

# **Part I:**

## **Research Context**

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1. 1 Research Background**

Translation has a special position in the development of literature as translated literature facilitates a country's access to the literature and culture of other nations. In fact, translation on many occasion is a key to the development of a national literary process, because by translating works of foreign literature, "features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before" (Even – Zohar, 1990 p.47).

In 2009, publishing houses in Vietnam began to publish several series of contemporary female popular fiction, or Chick Lit as it is popularly known, following the success of the movie *P.S I Love You* in Vietnamese cinemas as well as the warm welcome for translations of the same genre of fiction among Vietnamese readers (Huong Le, 2009). The most popular writers in this genre in Vietnam include Sophie Kinsella (5 works), Marian Keyes (2 works), Cecelia Ahern (5 works), Jasmine Oliver (4 works), Adele Parks (9 works), Isabel Wolff (8 works) and Katie Fforde (3 works) (Thuy, 2011). The fictional works by these authors were marketed in Vietnam as a must- read for contemporary women who love modern, fast-paced and glamorous life.

The translation of Chick Lit into Vietnamese can be seen not only introduce a new concept of women's lives to Vietnamese audiences, but also to meet the needs of local readers who are living in a time of economic development and

globalization, and in which the local literature has not yet had a sufficient number of fictional works that address the audience's experience. In fact, the growing number of Chick Lit works translated into Vietnamese can be said to reflect "the increasing confidence among young, single women in the country, especially those living in cities with good jobs" (Huong Le, 2009).

Among a number of writers who have had their works translated for Vietnamese readers, Irish writers were first introduced to Vietnamese audience thanks to the success of the movie *P.S I Love You* adapted from Ahern's book. Marian Keyes is marketed as "The Queen of Chick Lit" (Keyes, 2009); Cecelia Ahern as "the international bestselling author" or "the number one bestselling author in Europe" (Ahern, 2008) and Cathy Kelly is introduced as "one of the best Irish contemporary female writers" (Kelly, 2003).

In terms of the global market, though Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, which was published in 1996, is widely considered to be the first novel of Chick Lit, Irish writers in particular Marian Keyes, Cecelia Ahern, Cathy Kelly, Sheila O'Flanagan are now the most popular brands for this genre of literature. A UK chart of the bestselling authors of the past decade reveals seven of the top 100 are Irish — and five of those are women (Battles, 2009). The most successful of all is Maeve Binchy, the highest ranked at No 26, having sold 4.6m books, to a value of almost €36m. Marian Keyes is the next Irish entry on the chart at No. 27, having sold 4.5m copies to a value of €31.5m. At 42nd on the author list, Cecelia Ahern had the biggest selling Irish book in Britain during the decade. *P.S I Love*

*You* sold 1,035,864 copies, making it the 42nd most popular title. It is one of only 47 books to have sold more than 1m copies. Cathy Kelly and Sheila O’Flanagan, two other Irish chick-lit authors, are ranked 76th and 83rd respectively (Battles, 2009). On the larger scale, Cecelia Ahern’s first novel “*P.S I Love You*” has been always on the list of readers’ most favourite books and been published in more than 40 countries and adapted to the big screen. Recently Cecelia Ahern has sold the movies right to another novel “*If You Could See Me Now*” to Walt Disney for a musical film. The two novels “*Thank Your for the Memories*” and “*Where Rainbow Ends*” are also now in the progress of adapting. (Ahern, 2013) Marian Keyes’ books have been translated and published in over 30 countries (Keyes, 2013). Cathy Kelly, who is also well-known as one the best story teller of modern Irish women’s life, has her novels translated into approximately 20 different languages (Kelly, 2013).

So what are the factors that contribute to the success of Irish Chick Lit on the global market?

According to Ryan (2011), the success of Irish writers in this genre lies in their fresh and comic perspectives on women, their men, and the domestic and family dramas that shape their lives in the contemporary life. Additionally, these novels attract the worldwide audience because these writers set a global appeal for their characters. Maria Amor Barros de Rio notes that:

Cathy Kelly's and Marian Keyes' novels do not present a particularly Irish setting but are part of an international cultural trend. The only references to Irish culture and reality are names and places, and so these novels erase any other trace of cultural identification proposing a universal model of behaviour for "modern" women in developed countries (2005: 19).

McGonigle (2013), similarly explains that "what is remarkable about the novels of Keyes and Ahern is how completely the old Ireland, the impoverished Ireland of saints and martyrs and sinners and drunks, is absent from them. Their stories, which never mention religion, could be set in any affluent western city" (2013: 33). It is noticeable from these observations that the success of Irish Chick Lit comes from global features of women's life in Irish setting. Furthermore, the popularity of Irish Chick Lit lies in the fact that their writers refuse "to adhere to the clichéd storylines so often linked to chick lit" (Ryan, 2009). A typical plot of this literary genre often consists of several clichés regarding "glamorous job", "massive shopping", "evil bosses", "bitchy coworkers", "complicated relationships", and "the simple revenge of main characters" (Yardley, 2006: 10-14). The over usage and repetition of such storyline are always reasons for which contemporary female popular fiction is criticized. Irish writers use their creativity to portray various features of their Irish heroines in a more realistic way (Ryan, 2009). For example, readers of this genre often find their heroines working in extremely glamorous jobs in the fields of publishing, fashion, and advertising – "the sort of positions that readers would love to experience vicariously" (Yardley, 2006 p.11), but they never find a detailed description of how the heroines get there

or sometimes, besides a line a description of the job, the female fictional characters never seem to actually work. Irish Chick Lit, as observed by Ryan, describes all these dream careers with both positive and negative insights so that readers are not under false illusions of such jobs, and life in general. Apart from that, the “truly creative concepts” in which such issues like “sexual harassment”, “competitiveness”, “recognition of others” are presented make Irish chick lit novels become “a positive source of information and aspirations” for their readers (Ryan, 2009). Furthermore, Irish Chick Lit writers, unlike other writers of this genre, also tackle more serious issues such as “social inequality”, “single motherhood”; “domestic violence” and discuss them “as honestly as they can” (Ryan, 2010). The realistic look into women’s life can be seen as a bridge that brings Irish writers closer to their local and international readers. In fact, the success and popularity of Irish writers both in Ireland and abroad have indicated that their work and the themes they choose to focus on are strikingly close to their audiences. Taking Vietnamese women as an example, more than 30% of married women have been victims of domestic violence (GOPFP report, 2011) and such issues are never mentioned in any Vietnamese popular fiction genres. Therefore, it can be said that reading Vietnamese translations of Irish contemporary female popular fiction could allow Vietnamese women to identify aspects of their own lives in this genre and such reading experience is helpful in terms of reflecting on their own lives, as well as finding a fictional solution for their realities.

Due to the nature of the topic and translation, this research is an interdisciplinary study which relates to Translation Studies, Literature, Gender and Culture studies. Such an approach to the topic of this research encourages us to study translation not only as a product of the translating process but also its connection in a myriad of ways to culture.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

According to Milestone and Meyer (2012: 112), the representation of women in contemporary culture is a complex issue due to historical changes as well the progress of women's movements. The representation of women is not simply a matter of words or images, but it "reflects and encourages certain ways of thinking about and acting in relation to women" (ibid).

The aim of this dissertation is primarily to investigate the representation of women in Vietnamese translations of Irish Chick Lit. It aims to observe how these representations are recreated in Vietnamese: how Western women are presented to Vietnamese audiences, what are the translation strategies employed, what are the translational shifts in the process of translating? What do these shifts tell us about the relationship between culture, translation and literature? Furthermore, a significant number of cultural references existing in current Western culture, as well as paratextual elements are used in Irish Chick Lit and this thesis will investigate how they are rendered into Vietnamese and how the recreation of these elements affects the representation of women in Vietnamese translated texts.

### 1.3 Selection of Fiction for Analysis

To decide which novels were to be analysed, the following criteria were taken into consideration:

- All the novels analysed have been written by Irish writers, as the focus of this study is on the representation of women as described by Irish writers.
- The position of the authors and their novels in the marketplace, including their critical reception and recognition has been studied, for example by looking at their presence in bestseller lists or in scholarly works on the genre.
- All the novels in this corpus of investigation must have been translated into Vietnamese, because one aim of this dissertation is to investigate the Vietnamese recreation of the representation of Irish women in female popular fiction.

Taking such factors into account, the following titles have been selected for this research:

- *Watermelon* (1995) by Marian Keyes; translated by Cao Thi Lan Phuong and published in 2010.
- *Sushi for Beginners* (2000) by Marian Keyes; translated by Do Anh Tuan and published in 2009.



- *Never Too Late* (1999) by Cathy Kelly; translated by Nguyen Thanh Tam and published in 2003.
- *P.S I Love You* (2002) by Cecelia Ahern; translated by a group of translators and published in 2008.
- *Where Rainbows End* (2004) by Cecelia Ahern; translated by Petal Le and published in 2010.

This is a representative number of works to examine in the framework of a doctoral dissertation as this selection allows this research project to examine and observe the representation of women over a period of almost 10 years (1995-2004), as well as to investigate some strategies used for translating popular fiction in Vietnam in the period from 2003 to 2010. In addition, the time lag between publication of novels in English and their Vietnamese translations appears to be an interesting point for the study as investigating the time when translation was published may give some insightful information about the reasons why contemporary female popular fiction was introduced to Vietnamese audience. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that among four translators there is one male translator, who translated *Sushi for Beginners* and the five Vietnamese translations were published by three different publishing houses. *Watermelon*, *Sushi for Beginners*, and *Where Rainbows End* were published by Nha Nam, a private publishing house which is now a leading publishing brand in Vietnam due to its financial ability. *Never Too Late* and *P.S I Love You* were published respectively

by Women Publishing House and Youth Publishing House, two of which are state-owned publishers. Therefore, it can be said that the number of authors (3) and translators (4 + a group with an unknown number of translators) can help to provide, to some extent, some insight on general picture of the representation of Irish women and the translation strategies used in the recreation of these representations.

#### **1.4 Previous Studies**

Existing literature in the area of Chick Lit has particularly focused on defining its characteristics as a post-feminist product, or studying the connection between Chick Lit and the existing tradition of women's writing (Smyczyńska, 2004; Whelehan, 2000, 2002, 2005; Harzewski, 2006; Ferris and Young 2006; Gill 2006, 2007; Smith 2008, Gormley 2009).

As a subject for doctoral research, Chick Lit has been studied in works by Feral (2009), Arosteguy (2009), Ryan (2011), Balducci (2011) and McGonigle (2013). Arosteguy (2009) focuses on American Chick Lit texts and various aspects of white femininity as described in these works. Balducci's thesis (2011) investigates themes, narrative strategies and stylistic features deployed in Italian chick lit novels, not only in comparison with their Anglo-American models, but also in relation to Western popular media culture and the Italian tradition of the *romanzo rosa*, its cultures and practices as well as its legacy. Ryan (2011) presents

a case study of the work of Irish writer Marian Keyes in the context of Irish culture. In order to provide a serious, theoretically-informed reading of Chick Lit and of post-feminist perspectives, Ryan investigates Keyes's writing through three different perspectives: her role as a female Irish author, her role as a Chick Lit author, and her potential to be an author who addresses contemporary feminist issues. McGonigle (2013) dedicates a chapter in her doctoral dissertation focusing on Post-Catholic Ireland in literature and popular culture to studying how Keyes uses this new genre of literature as a tool to fight against the long existing views of conservative Catholicism of Irish women. The only doctoral work available that is purely concerned with actual translation is Feral's thesis (2009), which examines the impact of poetics and ideology on the translations of eight contemporary heroine-centred and women-oriented texts from English into French including Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and its movie adaptation, the novel *Sex and the City* by Candace Bushnell and its televisual adaptation, the first twelve episodes of the television series *Ally McBeal*, Jane Green's *Mr Maybe*, India Knight's *My Life on a Plate* and Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears Prada*. Feral investigates the various ways in which these texts have been rewritten according to the dominant poetics and ideology of the French *roman sentimental* by applying Toury's descriptive framework as well as works on manipulation in translation (e.g. Lefevere 1992).

These existing sources of literature have provided a solid foundation to this thesis. In terms of literature studies, understanding the nature of the genre helps to

understand the position of chick lit in literature, as well as the role that it plays to readers. On the other hand, research on translation provides further understanding on methodology that can be applied in order to analyse Vietnamese translation. Furthermore, it can be said that this thesis moves the current dialogue in chick lit and translation forward since it is the first work that analyses the language pair of English and Vietnamese.

### **1.5 Dissertation Structure**

The thesis is divided into a theoretical part and analysis part. The theoretical part is structured as followed:

Chapter 1 introduces the reasons for choosing the representation of Irish women as the topic of this research. It also gives information on the objectives and criteria for the selection of fictional works used for my future analyses, as well as the scope of this thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant academic literature, drawing on scholarly research relating to popular fiction and Chick Lit. It is an attempt to define the relationship between Chick Lit and popular culture. This chapter also provides an overview of the gap between Chick Lit and Vietnamese culture.

Chapter 3 starts with a discussion norms and different types of translational norms. It then moves on with the linguistic and functional approach used when translating norms from a source culture to a target one. Next, it investigates the issue of representation and translation.

Chapter 4 defines the research methodology employed in the present study. This discussion starts with the discussion of cultural references and paratextuality and translation. It then continues with an overview of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and explains why DTS was chosen as a methodology of the research. This chapter closes by outlining how the research methodology and the criteria for choosing segments of text used for comparative analysis have been designed.

Chapter 5- the analysis part is divided into two subchapters:

The first part of the analysis is dedicated to the analysis of cultural references and paratextual elements and their contribution to the representation of Irish women in the chosen work. This chapter also investigates how these elements have been translated into Vietnamese and how these elements may influence the representation of Irish women in Vietnamese translation. The second part discusses specific examples related to the representation of Irish women in contemporary female popular fiction and their Vietnamese translations. These examples are chosen according to criteria listed in the methodology chapters. This chapter will provide an insightful and in-depth understanding of how the representations of women are created in the source texts and recreated in Vietnamese translations.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis. It presents the findings with regard to the representation of Irish women in contemporary popular fiction and the translation strategies used by Vietnamese translators when recreating representations of Irish

women. It also discusses the contribution of this thesis and concludes with suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Chick Lit**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter aims to trace the origins of contemporary female popular fiction- ‘Chick Lit’ and locates it within contemporary culture. It also seeks to create a relationship between Chick Lit and Vietnamese culture in order to understand the reasons why a significant number of translations of various Chick Lit authors are published in Vietnam.

#### **2.1 Popular Fiction and Chick Lit**

##### **2.1.1 Definition of Popular Fiction**

The term “popular fiction” has been defined in a number of ways. In *New keywords: a revised vocabulary of culture and society* (Bennett, Grossberg and Meaghan, 2005: 262-264), the word “popular” can be understood either as “something that is widespread and well-liked by many people” or “what the mass media imposed on people by commercial interests”. It can also be seen “in the sense of the contrast between high and popular culture” or as “a culture made by the people for themselves.” Based on these meanings of the words popular, it can be said that popular fiction is fiction that is widely-favoured and well-liked by many people.

In terms of literary products, Gelder considers popular fiction to be the “opposite of Literature” (Gelder, 2004: 11). Gelder stressed his capitalized usage

of “Literature” instead of “literature” by explaining that the latter is “a general field of writing” while the former means quality literary works written by such writers as George Eliot, Henry James, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Flannery O’Connor, Vladimir Nabokov, Tobias Wolff (ibid: 11). According to Gelder (2004), Literature is a product of highbrow culture, which is “indifferent to the buying and reading/viewing public, often openly contemptuous of the marketplace and demand for profit, underwritten by a sense of ‘creativity’ and ‘originality’, and using the language or discourse of ‘art’”. On the other hand, popular fiction is the product of low culture, which is “open to mass audiences and necessarily caught up in the logic of the marketplace, which means it remains conscious of its viewers/readers, and is determined to please them” (ibid: 13). Literature, therefore, is often praised for the beauty of its language use and the originality of its approaches to explaining the fundamental questions of life, while popular fiction is well-liked “for short descriptions, patterns of dialogue copied from television sitcoms, familiar brand names, and plots that may follow convoluted entanglements but never allow for complexity or ambiguity” (Manguel, 2007: 131). The use of language seems to be at the root of the difference in the value accorded to popular fiction as opposed to Literature; as Gelder states “the former empties or ‘vacates’ the mind, while the latter is supposed to fill it up” (Gelder, 2004: 36). It also indicates another different reading purpose of the two genres; while popular fiction is read for leisure, Literature is used for more serious and educational purposes (ibid: 36).



As a production of pleasure, popular fiction has a great abundance of genres from romance to horror, detective to fantasy, science fiction to Chick Lit to meet its readers' interests. Supporters of popular fiction such as Macherey (1978) and Radway (1991) argue that readers and their level of interest should be the main concerns of any writers. Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*, which studies the reading habits of a community of romance readers, reveals that "romance reading addresses needs created in them but not met by patriarchal institutions" (Radway, 1991: 211). Popular fiction creates for its readers a new world where issues existing in reality can be solved in a fictional universe, and therefore, reading popular fiction can be seen as a form of entertainment used to escape the pressures of reality (ibid: 50). The next section of this chapter will examine, in detail, the characteristics of popular fiction in terms of its content and its role as a tool used by readers to escape reality.

### **2.1.2 The Characteristics of Popular Fiction**

According to Cawelti, popular fiction is a combination of two main elements: conventions and inventions. Conventions are elements which are "usually quite specific to a particular culture and period and do not mean the same outside this specific context" (Cawelti, 1976: 5). Stereotyped characters, accepted ideas, commonly known metaphors, even favourite plots, are examples of conventions. Inventions, on the other hand, are elements which are "uniquely imagined by creators" (Ashley, 1989: 87). Such invented elements could be either

new kinds of character ideas, innovative plot or creative usages of language. Inventions provide readers with new information about the world and the feeling of escape from the ordinary life around them (Cawelti, 1976: 9).

Both conventions and inventions play significant roles in a cultural context. While conventions represent the shared values of a society, inventions introduce new concepts to that society. Conventions maintain the traditions, customs and stability of a defined culture; inventions bring changes, new values. In popular fiction, conventions can be seen as elements of reality, which readers face in their daily lives and which they cannot change or break because conventions “rely on shared habits and mutual expectations which are common knowledge” (Hermans, 2000: 32). Inventions, on the contrary, are products of a writer’s creativity, which creates a utopia where readers can find themselves free from the social pressures of reality, and in which all of their problems can be solved easily. Conventions, therefore, are bridges to mutual understanding between writers and readers in so far as they both share similar backgrounds of reality, while inventions bring a sense of escapism, which leads to the pleasure of reading popular fiction mentioned in the previous section. On the other hand, the use of conventional elements is the root of criticism. Popular fiction is criticized for making overuse of the literary “formula”, which is “the synthesis of a number of specific cultural conventions in a period of time” (Cawelti, 1976: 6). Sewell (1984) states that the value of popular fiction as literature is subsidiary because of the limitations in novelty and creativity of “formula” fiction. However, such

“formula” fiction fills a strong need for escape and relaxation on the part of readers. Readers experience life, death, violence, and sex described in popular fiction in a manner that increases their sense of confidence and well-ordered existence (Cawelti, 1976: 16). Furthermore, a formula could be considered to be “a kind of literary art” because of its two features (1) essential standardisation and (2) its relation to the needs of escape (ibid: 8).

The first characteristic of “formula fiction” is the “essence of all literature”. (ibid: 8). This is the factor creating the common background between a writer and his/her audience. Such shared experience brings basic emotional security to readers and through this, readers may find it easier not only to comprehend the plot, but also to interpret “between the lines”. In other words, when a bridge between a writer and his/her readers is created, it enables “artistic communication” (ibid: 9).

The second feature of “formula fiction” plays a significant role in attracting readers to this genre, since the formula creates the ideal world without limitations or uncertainties in readers’ imagination (ibid: 16). Radway argues that reading popular fiction is “a form of behaviour operated as a complex intervention in the ongoing social life of actual social subjects” (Radway, 1991: 7). Readers, therefore, choose to read popular fiction, because while still recognizing their involvement in characters through the appearance of conventions, readers may find the elements of invention helpful. In other words, inventions will help them to escape from an uncertain and insecure reality and such findings bring them a

feeling of satisfaction. This feature appears to be a thought-provoking question for research in translation studies. It is undeniable that there is a cultural gap between cultures of original novels and their translation so it is interesting to find out which strategies translators have used to bring the sense of involvement and familiarity to the target readers.

The foregoing review has revealed certain characteristics of popular fiction. The next section of this chapter will investigate contemporary female popular fiction as a subgenre of popular fiction.

### **2.1.3 Chick Lit**

Chick Lit- is defined as stories of “single women in their twenties and thirties “navigating their generation’s challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships” (Ferriss and Young, 2006: 3-7). Joanne Hollows summarises the fundamental feature of this genre as stories of “a female protagonist seeking personal fulfillment in a romance-consumer-comedic vein” (Hollows, 2002: 3). Milestone and Meyer (2012) in their book *Gender & Popular Culture* notice that contemporary female popular fiction represents several aspects of women, but their main focus is on romance, sexuality and relationships, the body and physical appearance, women at work and at home, morality and violence (Milestone and Meyer, 2012: 87-107).

The genre’s emergence was marked in 1996 with the publication of Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. This new variation of women’s writing was then

named Chick Lit, which is concurrently “interesting and provocative” as it has both “positive and negative connotations” and at the same time brings in the “issues of gender and genre” (Gormley, 2009). Lit, which is the short form of the word literature, suggests that chick lit is “inferior” to high forms of Literature. Gormley (2009) examines the usage of the term “chick” through different historical periods and states that it denotes women who are “not intellectual, child-like and concerned with the trivial”; but at the same time the term also denotes an “independent, self-assured, intelligent” woman. Hence the combination of the two words indicates that this is literature by, for and about women (Gormley, 2009). The first usage of the term Chick Lit, however, can be dated back to 1995, when Cris Mazza introduced her collection of stories which was entitled *Chick Lit: On the Edge: New Women's Fiction Anthology*. Mazza (1995: 104) states that she “was looking for something different, something that stretched the boundaries of what has been considered ‘women’s writing’”. This stated intention of giving a voice to women writers led to the development of a publishing phenomenon, which has occupied most bestseller lists over the last ten years.

The key to the success of Chick Lit lies in several factors. Above all, it is the feeling of familiarity that the genre brings to the readers. Despite the fact that Chick Lit is considered to be a newly born genre of women’s fiction, readers can see the connection between it and other existing genres, because Chick Lit is commonly seen as “the daughter of the romance novel and the step-sister of the

fashion magazine” (Merrick, 2006: vii-viii). However, unlike the traditional romance novel in which a heroine in her search for the right man involves herself with “one, and only one, man”, the new women are involved in more relationships. Ferris and Young (2006: 3) argue: “Chick Lit jettisons the heterosexual hero to offer a more realistic portrait of single life, dating, and the dissolution of romantic ideals”. In this light, it can be said that this genre of women’s writing introduces the idea that women can achieve empowerment through their personal choices, which allow them to “consciously seek pleasure rather than use their bodies as tokens of exchange with men” and they can act as active agents instead of succumbing to the victim status of being men’s choice (Ferriss and Young, 2006: 89). This idea appeals to female readers’ desire to escape restrictive societal norms, which may contain unreasonable expectations of gender roles.

In addition, the focus on realism is another distinctive feature of this genre. Readers can identify so closely with the heroine’s human flaws and desires because contemporary female popular fiction describes matters of “identity, race and class, femininity and feminism, consumerism and self -image” facing contemporary women and contemporary culture (ibid: 2-3). Contemporary female popular fiction has “quite specific ways” of bringing its readers “an inclusive female sphere of experience”, therefore it helps late-twenty and late- thirty – year-old working women, who have an “identity crisis”, to consider themselves “part of a club and [they] are not the only ones that feel stupid.” (Whelehan, 2005: 187).

Lastly, another factor contributing to the widespread appeal of Chick Lit is its ability to meet the needs and interests of diverse audiences. The genre is primarily written by and for late-twenty and late-thirty – year-old white working women, but it has grown and branched out to include larger audiences. Chick Lit in fact has crossed the divides of generation, ethnicity, nationality, and even gender. The popularity of the genre has led to the birth of several subgenres such as “lad lit”, “hen lit”, “ethnic lit”, “church lit”, “bride lit”, and “work lit” (Ferris and Young, 2006: 5-8).

Despite its success, the genre has rarely received “serious or intelligent discussion” (ibid: 2). Like other previous genres of female fiction which have always received bitter criticism from literary critics and been labelled as “low art”, “silly” and “garbage” (Smith, 2008: 4), contemporary female popular fiction – Chick Lit – is a target for condemnation since it is the most recent manifestation of traditional women’s writing and its content also relies on the “conventions of the romance but updates them for its present-day setting” (ibid: 4- 8). According to literary critics, contemporary female popular fiction appears to consist of “formulaic and homogeneous plotlines, simplistic, trivial subject matter [and] absence of the characteristics academics use to judge literary merit” (Arosteguy, 2009). Gill (2006) criticizes the genre because it not only “reserves a safe space for the expression of traditional gender roles, but also fails to engage contemporary discussions of socio-economics, race, and gender” (Gill, 2006: 493).

Davis-Kahl summarises “academia’s lukewarm reception” of chick-lit by stating that “(the) reasons behind the reluctance to study the genre could include: a belief in the conventional wisdom that all chick lit is about stiletto heels and pink drinks, and men; or an assumption that very popular, highly- marketed and lucrative literature must be too lowbrow culture to warrant scholarly attention” (Davis-Kahl, 2008). Another trenchant comment comes from the six-time Booker Prize short listed novelist Beryl Bainbridge, who considers contemporary female popular fiction to be “a frothy sort of thing” and questions the purpose of writing a whole novel about “these helpless girls, drunken, worrying about their weight and so on” (Ezard, 2001).

In response to Bainbridge’s criticism, Helen Fielding, whose *Bridget Jones’s Diary* of 1996 became a classic of the genre, states that Chick Lit represents women as they actually are in the age in which they are living. These stories of happiness, sorrow, love-hate relationships, betrayal, confusion, despair and survival, humorously recounted in Chick-Lit, happen in and to the lives of ordinary women. This explains why Chick Lit is so popular among readers, since any reader can find and identify with a part of themselves and their personal issues in the main character’s life. The reader thus becomes “a participant [in] rather than an observer” of the storylines (O’Flanagan, 2012). Colgan describes her experience of reading this kind of fiction as “an absolute revelation to see [her] life and confusion reflected in print...and clearly about one and a half million other



people felt the same” (Colgan, 2001). Therefore, it can be said that the stories of the fictional characters in contemporary female popular fiction are representative of much of its audiences’ life-experience and real-life situations which they encounter. The well-known Irish writer Marian Keyes, considered by the media to be one of the initiators of Chick Lit, stresses its the significance: “Chick Lit uses humour to reflect life back to us. It's a very comforting genre, and it's the first time our generation has had a voice. It's a very important genre for all of those reasons.” (Keyes, 2010). Furthermore, the voice that Keyes mentions is not simply the voice of drunken and helpless women, but it is the voice of a new generation of women. These women are willing to define themselves in new terms without feeling the necessity to live up to standards imposed either by a patriarchal world or by the explicit desire to gain self-empowerment. They appear to be strong, independent, self-confident and true to their inner feelings. They confront their human weakness and take it as their nature; they accept themselves as who they are without blaming the surrounding world for their misery and unhappiness. They know what they are looking for and make every effort to overcome their own moments of darkness in order to achieve their dreams. These new women in Chick Lit no longer need to be “superhuman” but “just human” (Mazza and De Shell, 2000, p.9).

It is obvious that there are both critics and defenders of contemporary female popular fiction and such interest coming from both sides of the debate demonstrates the significance of this genre in the contemporary culture of the

times we live in. Therefore, it is justifiable to study these texts in order to define their importance and value in popular culture.

## **2.2 Chick Lit and Popular Culture.**

According to Milestone and Meyer (2012), popular culture is an “amorphous concept” (2012: 1). Therefore, in order to define the connection between popular fiction and popular culture, the first step would be to define what popular culture is. The term “popular culture” has been defined in numerous ways. Mukerji and Schudson offer the following definition of popular culture:

Popular culture refers to the beliefs and practices, and the objects through which they are organized, that are widely shared among a population. This includes folk beliefs, practices and objects rooted in local traditions, and mass beliefs, practices and objects generated in political and commercial centers (Mukerji and Schudson, 1991:3-4).

Bates and Ferri provide an even broader definition of popular culture:

Popular culture is the television we watch, the movies we see, the fast food, or slow food, we eat, the clothes we wear, the music we sing and hear, the things we spend our money on, our attitude toward life. It is the whole society we live in, that which may or may not be distributed by the mass media. It is virtually our whole world. (Bates and Ferri, 2010: 3)

Both definitions of popular culture given above highlight the fact that popular culture actually is the world that we live in, where all beliefs and practices are accepted by traditions and shared by all members of society. On the other hand, Storey (2009) defines popular culture as “mass culture”, which is mass-produced for mass consumption. It is “the culture that is left over after we have decided what

high culture is”. Popular culture, therefore, can be seen as a residual category, which consists of practices that fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture (Storey, 2009: 5-9). However, Ray B. Browne, a theorist of popular culture, asserts that “it is a grave mistake to assume that all creators of the popular arts achieve no worthwhile standards” (Browne, 2006:79). According to him, any form of popular culture is valuable because it represents ‘the voice of the people – their likes and dislikes, the lifeblood of daily existence, their way of life’, and only by conducting research into popular culture products in an objective and non-judgmental manner, can we understand and appreciate the value of popular culture (ibid: 76).

It is evident from both viewpoints of popular culture that contemporary female popular fiction reflects the values of popular culture and that popular culture, on the other hand, is a source of the conventions and the “formula” of the literary genre. Alan Sinfield believes that “Literary writing, like all cultural production, operates through an appeal for recognition: “The world is like this, isn’t it?” (Sinfield 1994: viii). Precisely, the success of contemporary female popular fiction is attributed to the fact that readers of the genre can always define various senses of social reality in those novels, as some parts of their lives are reproduced fictionally. To some extent, it could be said that this form of fiction is a mediation of readers’ real lives and their dream lives, which suits readers’ need for escape.

Furthermore, there is a connection between the genre's formula and popular culture. A successful formula may become a convention. For instance, the success of Candace Bushnell's novel *Sex and the City* series and its TV series adaptation has made its characters become icons of contemporary women living their life and possessing what they want. Another example to illustrate the relationship between this literary genre and popular culture is the phenomenon of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, which has spread far beyond the novel itself. *Bridget Jones's Diary* has been translated into at least thirty-three languages (Whelehan, 2002: 14), selling 4 million copies, including 1.5 million in the UK alone. A huge number of media spin-offs and merchandizing helped to keep Bridget Jones at the centre of cultural interest. The widespread usage of terms such as "singleton", "smug marrieds" and "emotional fuckwittage", and the main heroine's status as a cultural icon have helped *Bridget Jones's Diary* to become a cultural phenomenon. The process through which a formula develops and become a pattern of culture could be named "cultural evolution" (Cawelti, 1976: 20).

In brief, there is a mutual relationship between popular culture and contemporary female popular fiction. The fiction reflects popular culture; therefore, it is an integral part of popular culture. At the same time, the success of contemporary female popular fiction can contribute to the development of popular culture by providing it with new conventions, which would play a certain role in the stream of contemporary culture. It is also remarkable that thanks to the widespread, a phenomenon in popular culture is not limited to only a certain part

of the world but it can go worldwide. The following section will examine the influences of Chick Lit as a phenomenon of global popular culture in Vietnam

### **2.3 Chick Lit and Vietnamese culture**

That contemporary female popular fiction is translated into Vietnamese, widely published and warmly welcome by Vietnamese audience may appear to be an interesting question for research, especially because of the fact that Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by Confucism. Traditionally, women were not respected. They were ones who were exploited oppressed and mentally tied the most in the family and society. Women were expected to behave according to "three obediences, four virtues". The Three Obediences means women should be obedient to father before marriage, to husband after marriage and to son after the death of husband. The Four Virtues are courtesy, speech, self-representation and diligence.

The most vital feature of women in Vietnamese culture is their courtesy. Social judgments of women are normally made based on their behaviour in both their family and their social lives. Women in Vietnamese society are expected to fulfill the roles of dutiful daughters when they are young, devoted wives and caring mothers when they get married and conscientious employees when they go to work (Jamieson, 1993; Bich, 1999). They have to play a submissive role in their relationships with men. It is obvious that they are not expected to be the first who approaches or flirts with men when they are single. They should be able to maintain their dignity in any circumstances, faithful to their husbands and willing

to sacrifice themselves for their marriage because it is a long-term commitment in their lives (Nguyen, 2013).

Women's femininity in speech in Vietnamese culture is marked by their excessive politeness and hesitation to speak, and also by their tone and pitch while speaking (Nam, 2012). Women's speech is expected to be gentle and full of polite words and it is obvious that nothing like informal words or slang and swearing can be acceptable.

Another remarkable trait that Vietnamese women are expected to have is appropriate self-representation. In Vietnamese ideology, self-representation is signified by women's natural beauty, the way they dress and also their personality (Van, 2012). Vietnamese tend to believe women's beauty is highlighted not only by natural beauty and gorgeousness but also by the beauty of their inner soul, as a well-known Vietnamese idiom says *tốt gỗ hơn tốt nước sơn* (Handsome is as handsome does). This characteristic also emphasizes that women should pay attention to their appearance, because it is widely considered that women's visibility in public shows both self-respect and respect for others. Therefore, women's attractiveness also lies in their figures and clothing.

In Vietnamese culture, women are traditionally seen as "minister of the interior" with primary responsibility for making decisions related to the management of the home and child rearing, while men take responsibility for "foreign relations" and thus, take decisions on issues outside the house, and tend not to be involved in any housekeeping activities (Hy, 1992). In modern

Vietnamese society, this viewpoint still has a significant impact on the social judgments and perception of women despite the fact that women can now work outside the home and be breadwinners. Modern policymakers in Vietnam use the concept “good at work and excellent at home” to promote the image of new women in the new century (Nguyen, 2013). The Vietnamese concept of women’s diligence, according to Hy (1992) and Nguyen (2013), means undertaking every task given, both inside the home and at work, proceeding with it in an orderly and efficient manner, and completing it on time. An ideal woman should always sacrifice herself for the good of her family and the people around her.

These four rules indicate that the position and main responsibilities of women in a traditional society is mostly situated in the domestic atmosphere. However, according to Belanger (2003), Vietnamese women historically enjoy larger freedom as opposed to the traditional viewpoints of “ideal women” due to their long-lasting campaign of patriotic wars against foreign aggressors. During the French War (1946-1954) and American War (1964-1975), Vietnamese woman who were not only responsible for agricultural and industrial production but also directly took part in both wars and thanks to such contribution, improvement in social attitudes about equality has been made. In the Proclamation of the Democratic and Republic State of Vietnam in 1946, equality between men and woman was highlighted as a focus of the government.

In reality gender inequality still remains strong in Vietnam. Study of Binh (2002) points out that Vietnamese men take responsibility for only 20% of

domestic chores and women tend to be mainly responsible for domestic work, which shows that there is only little change over time in gender division of household labour. Teerawichitchainan (2009) in his research strengthens this finding by explaining that the unequal patriarchal division of labor of in Vietnamese society roots in the fact that in families women overwhelmingly take responsibility for household core mainly buying food, cooking, washing, cleaning while men's involvement in these domestic tasks witnessed only a minor growth. Recent research of Ngoc and Strachan (2008) on gender role in Vietnam pinpoints that Vietnamese women have a fierce struggle to balance between family commitment and paid work. Even though some of women have achieved leadership positions, they continue to face challenges at work that stem from culture and tradition of society. Only 4% of women work in director position in Vietnam (GSO, 2010). Interestingly, at all public workplaces in Vietnam for example, female employees are given a certificate annually for being "giỏi việc nước, đảm việc nhà - a good employee at work, an excellent homemaker at home". Therefore, it can be said that in the modern society, the "three obediences" may be eradicated but the "four virtues" are still treasured values.

Here it can be seen clearly that there is a cultural gap between the plot of contemporary female popular fiction and the moral standard of Vietnamese women. Novels about female protagonists seeking personal fulfillment in a romance-consumer-comedic vein appear to be improper for Vietnamese market due to cultural differences. However, translated novels of this genre are still



permitted to get published in Vietnam. It, therefore, can be assumed that the portrayal of women in the translated novels is accepted by Vietnamese ethics. This becomes even more crucial when taking into consideration the fact that to some extent Vietnamese are still judged by traditional values.

From my personal observation on various popular book forums, readers of chick lit in Vietnam are mostly women aged from twenties to thirties. They are all well-educated with university degrees, employed and a significant number of them are married. From their comments about Chick Lit novels on the forum of [webtretho.com/f115](http://webtretho.com/f115) , it seems that this group of readers looks at life of Western women as a dream life since it appears to them Western women have more freedom of choices in life. For example, in Vietnam it is almost an unwritten rule that a woman is expected to get married, settle down and have a baby right after graduating from the university, while the main character in Keyes' *Watermelon* starts her life adventures by moving to London from Dublin right after graduation. Another fact that is worth mentioning here is that the publishing houses in Vietnam seem to be unaware of the criticism of Chick Lit in the English speaking countries as they are more likely to aim at making profit by introducing the best selling books in the global market to Vietnamese audience. This genre is marketed in Vietnam as a must read for contemporary women who love a modern, fast-paced and glamorous life (Huong Le, 2009). What is more interesting is that while contemporary female popular fiction is criticized in the Western world for their stereotypical plots where all what the female protagonists do is making effort to

find the right men to settle down with, this stereotype is the selling point of this genre in Vietnam as it is still a common belief in Vietnam that the ultimate goal for all women is to get married to decent men and to become mothers. Therefore, it can be assumed that Vietnamese audience find their connection with contemporary female popular fiction through the effort of settling down of main female characters and what fascinates them is the storyline where the Western women seem to have more freedom of choices, fabulous lifestyle and interesting jobs. From this perspective, it can be assumed that Vietnamese readers read Chick Lit not only for pleasure and escapism purposes but also to brand themselves. The cultural difference, which seems to pose a challenge in understating, appears to add more value to contemporary female popular fiction. An entertainment product as commonly viewed in the Western culture has become books of role models. Another explanation for the popularity of Chick Lit in Vietnam that the idea of finding the right man in Chick Lit in fact is reassurance of traditional value of Vietnamese women. Vietnamese readers may perceive such stereotypical plot as a sign of similarity between cultures other than the degradation of their position as is criticized by Western feminists. This poses an interesting question for translation study in terms of investigating the value changes when translating from one language to another.

Furthermore, thanks to the popularity of translated Chick Lit, recently in Vietnam there has been a new wave of young female writer starting Vietnamese Chick Lit. Their plot and storyline is the relocation of Western scenes into

Vietnamese scenes and they claim to be the new portrait of Vietnamese style. According to Bich Hanh (2014), “the westernization of the plot has brought a new breath to the boring issues of Vietnamese women’s life” (my translation). It creates a space for Vietnamese female writers to write about love, family, sexuality and express their thoughts in a more innovative way. The famous Vietnamese literary critic Nguyen Dang Diep states that “thanks to Vietnamese Chick Lit, Vietnamese women and their current issues are now truly described by female writers in a woman way instead of being looked at from the traditional viewpoint of a man dominated society” (Bich Hanh 2014- my translation). The success of the Vietnamese Chick Lit can be seen by the increasing number of female writers as well as the figure of sales. For instance, *Cocktail for Love* has reached the sales numbers of 10.000 copies in 2 years, while some other books such as *Waiting for the Snow* or *Tio’s Love Diary* is sold at 3000 copies. In comparison, books of other genres are normally sold at only 1000 to 1500 copies yearly (Bich Hanh, 2014). However, it is also noticeable that there has been no official research or study of this Vietnamese Chick Lit genre yet and it appears to be a potential research topic to study the influence of foreign Chick Lit on Vietnamese female fiction in future.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a review of the origin of contemporary female popular fiction, its relationship with popular fiction and popular culture. It is

evident that Chick Lit is both a product of popular culture and a genre of popular fiction. As a cultural product, it is the synthesis of several elements of popular culture and at the same time, the success of contemporary female popular fiction has brought several characters from books to life as icons of popular culture. Although this genre has been criticised, its growth is nevertheless remarkable as it sets the foundations for various subgenres and taps into diverse reader markets. The essential thrust of this chapter is an argument that contemporary female popular fiction is, indeed, an interesting and worthy subject of academic research particularly for translation studies because by studying the translation of this genre, one can observe not only the strategies applied to translate the conventions and inventions in Chick Lit but also investigate the perception and the values of translated novels in a target culture. This chapter has also brought to light that there are some similarities in terms of the plot of foreign Chick Lit and the four virtues values of Vietnamese culture, and this may be an explanation for the popularity of this genre in Vietnam. Therefore, in the coming analysis chapter of this thesis, a more in-depth analysis of this feature needs to be done in order to confirm such assumption and initial findings.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Translation and Representation**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Having presented the background to this research project and relevant aspects of Chick Lit in chapters 1 and 2, this chapter now discusses a number of concepts that will be keys to the methodology and model of analysis.

The first section is an overview of translational norms and it is followed by a section discussing linguistic and functionalist approach to translation. It then moves on with the investigation of representation and translation. This section aims to define the central concept of this research.

#### **3.1 Translational Norms**

The previous chapters have reviewed the main characteristics of contemporary female popular fiction and presented the roles of conventions in the creation of Chick Lit. The understanding between writers and their audience is governed by these conventions, just as in the same way, “social life, including language use, is governed by norms - socially shared concepts of appropriate and expected behavior” (Kauhanen, 2010:34).

One may argue that there is a borderline between the conventions mentioned in chapter two on popular fiction, and the norms which are being discussed here. Hermans (1996), for example, differentiates norms from

conventions because of the fact that norms “have a binding character, carry some form of sanction and may either grow out of customs and be issued by an authorizing instance” (1996: 32), while conventions are simply generated by “common knowledge and on the expectation of what others expect you to expect them to do in a certain situation” (Nord, 1991: 96). Conventions, therefore, may become norms if the binding character of norms is acquired (Hermans, 1996: 30). This doctoral thesis, however, will treat the two terms as synonymous for several reasons. First of all, they are both “generally accepted patterns of behaviour” (Karamitroglou, 2000: 18). Secondly, it is argued that “norms of language may be conventions from a phylogenetic point of view, with respect to their origins, but from an ontogenetic point of view, i.e. relative to the individual who has been born into a speech community, they are norms – that is they are experienced as binding by every new generation and every newcomer” (Chesterman, 1993: 7). Based on these definitions, this research claims that norms and conventions are two sides of the same coin and can be considered to be synonymous because they are produced based on the similar values shared by a community and related to personal experience of any individuals. In the scope of this research, such consideration is of importance because it enables the researcher to study the representation of women in translation not only from a linguistic viewpoint but also as a cultural phenomenon. As it has been mentioned in chapter two, there is a cultural gap between the plot of contemporary female popular fiction and a traditional understanding of Vietnamese women so in order to publish these works in

Vietnam, it can be assumed that the norms at work in the original work may have been adapted to some local characters in order meet the expectations of the target culture.

Coming to the questions of translating norms from one language into another, Toury introduces various kinds of translational norms, which come into play at successive steps of the translation process. Toury explains his reasons for suggesting this variety of norms by stating that:

[R]eal-life situations tend to be complex; and this complexity had better be noted rather than ignored, if one is to draw any justifiable conclusions. As already argued [...] the only viable way out seems to be to contextualize every phenomenon, every item, every text, every act, on the way to allotting the different norms themselves their appropriate position and valence (1995:63).

This wide and diverse categorization of translational norms provides an important tool for the researcher, because it helps to determine the general concept and role of translation prevalent at a particular period of time or in a specific culture. Additionally, translational norms also indicate the underlying concept of translation used by translators.

Toury's translational norms include initial, preliminary and operational norms. These norms operate at different phases of the translational process and these are defined consecutively in what follows. **Initial norms** are the basic choice which translators can make. According to Toury, they can either stay faithful to the original text and "the norms it has realised" or choose to reproduce them by

means of “the norms active in the target culture” (ibid: 56). **Preliminary norms** are the combination of translation policy and directness of translation. Translation policy refers to the “factors that govern the choice of text-types [...] to be imported through translation into a particular culture/language at a particular point in time” (ibid: 58). In other words, translation policy refers to the reasons behind the selection of a particular text for translation. For instance, contemporary female popular fiction may have been chosen for translation into Vietnamese for their popular mass appeal in the global market and potential financial profitability, whereas the motivations for translations and this motive for translating chick lit work into Vietnamese is likely to have different effects on the accuracy of target texts. Directness of translation is the decision “to work either directly from the original source language or from an existing translation in another language.” (Hermans, 1999: 5). **Operational norms** consist of matricial and textual-linguistics norms. The former norm investigates whether the TT is a complete or an abridged rendering; whether any passages have been omitted or relocated; whether the translator has used footnotes, notes at the end of the text, prefaces and so on. It also considers the division of chapters and paragraphs, how chapter titles are rendered, how chapters are numbered and many other questions of outward, global presentation of the target text. These are all macro-level issues which help to situate the target text within the target culture system and to gauge its significance or acceptability. The findings gleaned at this global level are expected by Toury to offer clues as to the nature of the micro-textual level of translation



strategy. To examine the TT at this detailed micro-textual level, *textual-linguistic norms* should be taken into consideration. This is the process where the textual make-up and verbal organization of the TT are examined and compared to its source. It considers individual TT segments at sentence, phrase and clause level, matching them to their corresponding ST segments. This comparison of ST and TT segments includes describing and accounting for many individual realizations of grammatical patterns, vocabulary choice, shifts in modality, stylistic features and register (formal, colloquial, etc). Analysis of individual coupled ST and TT segments at this level will also provide some insightful information to explain why there are differences in the source and target culture. More importantly, it will help to find the answers to a central research question of this thesis related to the representation of women in Irish Chick Lit and their Vietnamese translation. In brief, this section of norms is the theoretical foundation for the coming analysis chapter of this research.

### **3.2 Linguistic approach versus functionalist approach**

It is unquestionable that translating norms is a fairly complex task, which involves quite a number of linguistic changes in the target text. Several translation studies scholars discuss what exactly happens to texts when they are rendered into another language and how this is achieved. Some of these researchers compare source and target texts to understand the techniques translators apply in their practice. Based on the findings from such observation, Catford uses the term shift

to describe any changes that are caused by the different features of the source and target languages. He distinguishes two major types of shifts; level shifts (where source language item at one linguistic level for example grammar has a target language equivalent at a different level, for instance lexis) and category shifts which involve (a) structure shifts, for example a subject-predicate-object structure maybe translated as a predicate-subject- object structure, (b) unit shifts for example a word may be translated by a morpheme (c) class shifts, for example an adjective maybe translated by a noun and (d) intra-system shifts, for example when the source language singular nouns translated as plural nouns in target language (Catford, 1965: 80). Newmark (1988) see such changes in the translation as “a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar from SL to TL” (1988: 85). In his opinion, there are four types of shift: The first type of shift is the change from singular to plural. A second type is required when a SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL. Here there are always options. Thus for the neutral adjective as subject, there is a choice of at least: 'What is interesting is that...', 'The interesting thing is that...', 'It's interesting that...', 'The interest of the matter is that...'. The third type of shift is the one where literal translation is grammatically possible but may not come with natural usage in the TL. The fourth type of transposition is the replacement of a virtual lexical gap by a grammatical structure (Newman, 1988: 86- 87). Catford and Newmark’s definitions of shifts focus only on the linguistic feature of translation. The problem with observing translational shifts from linguistics approach is that it addresses the translation of

linguistic elements on sentence level. It focuses only on equivalence on word or sentence level and has an evaluative nature in the sense that they are prescribing how to translate. In addition, one may argue that such shifts in translation are made so that the translated text can function in the similar way as the original does. Furthermore, since translation is a norm-governed activity, changes or shifts in translation can be results of social or cultural context. This approach to translational shifts is known as the functionalist approach to translation, which was established by Vermeer, Reiss and Nord in the 1980s. This approach was developed mainly on the foundation of criticism related to the linguistic approach mentioned above. “Skopos” (a Greek word meaning “function” or “aim”) is the key concept in this approach. Some of the main ideas of the functionalist approach include the notions that a translation is regarded as translation when it functions as a text in the target culture; that the function of a translation in the target culture determines which aspects of the ST should be transferred to the TT; that the ST is only seen as a source of information; and that the success of a translation is achieved only when it meets the need of target audience.

In brief, it can be said that observing how translational norms work from both viewpoints of linguistic and functionalist approaches will provide a general understanding of how translation functions in a particular culture, society or time, as well as how translation is influenced by parties related to the translation process. Within the scope of this research, it is impossible to say that observing the five translated texts will help the researcher to provide a full picture of the function

of translation in Vietnam, as well as factors that have impacts on translation. However, that the five chosen translations were made by different translators and published by three different publishing houses can provide to some extent some understanding of how the representation of Chick Lit heroines in Irish fiction is rendered into Vietnamese.

### **3.3 Representation and Translation**

Given that studying the representation of Irish women in translated female contemporary fiction is an aim of this work, this section will focus on the issues of representation and translation. It is important to acknowledge that representation is a spacious concept and, therefore, a full discussion of the issues related to representation and translation is far beyond the scope of this thesis. However, certain understanding of the term and its usage need to be discussed within this thesis so that the research question of this thesis can be answered.

Tymoczko (2007: 112) provides the following definitions of representation:

- The action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being so represented
- The description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way
- The depiction of someone or something in a work of art
- A picture, model, or other depiction of someone or something

- (in some theories of perception) a mental state or concept regarded as corresponding to a thing perceived.
- Formal statements made to an authority, especially so as to communicate an opinion or register a protest
- A statement or allegation: (for example, that) any buyer was relying on a representation that the tapes were genuine.

From Tymoczko's definitions, the representation of women in Chick Lit within the scope of this research can be defined as the written portrayal of women by Irish writers in their fiction. The representation of women in these works is in fact the perception of Irish writers about women's life in Ireland based on their mental concept, which can be seen as the result of their observation and personal experience.

Additionally, Webb (2009) further defines representation as a process of communication meant to depict or describe something or someone. This process of communication can be either written or spoken and representation can be understood from usages of language and images. Both definitions of representation above indicate that representation can be understood as portraying a particular view through usage of language. It is obvious that the choice of words and images has a significant influence on the understanding of representation. Representation, therefore, is important, because it creates meanings and shapes understanding (Milstone and Meyer, 2012: 7). Tymoczko (2007) observes that representation reflects and is structured by "preexisting

discourses that inform the views of those making the representations.” She states that representation has “ideological and ethical aspects, also implicit or explicit social purposes.” (Tymoczko, 2007: 113-115). The representation of women in Chick Lit written by Irish female writers can be seen as an author’s description of gender, based on her personal experiences and perception about the society she lives in. In fact, the writer’s viewpoint of women and gender in general is more “socially constructed rather than biologically given” (De Beauvoir, 1952; Carter & Sterner, 2004). In the viewpoint of social constructionists, regarding the field of gender, a society assigns certain norms or characteristics to each gender and people must possess these characteristics in order to be classified within a specific gender and to be accepted in a particular society (Zoonen, 1994; Stavropoulos & Kirby, 2003). The representation of women portrayed in Chick Lit, can be seen as a reproduction of women’s norms in reality. These norms are the conventions that have been mentioned in the previous chapter related to the characteristics of Chick Lit. The representation of women, therefore, is created not only by an author’s description of women, but also by the way a female character thinks, acts, speaks and sees the world and also by the description of other characters in a fictional work about them. Within the scope of this thesis, the representation of women will be approached through themes related to the four virtues of Vietnamese women since it can be assumed that a translation is permitted to introduce to target audience only when it suits the social norms of the target

culture. Therefore, the representation of women can be said to be constructed from four features namely courtesy, speech, diligence and self-representation.

The recreation of representation in translation is of great importance because it may affect the understanding of target audience about a foreign culture. In fact, translation, according to Tymoczko, is not only “one of the oldest and most continually practiced forms of representation in human culture” but also “a principal form of intercultural representation” (Tymoczko, 2007: 114). Additionally, Bassnett (2007) states that translation has a crucial role to play in aiding understanding of an increasingly fragmented world. As a form of representation, translation represents the foreign culture and as an act of communication, it is an attempt “to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication (which may have been intended for different purposes and different readers/hearers” (Hatim and Mason, 1997: 1). This understanding of the relationship between representation and translation is of extreme importance to this thesis as it can be seen from the discussion on Chick Lit and popular culture in the previous chapter that there may be changes of value when a text is translated from one language to another. The change of value or the concept of “boundaries” in Hatim and Mason’s definition is, to some extent, connected to what Pym calls “texts belong” in his book *Translation and Text Transfer* (Pym, 2010: 107). Pym (2010) claims that every text belongs to a specific place, time and context where it has “full textual meaning”. Therefore, it is

undeniable that when a text is translated into another language, it obtains another meaning, which may be totally different due to the time gap between the translations and the originals as well as the context of the source and target culture. In terms of values of a text, Andre Lefevere also argues that the production of literature in a culture is influenced by a series of ideological and power-related elements, which work both inside and outside the literary polysystem:

The first element is represented by interpreters, critics, reviewers, teachers of literature, translators. They will occasionally repress certain works of literature because these works go all too blatantly against the dominant concept of what literature should (be allowed to) be - and of what society should (be allowed to) be - its ideology, the world view - of a certain society at a certain moment. The second control factor which operates mostly outside the literary system proper, will be called "patronage" here and it will be understood to mean something like "the powers" (persons, institutions) which help or hinder the writing, reading and rewriting literature." (Lefevere, 1985: 226-27)

Hence, when a text is translated from one language into another, there will be changes of "values" in those culturally-bound elements in order to make the target audience engage with the text in a similar way to its original readers (Pym, 2010: 108). Pym's theory about translated texts is similar to Lefevere's concept of rewriting, which he defined as "the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work." (1982: 4). Rewriting is a complex process and is related to numerous variable factors including language, social policy and culture. In other words, translation as human behaviour is historically, socially and culturally determined,



or in short, as Toury would say “norm- governed.” (1995: 56). And norms can be defined as the transfer of “general values or ideas by a community- as to what is right or wrong, adequate and inadequate- into performance instructions appropriate and applicable to particular situations” (ibid:55)

The previous chapter has mentioned that Chick Lit tends to adhere to a certain formula, which is a synthesis of conventional and invented elements. The representation of women in Chick Lit written by Irish writers, in the context of this research, can be seen as the “norm-governed” synthesis of conventions coming from existing cultural facts, and invented elements, which are based on an author’ personal viewpoints and experiences conveyed in terms of an original novel. Therefore, it can be argued that when a text is translated into Vietnamese, that original representation will be recreated based on a translator’s understanding of the source texts and culture, as well as the norms that are prevalent within the target culture.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the concepts of representation and translational norms within the context this research. It also studied the linguistic and functionalist approach to observe translational norms. It has revealed that observing how translational norms work will provide a general understanding of how translation functions in a particular culture, society or time, as well as how translation is influenced by parties related to the translation process. It has also

pointed out that within the context of this research the representation of women in Chick Lit is recreated based on several conventional and inventional elements, which can be seen as norms accepted by the society.

## **Part II:**

# **Methodological Considerations**

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology used for the present research. It is divided into four sections. The first and second sections provide an overview of cultural references and paratextual elements, as well as their roles in this research. It then moves on with the discussion of the reasons for choosing Descriptive Translation Studies as a methodology for finding answers to the research objectives listed in the first chapter. The forth section is dedicated to explaining how translational norms will be identified. Finally, the fifth section presents the method of analysing translation practice.

#### **4.1 Cultural Reference and Translation**

As discussed in the 3.3 section, conventional elements or cultural facts are an important part of representation as it can be seen as a bridge that connects audience to a literary work. The understanding of the existing conventional elements at a given time creates a shared space for all members within a group or a society. Toury opines that:

As is well known, every culture community tends to codify phenomena of various types which have semiotic value for its members, linguistic and non-linguistic alike. Every set of codified items forms a *repertoire*, ie., an aggregate governed by systemic relations which govern the availability of certain items and the unavailability of others for certain uses within that culture (1991: 187).

Repertoire, as Toury calls it, or shared awareness of cultural references, constructs understanding and intimacy between members of a society. Hebdige (1979) and Cain (2001) also see this shared space as markers of identity, through which much can be told about the lifestyle or age group of an individual. It is obvious that Chick Lit as a product of popular culture (see section 2.2) makes extreme use of various repertoires to portray its characters and to communicate with its readers. However, despite the fact that popular culture has become a global phenomenon, translating cultural references stills appears to be problematic, due to what Pym (2010) calls the movement of a text. When an Irish- based work of Chick Lit is translated into Vietnamese, it moves away from its source context and becomes subjected to “a change of values”, because Vietnamese readers understand the text based on their awareness of what already exists in their culture. This is similar to what Hoffman describes in her book *Lost in Translation* about watching football in a foreign country, where “you can only keep your eye on the ball, it seems, if you have a rough prior idea of its trajectory.” (Hoffman,1991: 135). Having a basic understanding of football from previous experience, the viewer still does not understand the significance of the match or have a connection to the game as much as the local supporters. The understanding of elements of popular culture existing in translated Chick Lit is similar to the football game in Hoffman’s metaphor. Take the following extract for example:

That Christmas, Holly had spent a disgraceful amount of money in Brown Thomas on the most beautiful white dress she had ever seen (Ahern, 2007: 12).

An average Vietnamese reader, as observed in chapter two, may understand the act of shopping for a beautiful dress but will most probably not fully understand the information about the background and social status of a shopper who can afford the luxuries on offer in the upmarket department store of Brown Thomas in Dublin. This is a simple example to illustrate the idea that the cultural connotations in any text are often the ones that cause most problems for the translators. The translator should take into consideration what is called "cultural patterns of behaviour and presuppositions" (Nida & Reyburn, 1981: 62). It can be understood that a certain term of a specific culture may signify different implications or nuances. Such idea is pivotal when taking the representation of women into account because all the cultural references related to a female character may reveal different information about her in the original context. These elements, however, may not have the similar meaning when they are translated into the target language. The challenges that the translation of culture-specific terms pose are increased when the cultures to be analysed are deeply unrelated as in the case of my research. However, it could be argued that in the time of Internet and globalization, such difficulties can be overcome if the translator conducts a research through available sources on the Internet, or possesses a wide knowledge of both of his/her own culture and of the culture of the original texts.

Several studies have been conducted to find out the best possible solutions for translating cultural reference among which the following options were suggested by Newmark (1988):

**Transference:** According to Newmark (1988:81), transference (*emprunt*, loan word, transcription) is the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure.

When a translator decides to apply this method, he/she must be completely sure that the readership will be able to fully understand the meaning and implications of the SL term. In fact this can only be possible with terms that have already been internationally recognised. It would be problematic for a translator who considers using transference to translate objects or concepts related to small groups or cultures. For example, any TL readership will definitely understand cultural terms such as “pizza” or “Christmas” but when cultural references originated from the smaller culture, it will be more difficult for a TL readership to fully understand such reference in the context of SL culture. For instance, in my research, despite the fact that Ireland is a well-known country in Europe and America, the Irish Embassy in Vietnam was opened only 10 years ago in 2005 and for a long time until 2005, most Irish writers were identified as British. Therefore it is unavoidable that a Vietnamese audience may have problem understanding the Irish cultural references if they were translated by transference. For this reason,

an alternative method of translating cultural references should be employed. Newmark (1988) names this method as literal translation.

**Literal translation** the translation of one term in the SL by one term in the TL. For example, the German word “biergarten” can be translated into English as “beer garden”

In the majority of cases, if a literal translation is to be implemented and if a communicative translation is to be attempted and achieved, the translator should combine the literal version with some kind of explanation in order to give the TL readership a full account of the implications and nuances of the SL terminological item. The use of explanation in literal translation is close to the methods called a descriptive equivalent or of a translation couplet.

**Descriptive equivalent** the explanation of an SL culture-specific term  
This method is used when the translator, being aware of the difficulty in comprehending the existing references adds a short complementary explanation in the translation. For example, the Irish Leaving Certificate Examination can be translated into Vietnamese as kì thi tốt nghiệp phổ thông của học sinh Ireland và kết quả này còn dùng để xét tuyển đại học (the examination to graduate from school in Ireland and the result of this is used for admission to universities).

**Translation couplet** a procedure which combines two, or three of the above mentioned

Translation couplet is usually composed of transference along with a descriptive equivalent together. For instance, le baccalaureat can be translated as the



'baccalaureate', the French secondary school leaving examination. When applying this method, the reader will not only know what the item involved means (conveyed by the descriptive equivalent), but would also know the original SL name so he/she can identify it (conveyed through the transference procedure). This can be an appropriate method when the cultural reference in question is a key one which the reader might want or need to know.

Some other methods of translating cultural references introduced by Newmark (1988) include:

**Cultural equivalent** is the substitution of a SL cultural term by a TL cultural term.

Cultural equivalent is useful when the text does not present a high level of technical terminology. This method possesses a high functional value, since it provides the readership with the closest counterpart in the TL. For example, the French word for high school diploma "baccalaureate" can be translated into English as "A level" due to the equal value of these two words in two different educational systems. However, this procedure lacks precision and accuracy, since some of the implications or nuances of the SL term are inevitably lost. Nevertheless, it can be most recommended in texts where the loss of information is acceptable since a communicative translation plays a primary role and where a general, heterogeneous readership is addressed. As can be seen, when choosing cultural equivalent as a method of translating, a translator focuses on creating "functional equivalent" (Newmark, 1988:83) of cultural specific terms. In case

when there is no culturally equivalent word, a translator can use a method which Newmark (1988:83) calls functional equivalent.

**Functional equivalent** is the use of a culturally neutral TL term to define the culture-specific term.

This method can be useful in cases where there are limitations and restrictions in correspondence between the SLT and the TLT. For example, Taoiseach can be translated as the Prime Minister of Ireland. This method can also be used when loss of some information can be justified by either the function or the type of the text. The context of translation plays a significant role when it comes to decide if this method is suitable. When these cultural terms are more common, a translator can employ the method of through translation.

**Through translation** the literal translation of common collocations and names of organisations (Newmark, 1988: 84)

Normally, through-translations should be used only when they are already recognised terms as in an example some international organization as UNESCO, NATO or words such as superman or birthday child. Through translations have an aspect in common with transferences in the sense that their use is limited unless the TL readership has access to the understanding of the SL terms. Lomholt (1991:30) states this procedure as "*using an established translation*" but also states that "this option is best avoided when translating between cultures, as both the connotations and the denotations of such translations may be wrong."

As can be seen, while the differences between various methods of translating cultural references is clear, there is an overlap in the definition of through and literal translation since they both mean translating a SL cultural references by terms of TL. Therefore this research will treat these two methods as one under the name literal translation. In addition, as it has already been mentioned from the first chapter onwards, the focus of this research is on the representation of women in Vietnamese translation; therefore, an in-depth analysis of all cultural references appearing in the original texts is beyond the scope of this research. The following analysis of the translation of cultural references will be applied only to those in which cultural references play a crucial role in defining the identity of a female character or in representing a certain feature of these protagonists. Furthermore, cultural references can appear in various forms, from a proper name to certain idioms and expressions, from slang to various styles of swearing, which have specific cultural meaning, therefore this analysis will not divide these cultural references into distinct categories, instead they will be classified according to methods of renderings that have been mentioned in this section.

In brief, cultural references in contemporary female fiction are very important to the representation of its characters because these can give readers a greater understanding of the identity and background of a character. Therefore, further investigation of how cultural references are translated will be conducted and

analysed in the analysis chapter. Another factor of representation that also carries some cultural elements is paratextuality. The next section will investigate this concept in details.

## **4.2 Paratextuality and Translation**

Paratextual elements also play a pivotal role when it comes to representing the female characters. According to Genette:

If the text without its paratext is sometimes like an elephant without a mahout, a power disabled, the paratext without its text is a mahout without an elephant, a silly show (1997: 410).

Genette (1997: 1) also observes that seeing a text only as a “long sequence of verbal statements” does not provide a full understanding of a text since a written text is also “accompanied by a number of verbal and other productions such as an author’s name, title, illustrations” which surround and present the text. He, therefore, introduces the term “paratext” which “is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” to address these surrounding factors. The paratext comprises the peritext and the epitext. The peritext consists of elements which are directly attached to the text including the title, prefaces, author’s or translator’s notes. The epitext, on the other hand, is defined as “elements not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space.” (ibid: 344). Elements such as reviews, press releases, interviews with authors could be considered to be epitextual elements. These epitextual

elements later may become peritext if they are added to future editions of a work. For example, a press comment may appear on the book cover in order to attract greater audience attention. For the genre of popular fiction, the paratextual effect has a significant impact on the success of any authors and their work. Take the author's name for example; there is always an audience's desire to obtain more information about an author when a new book is published. Toolan states that:

Even if we know an author personally, we still perform the same process of forming a mental picture or representation (itself a kind of narrative) of that author to ourselves, as an integral part of the activity of knowing a person (1988: 78).

From the information collected about an author, readers are eager to know more about the background and lifestyle of the author. Booth describes the role of the author:

However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner [...] our reactions to his various commitments, secret or overt, will help to determine our response to the work (1961: 70-71).

To satisfy the reading public's desire for the author profile means to gain greater audience attention for the promotional campaign of a new novel. Publishers long for success and commercial benefit so they make the maximum effort to promote the name of the author. Genette (1997: 45) asserts that the author can be considered to be a commodity to be marketed by publishers. He states that "someone does not become an author until his second publication, when his name can appear at the head not only of his book but also a list of works 'by the same author'". The fame of the author, thus, is related to the amount of epitextual

material that is available to the reader, and in the publishing industry of popular fiction, the more information the audience have about an author, the greater the success the new book may achieve. The persona of the author, can be said to constitute the representation of her by the average reader. In other words, the brand name of an author might be seen as the representative voice for readers as it is undeniable that an author becomes popular only when his/her writing satisfies the needs of readers. Take the case of Cecelia Ahern in Vietnam for example, Vietnamese audience started to know her name after the success of the movie *P.S I Love You* in Vietnam. Her book was immediately translated into Vietnamese thanks to the success of the film and there were several articles published about her family background. All her books translated after *P.S I Love You* became popular among Vietnamese readers.

Other significant features of paratextuality are title and book cover, which are designed to attract potential readers' attention and stimulate them to buy and read books. A book cover can be seen as a visual summary of a book's content, which emphasizes "the special qualities and the individual imaginative space of the book" (Sonzogni, 2011: 15). A title is the verbal summary of a book, which may have several functions including a *heraldic* one (introducing the text to come), a *summarizing* one (giving brief information about the text), a *hermeneutic* (providing information for textual interpretation), an *iconic* one (provoking understanding of contents), or a *stimulating* one (attracting readers' interest in reading/ investigating the text) (Iliescu, 2001: 93-109). In many regards, it can be

said that both title and cover perform acts of communication, which form a connection between the reader and the text. These acts of communication, as Nord (1993) and Sonzogni (2011) observe, either reveal cultural assumptions or are culture - specific.

The expansion of a text, as has been discussed above, and the culture-specific characteristics that such expansion contains, has led the researcher to conclude that the translation of a text, when it is moved from one culture to another, should be examined not only through the lens of the content itself but must also be investigated through these elements of expansion. The main aim of my work is to investigate the representation of women in the Vietnamese translation of Chick Lit, therefore paratextual elements, namely book covers and novel titles will be treated in so far as they provide information about the representation of women.

### **4.3 Descriptive Translation Studies as Research Methodology**

The translational norms mentioned in chapter three is a concept derived from DTS, which is concerned with the study of translated segments and their comparison with the corresponding segments within the source texts. Toury states:

My own endeavours have always been geared primarily towards the descriptive-explanatory goal of supplying exhaustive accounts of whatever has been regarded as translational within a target culture, on the way to the formulation of some theoretical laws (1995: 25).

The aims and the nature of this research fits nicely within DTS because the present research mainly aims at examining the representation of Irish women in

fiction translated into Vietnamese and observing the strategies used in the process of translating popular fiction from English into Vietnamese. Toury's model can provide much detailed information, especially at the level of textual-linguistic norms, through the analysis of which we can gain an insight into translation strategies, as well as the influence of culture on the choice of the replacing segments in the target language. Furthermore, Toury regards translations as "facts of the culture which hosts them...whatever their function and identity, they are constituted within that same culture and reflect its own constellation" (ibid: 24), so his DTS model will provide the possibility of studying translations both as a product of a target culture and as texts inspired by source texts. The use of DTS, therefore, will be a key to discovering the position of the translated texts in Vietnamese popular culture.

In order to find answers to the research questions related to the representation of women in Irish Chick Lit, according to Toury there are two sources that can be used to observe the reconstruction of "norm-governed instances of behaviour" (ibid:65) in a particular text: the first source is textual, which involves only the translations themselves. The study of source texts will reveal the relationships between TT and ST segments and results of findings from such studies will help to draw conclusions about 'regularities of behaviour'. The second source is extratextual, which includes statements made by people themselves who might be involved in the translation act such as translators, editors, reviewers or others. As



is discussed in section 4.2, these elements are the expansion of the texts and they can provide information related to the representation of women in the context of this research. This source usually comes from “interested parties” (ibid:65), so it appears to be subjective, and sometimes may be misleading due to intentions which “do not necessarily concur with any declaration of intent” (ibid:66). It would contribute significantly to the research result if it was possible to interview all the parties related to the translation process. However, despite all the effort made in order to contact the translators of 5 selected books and their editors, I was unable to make contact with either of them. This situation can be explained by the fact that translation as a profession is still underdeveloped in Vietnam and it is unusual for publishing houses and translation to be involved in research. Most articles related to translation issues published in some literary magazines or in the culture columns of popular newspapers mostly aims at examining the accuracy of translation and criticizing the translation quality. According to Binh (2013), translation research and criticism in Vietnam only focuses on the comparison of the SL texts and translations in order to point out the inaccuracies since the central attention of Translation Studies in Vietnam only lies in the faithfulness of translation. Additionally, the existing translation research in Vietnam is governed by the media instead of researchers. The articles published tend to overdramatize the linguistic mistakes and equivalence while the “so-called” critics are lack of theoretical background and in-depth knowledge of the subject (Binh, 2013). Consequently, it can be said that it is a common fear in Vietnam that being

researched in some aspect is seen as being criticized publicly, which may negatively affect a publishing house or a translator's reputation. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning the fact that translation is not well-paid in Vietnam and there are not many professional literary translators in Vietnam. From my personal experience of working as a translator with experience and qualification in translation, the average payment for my three published books is about three dollars per page and it would be lower if a translator is inexperienced. Additionally, most of young translators may be afraid of losing their jobs when they know that their work is analysed in a research. For these reasons, applying Toury's 'product-oriented' DTS, as opposed to 'process-oriented' appears to be the most possible and appropriate choice. In addition with the extratextual material available namely book covers and novel titles, it is believed that the theoretical framework of this research will still help to find out some information related to the translation of norms into Vietnamese.

The DTS model analysis of Toury consists of three stages. Firstly, the translated texts have to be described and identified in order to understand its significance within the target culture system. The next step is to conduct a comparative analysis of source and target texts by creating pairs of target and source text segments. This step aims at detecting shifts between the source text and the target text. The final step is to identify regularities demonstrated by translation shifts, and to formulate generalizations about how translational norms work in the

context of target culture. In this step, a researcher also has to identify implications for future translation work (Toury 1995: 36–39, 102).

Toury's model of analysis can provide much detailed information, especially at the level of textual-linguistic norms, through the examination of which we can gain an insight into translation strategies, as well as the influence of culture on the choice of the replacing segments in the target language. The next section will describe the process of selecting material for analysis.

#### **4.4 Selection of Material for Analysis**

There are several criteria for selecting the material for analysis within the context of this research. First, it is of importance that novels chosen for analysis are written by Irish writers, as the focus of this study is on the representation of women as described by Irish writers. Secondly, the position of the authors and their novels in the marketplace, including their critical reception and recognition should be taken into consideration. It is done by looking at their presence in bestseller lists or in scholarly works on the genre. Third, all the novels chosen for analysis must have been translated into Vietnamese, because the main aim of this dissertation is to investigate the Vietnamese recreation of the representation of Irish women in female popular fiction. Following such criteria, five novels have been selected for this research. They are *Watermelon* (1995) by Marian Keyes; translated by a female translator named Cao Thi Lan Phuong and published in 2010. This book has 39 chapters and a prologue. *Sushi for Beginners* (2000) by Marian Keyes; translated by Do Anh Tuan, who is a male translator and published in 2009. The novel consists of 65 chapters, an epilogue and a prologue. *Never Too Late* (1999) by Cathy Kelly; translated by Nguyen Thanh Tam and published in 2003. This fiction is made up of 16 chapters. *P.S I Love You* (2002) by Cecelia

Ahern; translated by a group of translators and published in 2008. It has 51 chapters and an epilogue. *Where Rainbows End* (2004) by Cecelia Ahern; translated by Petal Le and published in 2010. This novel has 50 chapters.

As it has also been discussed in chapter 3, the representation of women in the chosen novels will be considered as the synthesis of several elements including the four virtues of women, the cultural references that are directedly related to their identity and also other paratextual elements such as titles of the novels and their covers. The length of the selected books and the several layers of representation appear to be problematic for comparative studies as argued by Tymoczko (2002):

In conducting research on translation, as is the case with other textual studies, it is a given that one cannot look at most texts exhaustively. The meaning of a text ... as an organized artefact and as an object in a social context is in many ... respects overdetermined. Thus, any extended text offers too much information to the researcher to be distilled into a normal academic 'unit' ... The researcher therefore must select what is to be investigated and must focus the research, and the prime method of focus or selection is the research design ... normally each project will require a specific research design. [...] one needs just enough information to confirm or deny the pertinent hypotheses governing one's research ... (2002: 15-6)

Attempting a comprehensive study of all the chapters and their translations in detail is not feasible, especially when it comes to the study of textual-linguistic norms. Therefore, it is essential to limit the length of material for analysis and selecting a number of chapters as representative of the entire ST seems to be the only solution. This limited amount of analysed translational text "should be large enough to be credible in [the] light of the purpose of the exercise but small enough to permit appropriate depth." (Herman, 1999: 69-70). There is also a need to

ensure that selections are representative and that segments selected convey the most characteristics and functions of the ST.

Taking into account the fact that Chick Lit has a solid formula, the first chapters are always the introductory sections, which play a crucial role in this literary genre as these sections are often used to introduce the scene-settings, the plots and the main characters. Therefore, it will be interesting and revealing to analyse these sections from a translational perspective. Moreover, such choices will also allow us to see how authors of a homogeneous genre, but writing at different times, have approached and dealt with similar issues. On the other hand, the lengths of individual chapters are also an important consideration. The length of each chapter of the selected novels varies, ranging from averagely eight pages in most books to about more than twenty pages as in *Never Too Late*. Therefore, it is important that the length of the selected material should be sufficient to provide an overview of the female characters portrayed in the novel. For these reasons, within the three novels: *Watermelon* (1995) by Marian Keyes, *Never Too Late* (1999) by Cathy Kelly and Ahern's *P.S I Love You* (2004), the material selected for analysis will consist of the first fifty pages of each novel as these pages illustrate the most significant features related to the background of the female characters within chosen novels. Despite the fact that such choice of material provides general understanding of the representation of women, it appears to be subjective. There is a need to testify the findings from such selection of material as Tymoczko (2002: 21) argues:

A basic requirement of sound research in any field is replicability ... [one should therefore] test conclusions by ... attempting to replicate results ... by examining other relevant passages of the translations being worked with, by looking at other translations of other texts presenting similar cultural configurations.

Hermans (1999: 67) in his discussion of Toury's descriptive procedures also shares the similar idea that findings from the application of DTS analysis model "should also be subjected to counterchecks using random text samples." Therefore, within the two other novels: *Where Rainbows End* (2004) by Cecelia Ahern and *Sushi for Beginners* (2000) by Marian Keyes, five chapters have been selected based on the principle of random selection. This random choice of text samples from various chapters will provide a more insightful understanding of women's representation in contemporary female popular fiction. The website [www.random.org](http://www.random.org) is thus used for this process in order to provide a purely random selection of chapter numbers between 1 and 50 or 1 and 65.

*Where Rainbows End* consists of 50 chapters and each chapter contains 8 pages on average. The five chapters chosen randomly by the website are chapters 10, 13, 31, 40, 43.

*Sushi for Beginners* has 65 chapters and each chapter contains 10 pages on average. The five chapters chosen randomly by the website are chapters 1, 20, 35, 50, 54.

A detailed comparison of the entire source textual content of each such chapter and its corresponding target text renderings, will be later conducted, in order to

gather information on how translational norms, namely textual-linguistic norms work. This was based on Toury's (1995) methodology of comparing what he terms *replaced and replacing segments* of text. These terms are employed by Toury to refer to the source text samples analysed, together with their corresponding, equivalent textual items in translation.

For both the motivated choice and the random choice, the extracted source text samples (replaced segments) dealing with themes related to the 4 virtues of women namely diligence, self-representation, speech and courtesy together with their corresponding samples in the target texts (replacing segments), will constitute a bilingual parallel corpus for the subsequent analysis. It should be noted that the corpus within the context of this research is theme-based and related to gender-behaviour norms, therefore, the translation can not be observed from lexical or grammatical level. Instead it should be examined from social and cultural contexts in which translation are produced. One would suggest analysing the representation of women in the five selected novels separately and comparing them one to another. However, I would argue that due to the formulaic nature of contemporary female popular fiction, as well as the fact all the novels are written by Irish writers, the approach of this research would provide a more general picture of how women are represented in Irish Chick Lit. Within these chosen pages and chapters mentioned above, a qualitative approach will be applied in order to investigate various aspects of both source and target texts. A detailed comparison of the

source textual material and its Vietnamese renderings will be conducted so research objectives of examining the representation of women in Vietnamese translation.

#### **4.5 Analysis of Translation Practice**

The subsequent analysis will consist of the following points:

First of all, it will look at the translation of book covers and novels' titles. As has been argued in the previous chapter, paratextual elements such as book covers and titles are treated in this research as reflecting translational norms and as a form of representation. These elements are part of what Toury names matricial norms. It is remarkable to mention that the focus of the analysis of book covers will be on the front cover only since the back covers are often dedicated to a short summary of the content of the books. Additionally, it is noted that while the names or logos of the publishing houses is provided on the front covers of the Vietnamese translations, they appear in the back covers of Chick Lick novels published in English speaking countries. One may argue that Chick Lit is published by only a certain number of publishing houses in English speaking countries and to some extents it reveals certain information about women, the case is not applicable for the Vietnamese market because these novels might be published by all publishing houses, both public and private, depends on their marketing strategies at certain time. For this reason, only the front page will be taken into consideration for



analysis. The analysis of these elements will provide a more in-depth understanding of how the genre of contemporary female popular fiction and its visual representations are recreated in a Vietnamese target market and how the genre is marketed to the target readers.

After the analysis of paratextual elements, the study will investigate the translation of cultural references. It is significant to highlight that not all the cultural references found in the texts will be used because that would go beyond the scope of this research. The study will take into consideration only cultural references which play a crucial role in defining the identity of a female character or in representing a certain feature of these protagonists. The analysis of cultural references aims at revealing various methods which the translators chose to apply while rendering these elements.

Next, the chapter moves on to the analysis of the translation of extracts related to female characters' representation. These extracts are chosen based on four virtues themes: diligence, self-representation, speech and courtesy. As has been discussed previously in chapter 2, a thousand year of Chinese colonization and the associated ideology of Confucianism have had profound influence on Vietnamese society's attitudes towards women. Vietnam, which used to be a matrilineal and matriarchal society in ancient times, has turned into a male-dominated society. It is still a prevailing belief in Vietnam that women are supposed to follow a system of concepts and virtues called the Three Submissions

and the Four Virtues. The Three Submissions are: submission to their fathers before marriage, to their husbands when married, and to their oldest son after their husbands die. The Four Virtues include diligence, self-representation, speech, and courtesy. In modern Vietnam, while the Three Submissions are now seen as old-fashioned and oppressive towards women, the Four Virtues still enjoy remarkable longevity of influence and women are still judged according to these virtues. Therefore, the representation of women in Vietnamese translation will be studied from the viewpoint of these Four Virtues. This comparative analysis will provide an insight into how women are represented in Vietnamese translation and will help gain information on the translation of textual-linguistics norms.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the methodology to be used in this dissertation. It is situated within the domain of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and it covers several points in order to fully examine the translated representations of Irish women in contemporary female popular fiction as rendered from English into Vietnamese.. The coming chapter will be concerned with translation analysis.

## **Part III:**

## **Analysis**

## **Chapter Five**

### **Translation Analysis**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into several sections. The first section investigates how certain paratextual elements, namely book covers and titles of certain contemporary female popular fiction have been translated into Vietnamese. The second section observes how cultural references have been rendered and how the representation of women, which has been built on these cultural references, may have shifted in the Vietnamese translation. The next section conducts a comparative analysis of the representation of women in five chosen texts mentioned in the methodology chapter of this thesis. It will first investigate how the female characters are represented in the Vietnamese translation from the viewpoint of the four virtues of womanhood in Vietnamese culture.

#### **5.1 Translation of Paratextuality**

##### **5.1.1 Translation of Book Covers and Titles**

Among several authors chosen for this research, Cathy Kelly is the author who was first translated into Vietnamese. Her novel *Never Too Late* (1999) was translated into Vietnamese in 2003, a few years before the wave of contemporary female popular fiction appeared in Vietnam in 2009.

On the covers of both the first and second editions (see Figs. 1 and 2), Cathy Kelly is marketed as “the number one bestseller” at the top of the novel’s

covers. Her name is printed in a similar size to that of the novel's title. On one cover, white and dark green are used as the main colours, while on the other, light blue and pink dominate the design. Both covers use a picture of models as part of their illustrations. On the second edition cover, it is a full-body picture of a woman in a summer dress smiling happily, while on the first cover, there is a close-up portrait of a woman in a white sweater who is also smiling. One striking difference between the two is that the woman in the first edition is covered up to her neckline in a simple white sweater and has a slightly tousled haircut, which gives her a natural, more 'wholesome' look, while the woman in the second edition is wearing a flowing, sleeveless, low-cut dress. On the second edition cover, the intensifier 'too' in the title is italicised and there is an additional line under the title that reads "for three women to change their lives forever", which is intended to be a concise summary of the theme of the novel for the potential readers. Judging from the whole cover, it may be assumed that the first edition cover indicates only that the novel is a work of romantic fiction telling stories of women and for women, while the second edition cover contains all the features necessary to indicate that the book of Cathy Kelly is a product of contemporary female popular fiction with its light blue, mostly pink dominated colours.

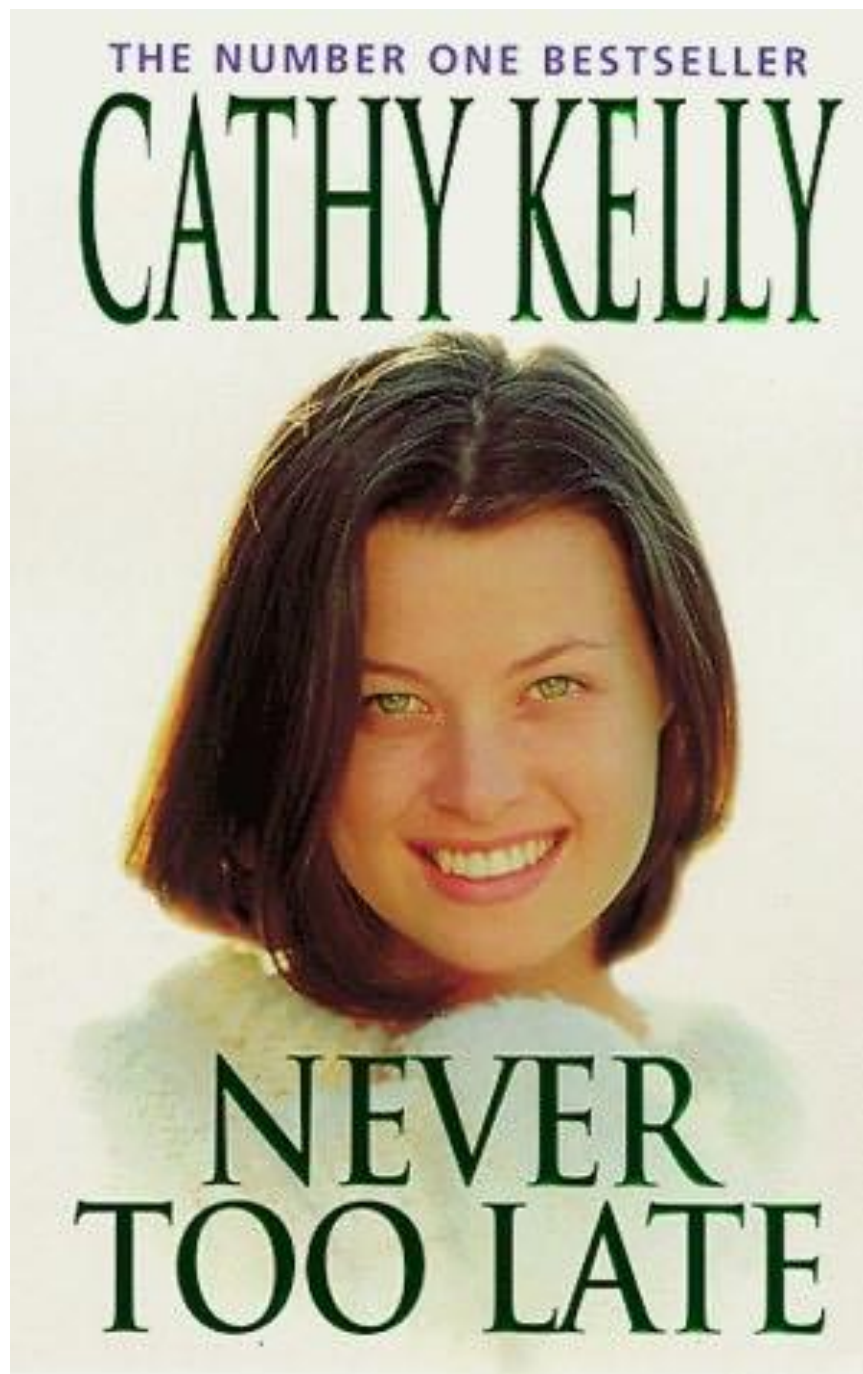


Fig 1: *Never Too Late* book cover (first edition)

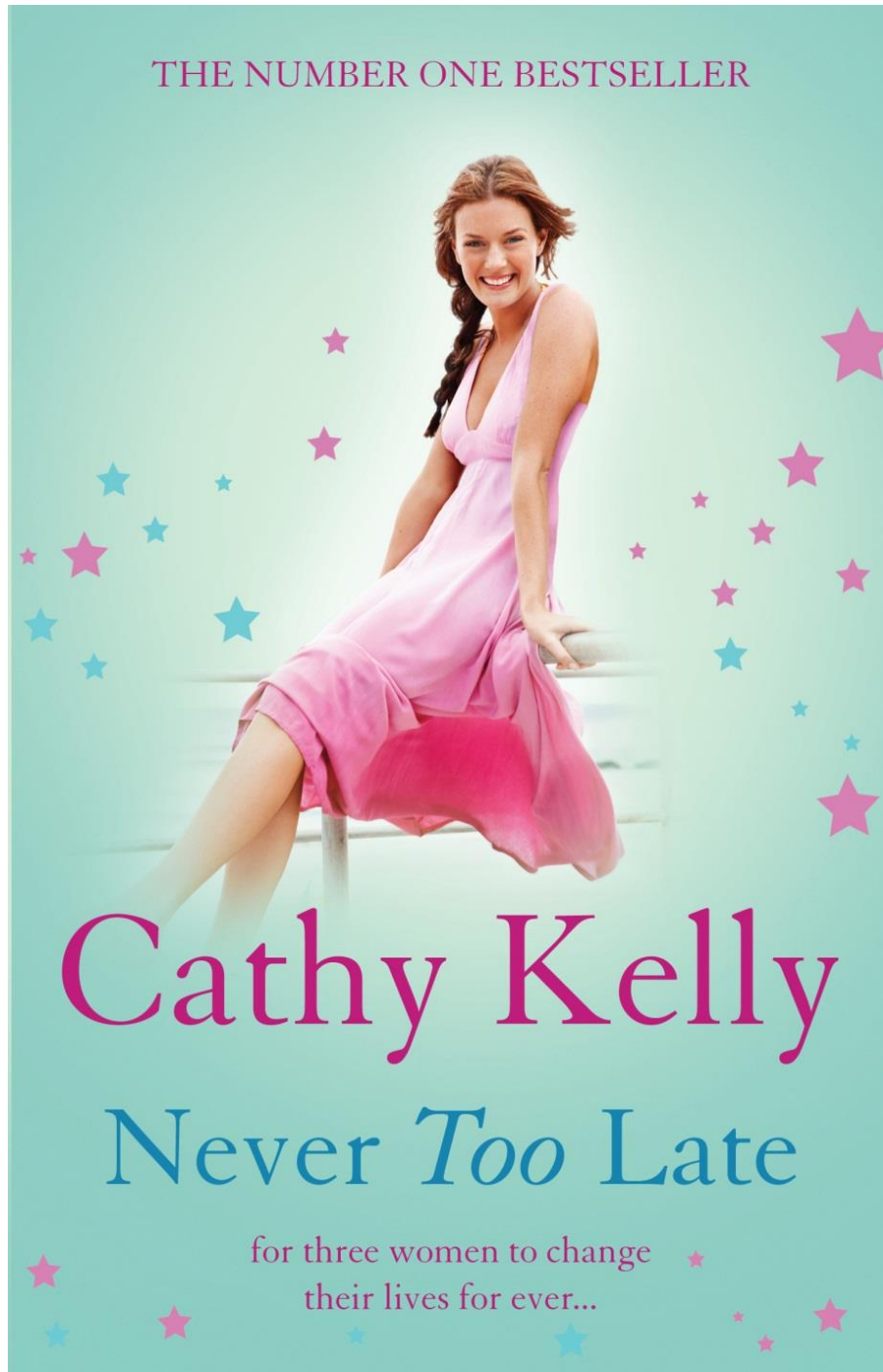


Fig 2: *Never Too Late* book cover (second edition)

Cathy Kelly's novel was translated and published in Vietnam in 2003 by the Women's Publishing House, a public owned publisher in Vietnam and it belongs to The Vietnamese Women Union and it publishes both fiction and non-fiction genres related to women's issues. The author's name, appearing in a light pink background, is in significantly bigger letter size than the title of the novel, which is directly translated into Vietnamese. The English title also appears on the cover with a misspelling of "never". The logo of the publishing house also appears at the bottom of the cover. It can be explained by a law of publishing in Vietnam, which regulates in article 26 of the relevant statutes that *"On the front cover, there shall be recorded the name of the book; the name of the author; the name of the publishing house or of the body or organization with the publishing permit; and the number of the series."* (Law of Publishing of Vietnam 2001 – my translation)

The usage of an illustration of sunset/sunrise (which is hard to decipher from the cover), together with the title, could be interpreted as a message to the future reader that it is never too late to recognize that one can always make a new start in life, or that there is always light, metaphorically speaking, at the end of a dark tunnel (see Fig. 3 below)



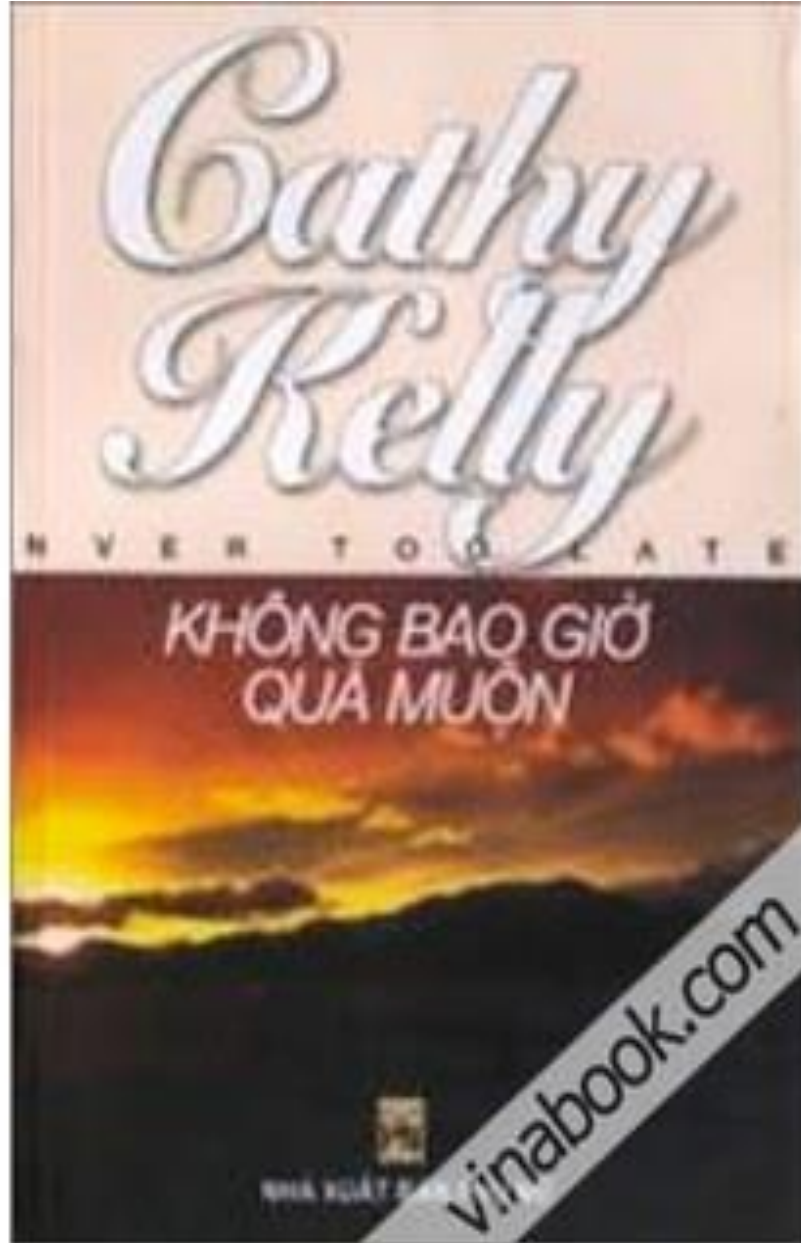


Fig 3: *Never Too Late* book cover in Vietnam

Judging from the cover, it can be concluded that the covers in both markets signal explicitly that this is a book about women and for women. It is also

interesting to see that the English title is retained (albeit misspelt) in Vietnamese cover, which is a sign that shows the prestige of the English language in contemporary Vietnamese culture.

Let us now discuss *Watermelon*, which was Marian Keyes' first novel. It was published in 1995 and it has been translated into twenty- five languages, including Vietnamese in 2010 (Keyes 2013).

On the covers, as published in English speaking markets, it can be observed how important the brand of an author is. Marian Keyes is marketed as a “No. 1 bestselling author” and her name is printed in even bigger, bolder letters than the title of the novel. On the original cover, a light red colour is used. In the centre of the cover page, there is an illustration of a stork, a creature which is usually dedicated to Juno - the goddess of marriage and married women and which is considered as a “good omen” and “bearer of babies” in the cultures of several European countries (Roque, 2009: 101). However, instead of carrying a baby, the stork in the illustration carries a watermelon, which also is the title of the Marian Keyes's work. Such an illustration stimulates the readers' curiosity to read the book to find out what the significance of this image of the watermelon might be.

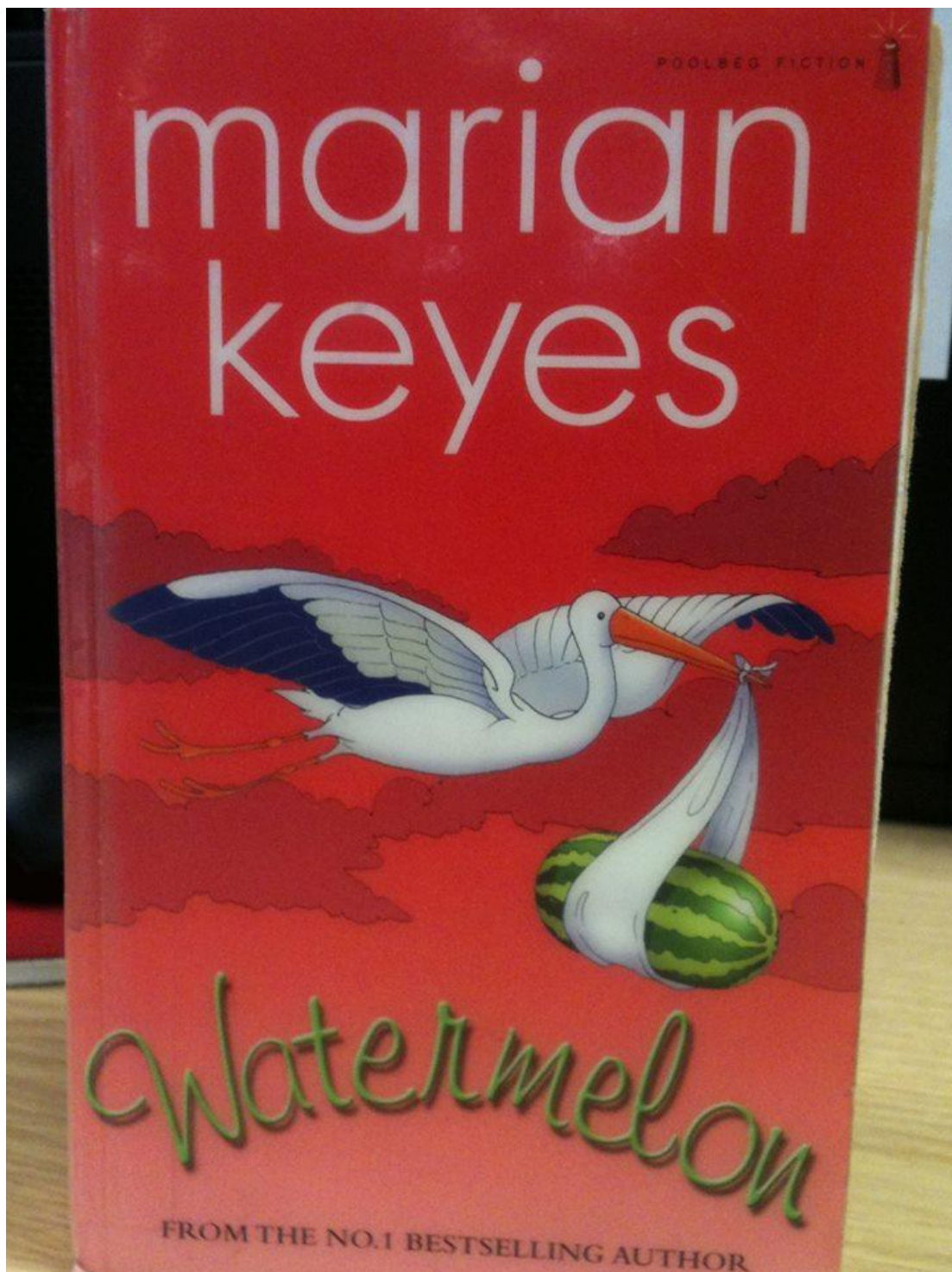


Figure 4: *Watermelon* book cover (original)

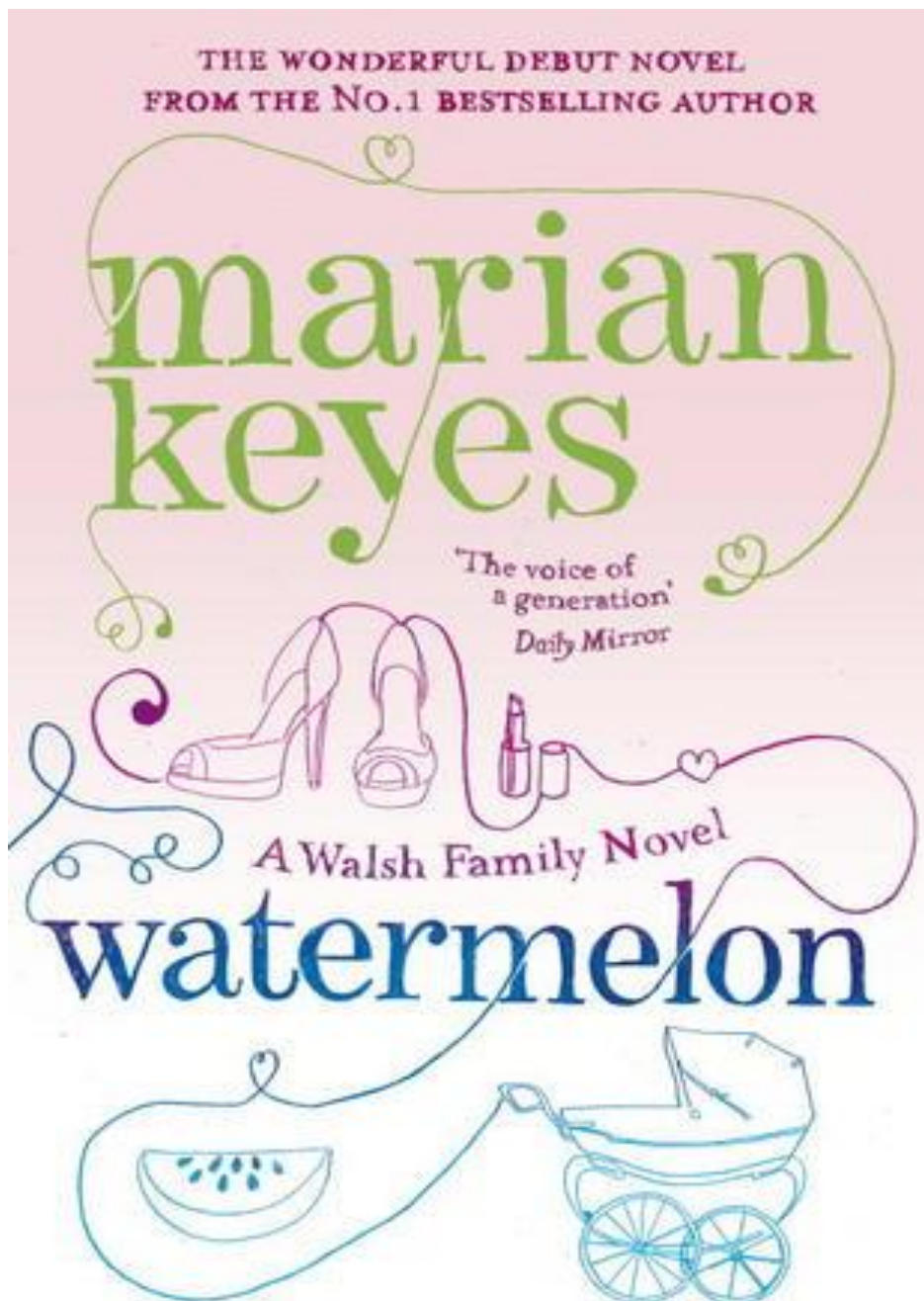


Figure 5: *Watermelon* book cover (edition)

On the edition UK cover, light pink is used as the main colour. Keyes is marketed not only as a bestselling author but also as “the voice of a generation” according to Daily Mirror. Such review on the front cover page can be interpreted as a hint to indicate this book is a great source of entertainment for women. The illustration includes – in addition to a watermelon - a pair of high heels, a lipstick, some heart shapes and a pram, all of which directly evoke issues relevant to female readers. According to Feral (2009), cartoons of female silhouettes on Chick Lit covers draw attention to the heroine’s ordinary and identifiable nature: she could be any woman, including the female reader herself (Feral 2009: 159). There is also a line which reads “A Walsh Family Novel”, which aims at revealing that the book is also an episode of the Walsh series, since in all novels by Keyes, the main characters always have Walsh as their surname.



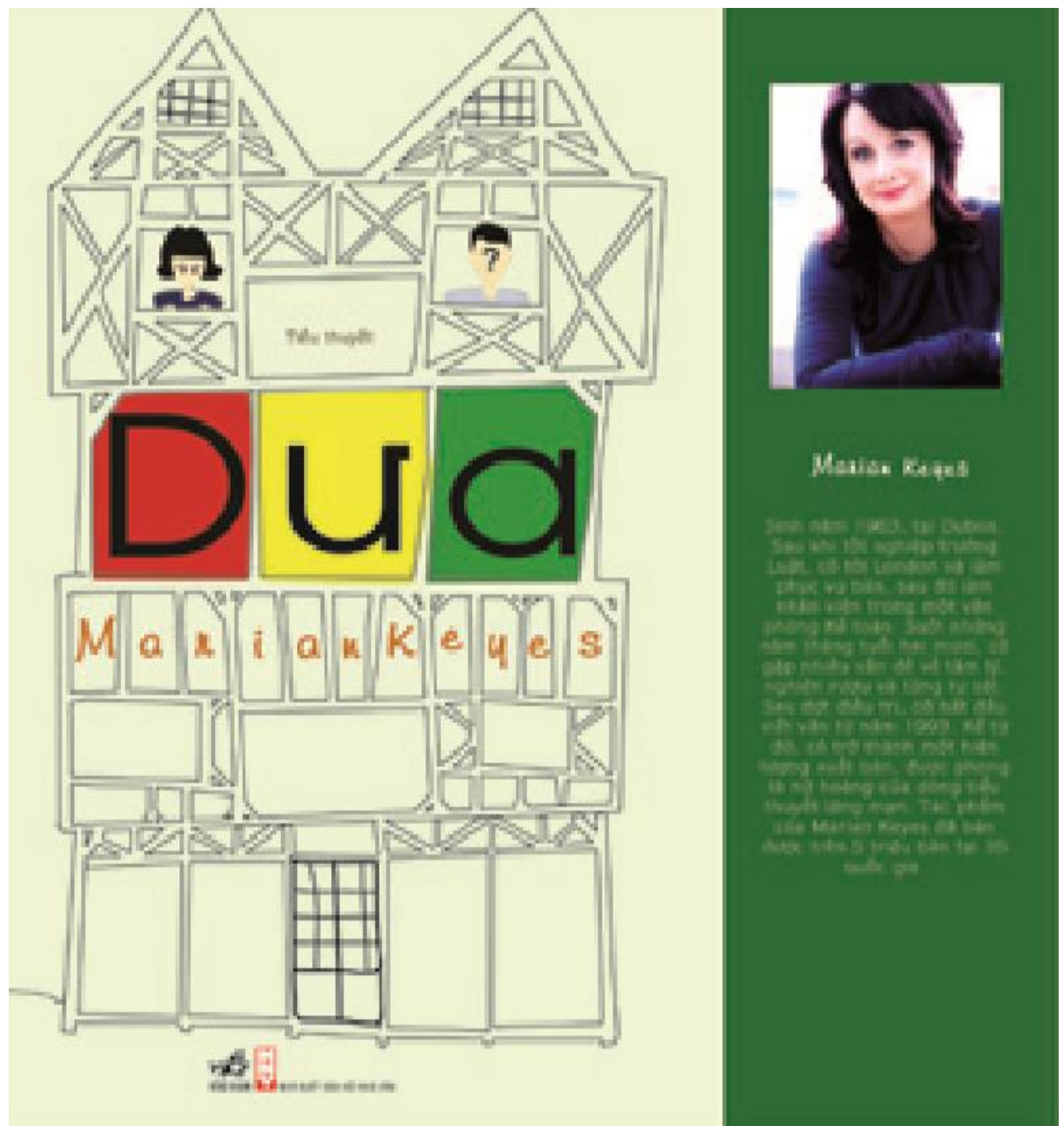


Fig 6: *Watermelon* book cover in Vietnam

In the Vietnamese version, a house with a contemporary architectural design is used as the main theme for the illustration. This may indicate an intention of marketing this new genre of contemporary female popular fiction as novels

primarily intended for the segment of urban female readers. While on the English speaking market covers, there are some images, which are allusions to a newly born baby, there is no such image on the Vietnamese cover; instead, there is a painting of a woman, and a man with a question mark on his face, which could suggest that the work is about a woman and her quest to find “Mr. Right”. It is also noticeable that the status of the author changes when she is translated: while in the English speaking countries, Keyes is well-known as a leading brand name of the genre of contemporary female popular fiction, and her name appears in even bigger print than the title, on the Vietnamese cover her name appears in smaller characters than the title, which may indicate that Vietnamese readers are more likely to be attracted by titles rather than by a specific author. It is interesting to note here that while in 2003, Cathy Kelly’s name appeared much bigger on the cover than Keyes’ name in 2010. A possible explanation might be due to the fact that translated books were rare in Vietnam in 2003 so the publishing house wanted to impress the readers with a book by a foreign author. Another explanation may be that the illustrators of the covers did it unintentionally, and both of these hypotheses are impossible to confirm since no interviews could be conducted. It is also noted that the Vietnamese cover also includes an inside front flap providing a short biography of Marian Keyes and some reviews, which aim to attract audiences by means of two main ideas: that Marian Keyes is the Queen of Chick Lit and that the novel is extraordinarily romantic, lightweight and feminine.

As for the title, it may sound somewhat exotic and exciting to Irish readers, because a watermelon is a tropical fruit which is not popular in Ireland. Therefore, it is likely to attract readers' attention and curiosity. In my interpretation, the title can be seen as Keyes' metaphor about her main character's story. Claire feels that her life is ruined when she is left with her newly-born baby and her husband wants to divorce, but in fact her life is not over and Claire recovers with time, thanks to the support of her family and friends. Claire's situation is just like that of a watermelon, which looks green from the outside but is red inside, so Keyes' message is that a woman can be strong enough to get through the toughest of situations. On the other hand, as can be seen from the illustration on the Irish cover, the title could be a description of a woman who has recently given birth. The Vietnamese translation of the title is "*Dua*" (melon - my back translation). The translation of the title as melon may not aid Vietnamese readers' understanding of the iconic and symbolic meaning of the original title, since melon is a common fruit and sounds very general to Vietnamese readers. It can be seen here that culture has a certain effect on the understanding of book titles.

The third book *Sushi for Beginners* is another popular novel by Marian Keyes, which was first published in 2000. Up to now, it has been translated into approximately thirty languages, including Vietnamese (Keyes 2013).

As regards its title, the English immediately recalls a series of various books because the model: A Noun + for beginners appears in several self- help books, such as *36 Cooking Recipes for Beginners*, *Computer for Beginners*, *Yoga for*



*Beginners*, which targets readers who want to learn new skills on their own. Moreover, the sushi component in the title of the novel appears exotic to most Irish readers since Japanese food was not popular in Ireland at the time when the novel was first published. Therefore, in my interpretation, Keyes's intention is not only to attract readers with her book's title but also to provide her potential readers with some advice on how to help themselves in difficult and unfamiliar cases. This title is directly translated into Vietnamese, and the title sounds very provocative in terms of attracting an audience's attention because, despite the fact that Vietnam and Japan are both Asian countries, there are huge differences between the two countries in terms of culture, tradition and cuisine. Therefore, a Western book with an Asian feature in the title may stimulate readers' curiosity and willingness to read it. However, it is important to notice that the genre of self-help book is not popular in Vietnam so it can be said that the target audience may not get the author's intention in the translation of the novel's title.

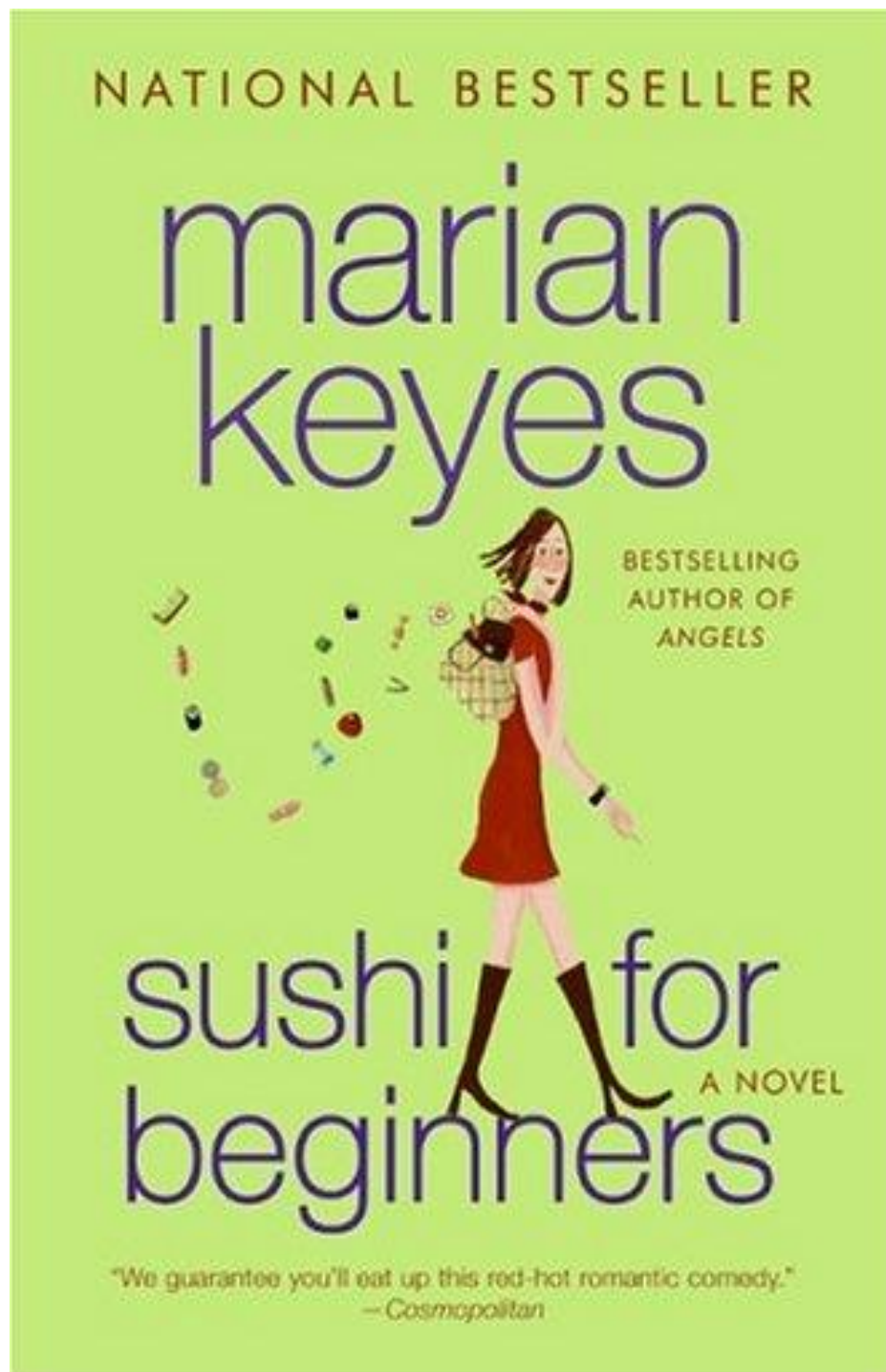


Fig 7: *Sushi for Beginners* book cover for Irish market

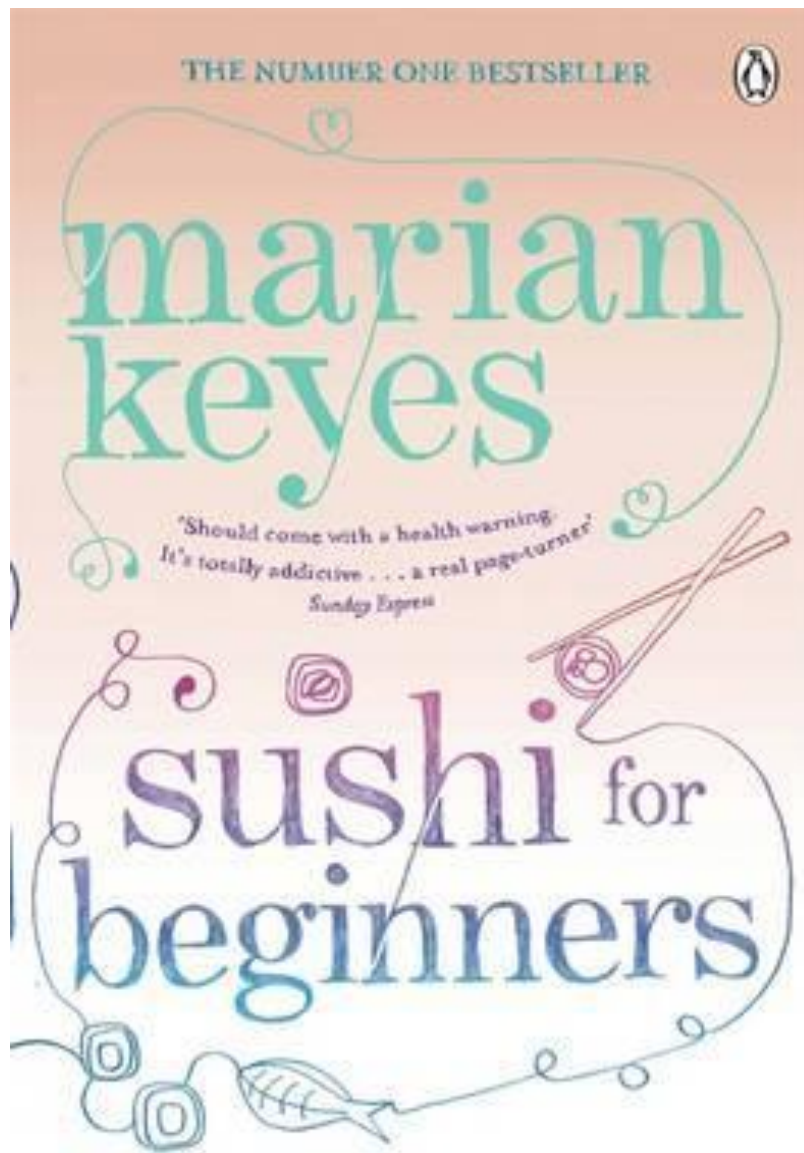


Fig 8: *Sushi for Beginners* book cover for UK market

Both covers for English speaking markets are dominated by light-tone colours, green and pink respectively. On the Irish cover, Keyes is marketed as “national bestseller” while on the UK cover, she is “the number one bestseller”.

Both covers have different shapes of sushi as illustrations and contain reviews from an Irish woman magazine or a British newspaper to make the novel seem more enticing to readers. The visibility of reviews on book covers reinforces the close connection between contemporary female popular fiction and other forms of popular culture products. In addition, it can be seen as a hint for target readers of the book. It is remarkable that the UK cover of *Sushi for Beginners* is reminiscent of the cover of *Watermelon*, which seems to indicate an intention on the part of the relevant publishing houses to create a familiar feel for readers when they see books written by Keyes. The message on the Irish cover may indicate that the book is for a young and trendy generation of women, due to a cartoon-like drawing of a fashionable girl in a red dress and on high-heel boots appearing on the cover.



Fig 9: *Sushi for Beginners* book cover in Vietnam

The Vietnamese cover also has a very bright tone, but instead of pink and blue, it is a different shade of yellow. Judging by the clothes of the three figures appearing on the cover, it can be postulated that the publishing house wished to target various audiences, which may include working women, housewives or recent female graduates from universities, because in the common perception of Vietnamese people, knee length black skirts and high heels are associated with

female professionals, aprons are for housewives and jeans are mostly worn by students. Keyes's name appears in bigger typeface in comparison with her name on the Vietnamese translation of *Watermelon*, but it is still not as large as the novel's title. It is noteworthy that the review from the *Sunday Express* reads "should come with a health warning. It's too addictive...a real page turner" is used on both the UK cover and the Vietnamese one. This can be seen as a marketing strategy on the part of the publishing houses to arouse readers' curiosity about this particular work of fiction. Also the use of blurbs from Sunday Express on the Vietnamese cover is interesting as it appears as a means of attracting audience while the number of Vietnamese people who knows about Sunday Express would be limited. Such appearance of foreign names on the cover can be seen as a marketing strategy of publishing houses in Vietnam aiming to persuade readers that they are going to read a book that is internationally recognized.

Let now examine the case of Cecelia Ahern's *P.S I Love You*. The title is translated into Vietnamese as *Sức mạnh tình yêu* (The power of love- my back translation). The original title in pink letters and cover hint that the novel is centered round the theme of love letters, because P.S or Post Scriptum is normally used at the end of a letter and the illustration on the book cover as published in Ireland also contains a number of envelopes decorated with ribbons and flowers. There is also a line reading "A Richard and Judy Summer Read selection". Richard and Judy are two famous presenters in the United Kingdom and their

Book Club was a show that introduced new books and new authors. *P.S I Love You* was Ahern's first book so a line of introduction from a popular show might be seen as a sign of persuading readers to buy the book. It is also worth mentioning that the cover used in the thesis is the cover of the original edition as one may find several covers of this book due to a number of reprints.



Fig 10: *P.S I Love You* original book cover

The Vietnamese edition contains a photograph of Hilary Swank and Gerard Butler, who are the two main actors in the film adaptation of the novel, with a red line reading *P.S I Love You*. This cover is, in fact, the poster of the movie which was shown in Vietnamese cinema.



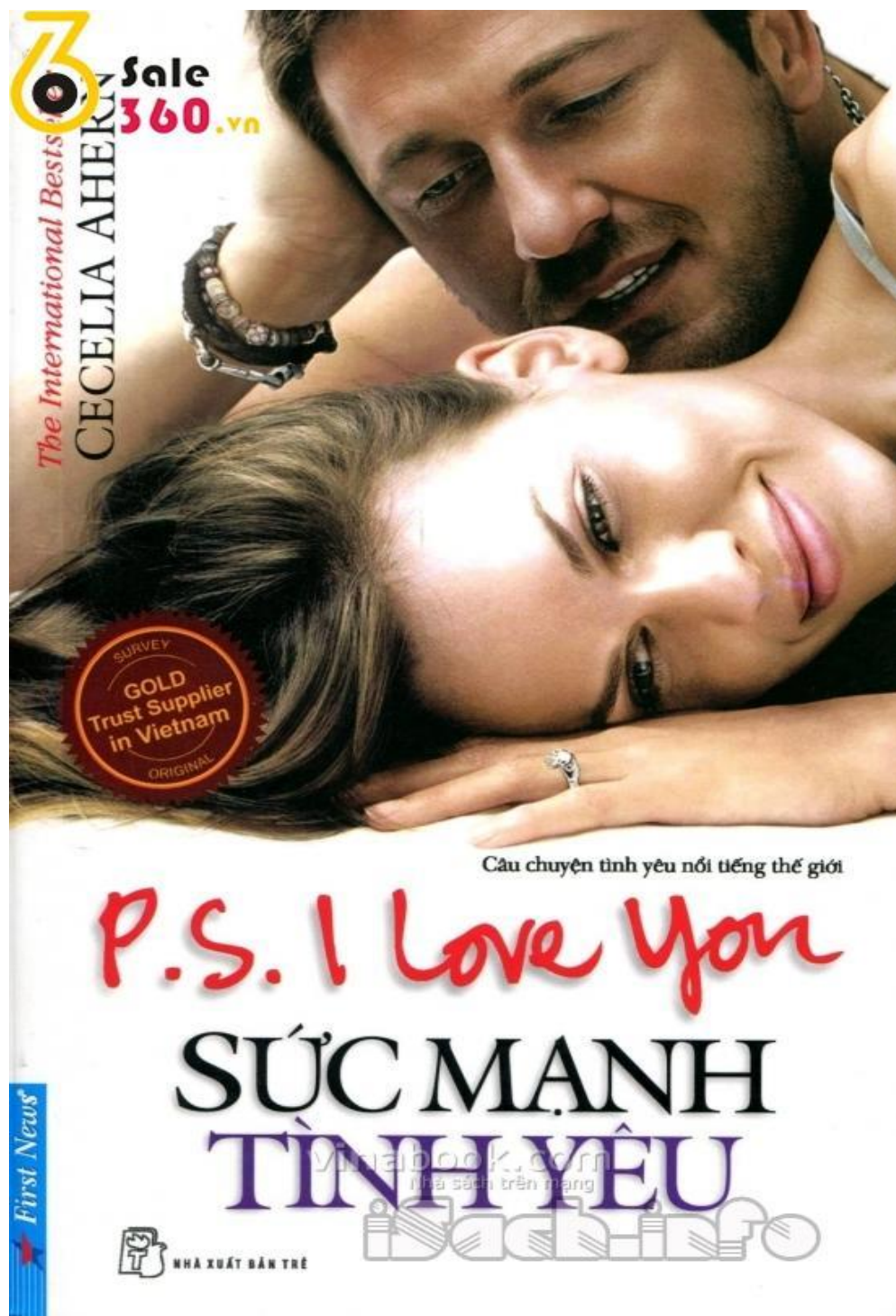


Fig 11: *P.S I Love You* book cover in Vietnam

The translation was published after the success of the film in Vietnam, so a shot from the film undoubtedly helped to attract readers. It is also noticeable that on the Vietnamese cover there is a line reading “Một câu chuyện tình yêu nổi tiếng thế giới” (a worldwide famous love story – my back translation) above the English title.

Cecelia Ahern is marketed as an international bestseller in both Vietnamese and Irish-UK markets. However, in the Irish and UK publications, the author’s name is placed in the centre of the cover and in pink letters, which indicate the celebrity status of Cecelia Ahern as an extremely popular contemporary female popular fiction writer, and also gives readers a signal that this book is primarily, if not exclusively, intended for female readers. Ahern’s name on the Vietnamese cover appears less significant in comparison to the Irish version and the name and the logo of the publishing house are also visible on the cover. In terms of colour, the main tone of the Irish cover is pink, baby blue and white, which have been traditionally perceived as feminine symbols and thus, intended for female readers. The Vietnamese cover is a poster from a movie in order to bring a familiar feel to Vietnamese readers. Another difference between the two covers lies in the back cover of the two books. On the back cover of the Vietnamese version, there is only a summary of the plot of the novel, while on the Irish cover, as well as the summary; there are extracts from several reviews which appeared in *Glamour*, the *Irish Times* and *Company*. It is also noticeable that the original novel consisted of fifty-one chapters, plus an epilogue. The translation contains only twenty-two

chapters and there is no epilogue. Moreover, an introduction summarising the content and theme of the novel, as well as providing a brief biography of Cecelia Ahern and information about the success the novel and the movies worldwide, has been added. The translation is printed in size of 13x20.5cm typeface size and this is almost the same size as the original. Therefore, at first glance, it can be assumed that several passages from the source text have been omitted from the target text. A possible explanation is that this book was published in Vietnam after the success of the film adapted from it so the publishing house may have wanted to keep the content of the book close to the film.

Let now look at another book of Ahern.

*Where Rainbows End* is another novel by Ahern that has been translated into Vietnamese. The novel was published for the Irish and UK markets in 2004, and, in 2010 its Vietnamese translation was introduced to Vietnamese readers.

The English version has the same book cover in both the Irish and UK markets.

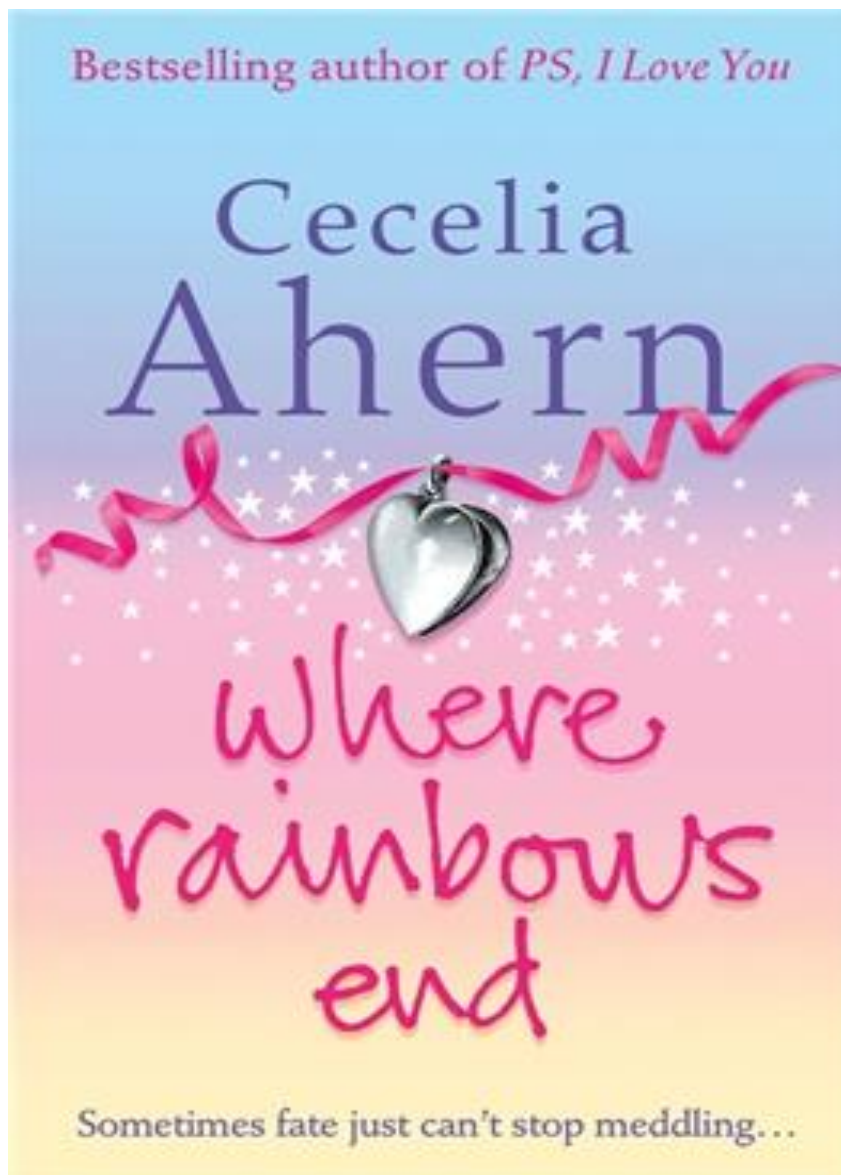


Fig 12: *Where Rainbows End* book cover in Ireland and UK

It can be easily noticed that the cover of this novel is strikingly similar to Ahern's first book *P.S I Love You*, in terms of its light and feminine colours, as well as the simplicity of its illustration. The title, the heart and the line at the bottom of the cover reading "sometimes fate just can't stop meddling..."

automatically give potential readers a hint that this is a complicated love story. The line at the top of the cover reading “best-selling author of *PS I Love You*” reminds the audience of Ahern’s first novel. This may also be explained by the fact that the author is a daughter of a former Taoiseach of Ireland so her name is perhaps a sign of her already existing celebrity status. Such visual design of the writer’s surname affirms the observation of Cain (2000: 164) that “The press and publishers use the figure of the author to define markets and publicise texts.” In the market of female contemporary popular fiction, the better known an author is, the higher the sale figures her book can achieve, as Cain (2000: 164) observes: “successful writers are not necessarily the best, but the best marketed”.

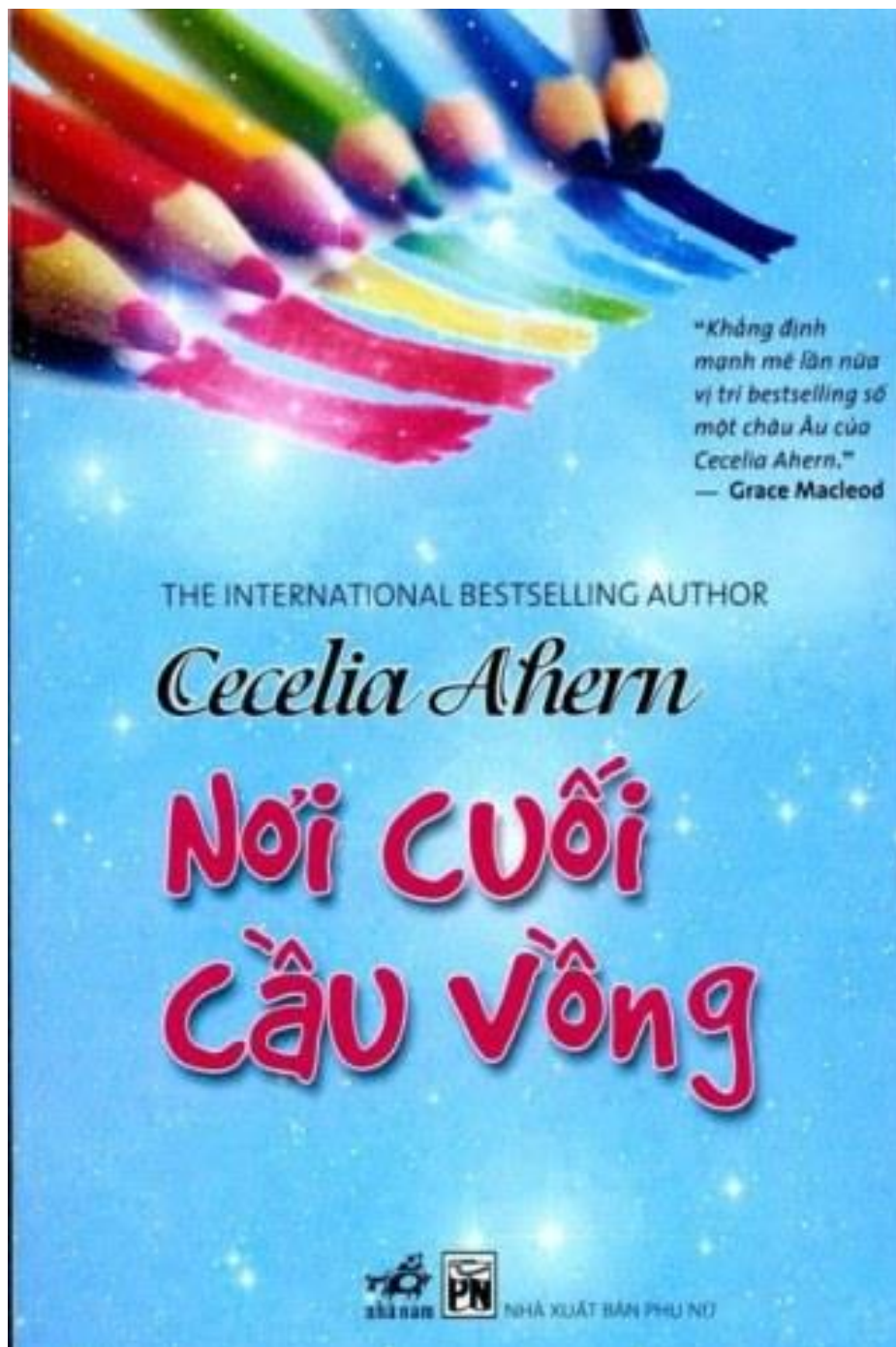


Fig 13: *Where Rainbows End* book cover in Vietnam

The title of the book has been translated directly into Vietnamese and sounds quite attractive to potential readers, as it can be said to stimulate their curiosity to find out precisely “where rainbows end” and what the meaning of this intriguing title might be. It is remarkable that while in English speaking culture it is believed that the end of the rainbow is where a crock of gold can be found, while such myth does not exist in Vietnamese. Therefore, a loss of the title’s meaning can be seen in Vietnamese translation. It may be assumed that the translator may not have been aware of or had an understanding of this saying in English culture. In terms of the book cover, the idea of presenting this novel as a saccharine, light reading genre looks remarkably similar to the Irish and UK cover due to its use of light colours. The image of a rainbow is illustrated by the arrangement of seven pencils of different colours in a sequence. The author’s name looks smaller in size in comparison to that of the title. Interestingly, there is an extract from a review by Grace Macleod, who is not even a well-known name as a book reviewer in English speaking countries: “Strongly affirms the number one bestselling position in Europe of Cecelia Ahern (my translation)” and a line reading “the international bestselling author” over Ahern’s name. An effort to market Ahern as a popular and famous Western writer can be clearly discerned from such reviews, and it can be concluded that the publisher in Vietnam also wanted to assure potential readers that they are about to read a work by a high-quality author. In order to strengthen such arguments, a logo and the name of a well-know publishing house in Vietnam is also visible on the cover.

### **5.1.2 Conclusion**

As has been argued in the previous chapter, the paratextual material is the visual representation of a female character in a novel and the analysis of this material will help to provide a more insightful and detailed understanding of the representation of women in Chick Lit. The analysis, in fact, has revealed some interesting results.

First of all, the analysis of the paratextual material of both the source and target texts reveals that the covers of works of Irish Chick Lit typically tend to be characterised by simple illustrations of female accessories. These simple designs represent a type of paratextuality, which mainly aims at drawing the future audience's attention to the ordinariness and an insight into their worlds of the novels' heroines. It can be said that this is a way of creating a feeling of familiarity for readers, as this genre is intended to tell stories of ordinary women and their ordinary lives. For this reason, the covers of contemporary female popular fiction tend to both reflect and reinforce the idea of the genre that any female reader can find a part of herself in this kind of novel, and thus identify closely with it.

Secondly, the bright, colourful covers of the Vietnamese translations, to some extent, echo the Irish and UK covers. The Vietnamese publishing houses appear to have made an effort to establish a connection between the Vietnamese translations and the current existing trend of Chick Lit. However, there are some differences in the way the source and target texts have been marketed. In Ireland



and the UK, it is the names of the authors that are marketed on the covers, while the publishing houses' name and logos, if they appear, are in very small typeface and almost unnoticeable. In Vietnam, the focus is more on the titles, and the names of the authors play a less important role. This difference can be explained by the cultural distance between the two cultures. The position of an author, as well as her celebrity status, is changed when she is translated from one culture to another. In other words, the name of an author can be seen as a cultural reference and the fact that she is a popular writer in one culture can be translated, but how and why she is so well-liked may not be understood by a reading audience within a different culture. It is also remarkable that there are certain English phrases, either the original title or a line which read "the international bestseller", appear on the covers of the translated fiction. This can be seen either as a reflection of the prestigious status of English language in Vietnam or as a reminder to tell the reader that the book is a translation

The analysis of the translations of the titles of the contemporary female popular fiction discussed has revealed that different approaches are often employed to carry out translation:

- The source titles are translated literally into the target texts: (*Never Too Late*, *Sushi for Beginners*, *Where Rainbows End*), or

- The original title is normalised in the translated version (*Watermelon* → *Melon*), or
- The original title is completely changed (*P.S I Love You* → *The Power of Love*)

The analysis translation of the titles or the matricial norms has revealed that in terms of carrying the function of giving information about the book and attracting potential audience' attention, the Vietnamese translation of the titles of five chosen books has shared the similar function with the original titles. The differences between original and translation are made in order to make the book marketable to the audience. Together with the use of bright colors on book covers, it can be said that both the titles and book covers have hinted that these translated books are targeted at young women readers. Presenting book covers in such way indicates that readers of Chick Lit are a generation of young and fashionable women.

## **5.2 Translation of Cultural References**

In order to examine the representation of Chick Lit's heroines in Vietnamese translated texts, the translation of cultural references related to the female characters should thus also be investigated. As has already been mentioned from the first chapter onwards, the focus of this research is on the representation of women in Vietnamese translation; therefore, an in-depth analysis of all cultural

references appearing in the original texts is beyond the scope of this research. The following analysis of the translation of cultural references will be applied only to those examples in which cultural references helps to show a part of the female character 's identity or to represent a certain feature of female characters. Cultural references can appear in various forms, from a proper name to certain idioms and expressions, from slang to various styles of swearing, which have specific cultural meaning, therefore this analysis will not divide these cultural references into distinct categories, instead they will be classified according to methods of renderings that have been mentioned in section 4.1.

### 5.2.1 Transference

According to Newmark (1988:81), transference (*emprunt*, loan word, transcription) is the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure. This is used to show respect for the SL country's culture and when certain cultural references are known internationally. This following section will investigate various examples of transference in Vietnamese translation.

**ST:** For a couple of years I'd been off that horrible merry-go-round of trying to meet the right man, finding out that he read **Jeffrey Archer**.(Keyes, 2003: 37)

**TT:** Đã vài năm nay tôi không còn phải cố truy tìm người đàn ông của đời mình để rồi phát hiện ra hán gối đầu giường sách của Jeffrey Archer (Keyes, 2010: 33)  
[For a few years I haven't had to try to find the man of my life just to discover that he had books by Jeffrey Archer in bed]

**ST:** I'll see your **Hunter S. Thompson** and I'll raise you a **Jay McInerney**. (Keyes, 2003: 10)

**TT:** Vậy là anh biết Hunter S. Thompson, thế thì tôi nói chuyện ông Jay McInerney cho anh nghe nhé. (Keyes, 2010: 14)  
[So you know Hunter S. Thompson, so I will talk to you about Jay McInerney]

The first example mentions Jeffrey Archer, a British writer and former politician. He was known as a man who “lied his way to top” and he was involved in several scandals, including telling lies during his 1987 libel action (Telegraph, 2001: Online). The second example includes the name of two contemporary American writers. Thompson is known as the creator of Gonzo journalism, which was considered to be a major part of the New Journalism literary movement of the 1960s and 1970s; and Jay McInerney belongs to a group of young, East-coast American authors, who are labelled as a literary “Brat Pack” for their young, iconoclastic and fresh contributions to American literature, in the 2005 September/October issue of *Pages* magazine. The usage of several authors’ names in these examples illustrates the literary and well-read background of Claire, who, as stated previously, has a degree in English literature. She is knowledgeable about different types of contemporary authors. Therefore, a man who reads Jeffrey Archer may appear as either a man with no taste, as this author is a popular writer of mass market fiction, or a morally dubious man because of Jeffrey Archer’s unethical political activities, while a man who reads Thompson and McInerney can be seen as a well-educated one. Both examples are translated directly into Vietnamese without any footnotes to provide explanations for readers about the three writers mentioned here, which to some extent may influence the perception

by Vietnamese readers of the main character. Neither of the two American writers has ever been translated into Vietnamese, while Jeffrey Archer is marketed in Vietnam only as an author of bestselling books; therefore the implied symbolism of a man reading Jeffrey Archer may not make much sense to Vietnamese readers. It is still almost unknown to most Vietnamese readers that Archer was a politician and a person who spent time in prison for perjury and other criminal offences. Besides, Vietnamese readers may not know about the status of Archer in the English and American literary system so the symbolism of Archer as a deceitful man is possibly lost in translation, as this source- culture-based allusion, when carried across intact as in this case to the Vietnamese target culture and language does not contain a similar connotation in the target culture. The usage of these references reveals the heroine's well-read background, as well as her perception of literature. She appears in the English context as a well-educated person and her concept of an ideal man is created to a certain extent on the basis of certain figures of contemporary literature. The transference of these names into Vietnamese does not fully represent this feature of the heroine to Vietnamese readers.

**ST:** She'd already read this month's **Elle, Red, New Woman, Company, Cosmo, Marie Claire, Vogue, Tatler**, and the Irish magazines that she'd be competing against. She could read a book, she supposed. If she had one. Or a newspaper, except newspapers were so boring and depressing. (Keyes, 2004: 38)

**TT:** cô đã đọc hết đồng tập chí Elle, Red, New Woman, Company, Cosmo, Marie Claire, Vouge, Tatler và cả những tạp chí Ireland mà cô nghĩ sẽ phải cạnh tranh. Cô có thể đọc một cuốn sách, cô tự nhủ. Nếu như cô có một cuốn. Hoặc một tờ báo, chỉ có điều báo chí thật buồn tẻ và nặng nề. ( Keyes, 2009: 43-44)

[She read this month's *Elle, Red, New Woman, Company, Cosmo, Marie Claire, Vogue, Tatler*, and all magazines of Ireland that she thought she would have to

compete with. She could read a book, she supposed. If she had one. Or a newspaper, except newspapers were so boring and depressing.]

Several names of magazines are translated into Vietnamese by transference. Some of them, for example Elle, Cosmo, Vogue, Marie Claire have published their Vietnamese versions with the same English name, the target customers of which are young, active and successful women in Vietnam. Therefore, it can be said that the heroine's representation as a trendy woman working in the media field appears similar to both source and target readers.

**ST:** She looked down at her own sensible **Marks and Spencers** white blouse. Even if maybe she needed an eye job to get rid of her crow's feet, she certainly didn't need a boob job. 36C was enough for anyone. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Cô nhìn xuống chiếc áo khoác trắng gọi cảm hiệu Mark and Spencer của mình. Thậm chí nếu cô có cần đến việc chần chỉnh đôi chân quạ của cô thì rõ ràng là cô không hề cần phải làm gì thêm cho bộ ngực, cỡ 36C có thể đủ cho bất kì ai (Kelly, 2003: 14-15)

[She looked down at her sexy white blouse of brand Mark and Spence. Even if she needed to improve her crow feet, it was obvious that she did not need anything more for her boob, size 36C is enough for everyone]

**ST:** Then came the presentation to Lisa of twenty pounds' worth of **Marks & Spencer** vouchers and a large card with a hippo and "Sorry to see you go" emblazoned on it. Ally Benn, Lisa's former deputy, had chosen the farewell present with care. She'd thought long and hard about what Lisa would hate the most and eventually concluded that M&S vouchers would cause maximum distress. (Keyes, 2004: 8)

**TT:** Tiếp theo là màn trao tặng quà cho Lisa mấy tờ phiếu mua hàng giá trị hai mươi bảng ở Marks & Spencer cùng một tấm thiệp lớn có in hình con hà mã với dòng chữ "rất tiếc phải nhìn bạn ra đi" in nổi trên đó. Ally Benn, cựu phó tổng biên tập của Lisa, đã rất kì công để chọn món quà chia tay này. Cô ta đau đầu suy nghĩ rất lâu để tìm ra thứ gì sẽ khiến Lisa căm ghét nhất và kết luận rằng những phiếu mua hàng Marks & Spencer sẽ gây bực mình tột đỉnh. (Keyes, 2009: 17)

[next was the present giving scene to Lisa, vouchers of twenty pounds worth in Marks and Spencer and a large card with a hippo and a line “very pity to see you leave” were given. Ally Benn, former deputy editor of Lisa, made endless effort to choose this farewell present. She had a longlasting headache while thinking of what Lisa would hate the most and concluded that vouchers of Marks and Spencer would cause the most distress]

These two extracts offer an interesting example of how meanings indicated in the usage of the same cultural reference can be altered in different contexts. For a woman living in Dublin in the first example, a blouse from Marks & Spencer, to a certain extent, can boost her confidence while for Lisa who is about to move from London to Dublin it is an insult to receive a farewell present from this brand. The way the two women view the similar brand reveals their different social status. In addition, in the case of Lisa, it also indicates that people are not really fond of her. Both these indication is not visible to all the target readers. In the translation, the woman in the second example appears to be richer and more demanding while the first woman seems to be much more modest. However, it is also noticeable that Kelly’s book was written in 1999 and Keyes’s work was published in 2004 so the perception of the same brand may have changed over time. It is also remarkable that there are some mistranslations in the extract above. Firstly, the original the crow’s feet under the eyes, which are the character’s signs of aging, is translated her feet has the shape the of crow’s feet. Secondly, a sensible blouse in the original, which is a sign showing that the female heroine is a practical rather than fashionable person and in a way she is very modest about

what to wear, is rendered as sexy blouse, which gives readers the impression the woman is the example trying to dress impressively to attract attention.

**ST:** Look at those shapeless outfits she wore, baggy combat trousers or hopelessly long skirts that reached her ankles worn with baggy tunics that covered everything else. She looked like a **Greenham Common woman** who'd got lost in time. If she didn't make an effort soon, she'd be stuck on the shelf watching endless repeats of **Ally McBeal** with a tub of ice cream for company while other people led fulfilled lives. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Cứ nhìn những thứ áo chui lủng thùng, quần hăm hỏ toàn là túi, rồi những cái váy dài thê thảm tận mắt cá, chả còn thấy dáng dấp gì mà nó mặc thì biết. Trông nó giống như nữ chiến binh vừa lạc từ thời nào về. Nếu nó không sớm cải biến đi thì suốt đời nó sẽ chỉ có mỗi việc xem đi xem lại Ally Mcbeal với một hộp kem làm bầu bạn trong khi những người khác thì có cuộc đời đầy đủ yên vui ( Kelly, 2003: 18)

[Look at those loose clothes, combat trousers that full of pockets or hopelessly long skirts that reached her ankles and showed no shape of her. She looked like a female soldier who just came back from some historic time. If she did not change soon, then all her life she would watch Ally Mcbeal over and over again with a box of ice cream while other people will have happy lives]

Both Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp and the television series Ally Mcbeal have significant symbolic meaning in English-speaking popular culture. Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was a female only political campaign in the 1980s, where participants using their female identity protested against nuclear weapons for the safety of their children and other future generations. It is a significant event because politics is a male dominated arena and it is one of the events when women raised their voices in for the sake of their children and challenged the traditional notion which believes that the only place for women is at home (Shepherd, 2010). Ally McBeal, on the other hand, is created as an icon of the postfeminist generation, a woman who represents a new



lifestyle of feminism by the statement “I plan to change the society. But I’d just like to get married first.” (Zeisler, 2008: 99). The use of Ally McBeal in the extract also indicates the sarcastic way the female character looks at her sister’s future. The usage of these cultural references in describing a female heroine aims to show that this female character has a rebellious and strong personality. While Ally Mcbeal is rendered by transference, Greenham Common woman is replaced by a female soldier. This generalization, in a way, leads to the loss of the identity of women in the original context and represents the heroine as a soldier, who in the understanding of the target readers will be involved in fights and wars in a literal sense. In addition, it can be assumed that the translation ‘soldier’ is a result of the translator’s ignorance of the Greenham Common camp – Greenham Common was a military base outside which the women protested. It can be assumed that the translator may make an assumption that the women were stationed in the base and therefore must have been soldiers. This can be seen as a vivid example of a translator’s failure to understand a cultural reference.

**ST:** The guidebook said that it would only take half a day to walk around Dublin and see all its important sights— as if that was a good thing! Sure enough, less than two hours was enough to check out the high spots—read shopping—both north and south of the river Liffey. It was worse than she’d expected: nobody stocked **La Prairie products, Stephane Kelian shoes, Vivienne Westwood, or Oswald Boateng. It’s total pants! A one-horse town**, she thought, in mild hysteria. *And the horse is wearing last season’s Hilfiger*. She wanted to go home. (Keyes, 2004)

**TT:** Cuốn sách hướng dẫn nói rằng chỉ mất khoảng nửa ngày để đi bộ vòng quanh Dublin và tham quan tất cả thắng cảnh quan trọng nhất ở đây – cứ như thể nó là một điều tốt vậy. Chắc chắn rồi, chưa đến hai tiếng đã đủ liếc qua cả ở bờ Bắc và bờ Nam sông Liffey. Còn tôi tệ hơn những gì cô chờ đợi: không có chỗ nào bán

các sản phẩm của La Prairie, giày Stephane Kelian, Vivienne Westwood hoặc Ozwald Boateng. “Thật là rẻ tiền, cái thị trấn một ngựa kéo\*”, cô thầm nghĩ, gần như phát cuồng. “đã thế còn ngựa mặc đồ Hilfinger tung ra từ mùa trước nữa chứ.” Cô chỉ muốn về nhà. ( Keyes, 2009: 42) \* ý nói nhỏ và buồn tẻ

[The guidebook said it took only half a day to walk around Dublin and view all most important sightseeings – as if that was a good thing. Surely, less than two hours was enough to see both north and south banks of Liffey river. It was worse than she had expected: there was nowhere selling products if La Praire, Stephane Kelian shoes, Vivienne Westwood or Ozwald Boateng. “that's cheap, the one horse town”\* she thought, almost lost her minds, and it was a horse in Hilfinger from last season. She wanted to go home] [\*means small and boring]

It can be easily observed that there are several luxurious high fashion brands mentioned in this short extract. These brands firstly illustrate the fact the heroine has a profound knowledge of these products since she works as the chief editor of a fashion magazine. Secondly, they reveal that the heroine has a high standard of living and is a classy consumer. They also help to explain why she finds Dublin *total pants* and calls the city an *one-horse town*. The usage of British slang confirms her foreign status in Ireland. In the Vietnamese translation, the translator uses transference for the brand names, and translation couplet for the slang. Readers may not be fully aware of the brands but the context of the extract helps them to understand that the city in which the heroine is living is not the same as London, a city which every average reader in Vietnam has a basic understanding of. The footnote makes it easier for readers to comprehend what the character wants to say but they may find it difficult to figure out why she says that since there is only a short explanation of the meaning but there is no information on the origin of such slang. Therefore, Vietnamese readers cannot notice her identity as a Londoner. In addition, they will not understand her insult when saying it is an *one*

*horse town* and *the horse is wearing last season's Hilfiger*, which also indicate her negative attitude towards the city.

As can be seen from this subsection, transference is applied to a number of cultural references, related to writers, journal names, designers brands or some historical events. Despite the fact that transference is recommended only when cultural references are either internationally accepted terms or well-known abbreviations, the translators tended to apply this method to all cases when the terms may appear to be unknown to an average Vietnamese readers. It can be assumed that the translators themselves may not have fully understood these cultural references, so they decided to bring these terms to their translation without thinking of the underlying meaning of these references. Consequently, certain features of the female characters' identity are not represented to the target readers due to this gap of cultural understanding. On the other hand, it has to be said that number of examples is small and representative due to the fact that only cultural references contributing to the construction of women's identity are taken for analysis. As a result, it is almost impossible to draw any conclusions related to the usage as transference as a method of translating cultural references into Vietnamese. However, based on what have been noticed from the examples and main aim of examining the representation of women in Vietnamese translation, it can, to some extent, be stated that certain features of the female characters' identity are not represented to the target readers when transference is employed due to this gap of cultural understanding.

### 5.2.2 Literal Translation

Literal translation is the translation of one term in the source language by one term in the target language (Newmark, 1988). The following section is the analysis of how some Irish cultural references are translated literally into Vietnamese.

**ST:** I thought it might be a bit of a laugh to give up my permanent, wellish-paid job in Dublin and go off to the **Godless city of London** (Keyes, 2003: 7)

**TT:** Tôi cũng thấy hay hay nếu từ bỏ công việc đường hoàng của tôi ở Dublin, một công việc lương cũng ổn, có khoản lương hưu về sau này và vù sang cái thành phố London tỉnh phớt ăng lê (Keyes, 2010: 11)

[I found it quite interesting to leave my proper job in Dublin, a job which gave me good salary and even retirement allowance later, and moved to city London- town of aloofness]

**ST:** There is **no divorce in Ireland**. James and I had been married in Ireland. Our marriage had been blessed by the fathers of the **Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour**. (Keyes, 2003: 24-25)

**TT:** Không có chuyện li dị ở Ireland. James và tôi đã cưới nhau ở Ireland, Chúng tôi đã được các cha ở nhà thờ Đức Mẹ Hằng Cứu Giúp ban phước. (Keyes, 2010: 25)

[ No divorce in Ireland. James and I got married in Ireland, We were blessed by fathers of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour]

**ST:** I was a deserted wife. Me, middle-class Claire. What was I? **Mother bloody Teresa?** (Keyes, 2003: 39)

**TT:** Chính tôi là một cô vợ bị chồng bỏ, Tôi là ai kia chứ? Cái bà mẹ Teresa gì đấy. (Keyes, 2010: 34)

[I was a deserted wife. I, Claire of middle-class. Who am I? Mother Teresa whatever?]

These three examples illustrate several cultural facts. In the first example, the author uses the phrase “Godless city of London”, in order to create a contrast between London and Dublin in the 1990s, when the former was considered to be a

more open and non-religious city while the latter was a more religious city which generally adhered to strict Catholic dogmas of the dominant Roman Catholic Church. The translator may have misunderstood this point and she rendered it as a “town of aloofness”, which is a stereotypical idea about London that most Vietnamese people have. In the second example, Keyes mentions the fact that there is no divorce in Ireland. This fact in the original context, together with the line that their marriage was blessed by the fathers of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, reveals Claire’s hope of legally protecting her marriage from divorce. It is also important to take into account the fact that the book was written before the second divorce referendum of November 1995, which approved divorce in Ireland. The translation was published in 2010 and there is no additional explanation for this line, so the target language readership may not understand this specific important cultural and religious context. The translation of *Mother bloody Teresa* into Vietnamese as Mother Teresa to some extent makes the Vietnamese Claire sounds softer than her Irish English counterpart. According to the *Longman English Dictionary* (2009), the adjective *bloody* is used to “*emphasize a statement in a slightly rude way*”. In the source context, the term is used with a dual purpose: firstly it serves to portray Claire’s anger when she finds out that she has been deserted by her husband, and secondly, it expresses Keyes’ attitude towards religion. In fact, all these three source examples demonstrate a similar attitude, in a humorous tone, but in the translation, the humorous tone has either been

mistranslated ( in the example of Godless London) or has been softened ( Mother Bloody Teresa).

**ST:** And I had spent the last six months working with people who could just about manage to read *Stage magazine* (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Suốt sáu tháng trời rồi tôi đã phải làm việc với những kẻ rảnh rỗi cũng chỉ đọc hết tờ sân khấu (Keyes, 2010)

[During the last six months I had to work with people who at their best can read only magazine Stage]

**ST:** I cried at everything from **Little House on the Prairie** to **The Money Programme**. (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Từ phim truyền hình ngôi nhà nhỏ trên thảo nguyên cho đến chương tài chính và kinh doanh, thứ gì tôi cũng khóc được (Keyes, 2010: 22)

[From TV series Little House on the Prairie to finance and business program, all could make me cry]

**ST:** I had always thought that deserted wives were women who lived in **corporation flats** whose husbands, pausing only to blacken their eyes, left with a bottle of vodka, the **Christmas Club money** and the **children's allowance book**. (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Tôi đã nghĩ những cô vợ bị chồng bỏ sống trong các khu nhà bảo trợ của hội đồng thành phố, đức ông chồng thỉnh thoảng tạt qua chỉ để thương cảm chân, hạ cẳng tay rồi lại biến đi, vợ vét chai vodka, tiền tiết kiệm sắm sửa cho Giáng sinh và cả sổ trợ cấp của con. (Keyes, 2010: 34)

[I thought that wives deserted by husbands live in houses sponsored by City Council, their husband sometimes just dropped by to beat them and then left with bottles of vodka, money saving for Christmas and the children's allowance book]

The terms *Stage magazine*, *corporation flats*, and *children's allowance book* are all translated literally into Vietnamese. What is interesting is the case of how the titles of TV series have been rendered into Vietnamese, while *The Partridge Family* title has been preserved in Vietnamese translation, *Little House on the Prairie* has been translated into Vietnamese. This could be explained by the fact

that the latter series was broadcast in Vietnam and was very popular among Vietnamese television audiences. Therefore, translating its name into Vietnamese would make the translation sound much more friendly and familiar to the target readership, and to some extent, it creates an intimate connection between the readers and what they are reading. It is noticeable that *The Money Programme* and the *Christmas Club Money* are replaced by Vietnamese terms which have similar meaning.

**ST:** Lisa tried to put a gloss on it. She'd never admit she was disappointed. Especially after all she'd sacrificed. But you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Dublin was not New York, no matter how you sliced it. And the "generous" relocation package could have been sued under the **Trade Descriptions Act**. (Keyes, 2004: 6)

**TT:** Lisa cố nhìn nhận sự việc theo chiều hướng tốt. Cô sẽ không bao giờ thừa nhận mình đã thất vọng. Nhất là sau tất cả những gì cô đã hi sinh. Nhưng tai lợn nái thì sao có thể may thành túi lụa. Dublin không phải là New York dù nói thế nào đi nữa. Và gói hỗ trợ di chuyển hào phóng có thể bị kiện theo Đạo luật miêu tả hàng hoá. (Keyes, 2009: 16-17)

[Lisa tried to see things in a positive way. She would never admit that she was disappointed. Especially after all what she had devoted. But the pig's ear couldnot be used to tailor a silk bag. Dublin was not New York, whatever you may say. And the generous relocation package could be sued according to the law of goods description]

In both versions, the heroine appears to be a strong and ambitious woman, who is dedicated to her work and trying to hide her disenchantment and frustration at being sent to Dublin instead of New York for her promotion. The bitter feeling of the female character, as well as her acceptance of the situation is visible through the usage of language, especially the idiom "you can't make a silk purse out of a

sow's ear" in an English context. However, the literally direct translation of the idiom into Vietnamese has made the character sound nonsensical since such a phrase indeed has no logical and literal meaning in Vietnamese. It is also remarkable that when the heroine mentions the Trade Descriptions Act in the English extract, it can be seen that she firstly understands the labour law very well and secondly the usage of this term has nothing to do with the actual goods in the context of the example because she uses it as a metaphor, telling how misleading her promotion, which forces her to relocate from London to Dublin, is. This indicates her dissatisfaction at not obtaining what she has aimed for. The Vietnamese translation is simply a direct transfer and since the act is unknown in Vietnam, readers cannot fully understand the bitterness and disappointment of the heroine.

**ST:** And like **Scarlett O'Hara** in the last few lines of *Gone With the Wind*, I said plaintively, "I'll go home. I'll go home to Dublin." Dublin doesn't quite the same ring to Tara but what would be the point in me going to Tara. (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Rồi giống như Scarlett O'Hara trong đoạn kết của Cuốn theo chiều gió, tôi nói giọng buồn bã.. Dublin nghe không được như Tara nhưng tôi đi đấy để làm gì. (Keyes, 2010: 26)

[Like Scarlett O'Hara in the end of *Gone with the Wind*, I said sadly I am coming home, I will come back to Dublin, Dublin doesn't sound like Tara but the problem is for what I am going to Tara]

*Gone With the Wind* is a globally well-known novel and its main character Scarlett O'Hara is always seen as a model of a strong woman. This reference is used in order to show how determined Claire is when deciding to come back to Dublin, as well as to present the fact that Claire is a strong-willed and independent



woman. This cultural reference appears to be a global phenomenon so Vietnamese audiences can easily understand the message. However, the Vietnamese reader may not understand the symbolic meaning of Tara, since they mostly know it as the house of Scarlett O'Hara in the novel but little is known about the fact that this character has Irish origins, and for Scarlett, it is the center of life which is worth fighting for. Claire's usage of Tara is an example of her sense of humour. She changes 'Tara' to 'Dublin' and then adds humorously that there would be no point in going to Tara - the hill in County Meath where the Irish kings were crowned in Irish history and mythology. It can be understood that in the source text, the heroine is not looking for glory but she only needs to go to Dublin, her hometown. An average Vietnamese reader would hardly understand this part of Claire's identity despite the fact that s/he is fully aware of what *Gone with the Wind* is.

It can be concluded that, in the scope of this research, literal translation is useful when certain SL cultural references are already known in TL culture. On the other hand, when the cultural references are unknown in the TL culture, this method of rendering can only help readers to understand what some cultural references literally mean but the terms can not be fully understood because the TL readership does not have a full account of the implications and nuances of the SL items. As a result, readers may not understand the sense of humour of the heroines and some attitudes of these female characters to certain events are not visible to target readers.

### 5.2.3 Functional Equivalence

Functional equivalence, according to Newmark (1988), can be understood as the use of a culturally neutral TL term to define the cultural references of the SL. An example of this method can be seen in the example of Christmas Club Money in the previous section since both Christmas and Christmas Club are not a part of Vietnamese culture.

The use of the same method can also be spotted in the following example:

**ST:** When her beloved Rosie was so grown up she left home and there'd be no more cosy evenings together, watching telly, laughing over old **Father Ted episodes** (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Khi Rosie yêu quý của cô đã quá trưởng thành, con bé sẽ rời nhà đi và sẽ chẳng còn những buổi tối ấm cúng bên nhau, cùng xem tivi, cùng cười vì những đoạn kịch vui. (Kelly, 2003)

[When beloved Rosie of her was too grown up, the girl would leave home and there would be no more cosy evenings of being together, watching TV and laughing because of comedies]

Father Ted is a television comedy programme about three priests and their housekeeper who live on Craggy Island, off the coast of Ireland and it uses humour to expose the flaws of Irish culture. Both the original usage and the translation of this cultural reference give readers an impression of a protagonist as a typical woman and loves watching comedies on television. And since Father Ted is unknown to Vietnamese audience, the generalization in this example helps readers to understand the context better.

There are only few cases of functional equivalence found in the analysis. A possible explanation is only cultural references that directly contribute to the representation of women are chosen for analysis. However, from what is gained in

the example, it may be possible to state that when the correspondence between two languages and cultures is restricted and limited, replacing cultural references by functional equivalent can be useful as it helps the target audience understand the situation in which cultural references are used.

#### **5.2.4 Cultural Equivalence**

According to Newmark (1988: 82-83) a cultural equivalence is the substitution of a SL cultural term by a TL cultural term. Cultural equivalence is similar to functional equivalence in the way that they both provide the readership with the closest counterpart in the target language. However, rendering cultural references by the procedure of cultural equivalence may result in a lack of precision and accuracy, because some of the implications or nuances of the SL term are replaced by TL ones.

**ST:** ‘Some kohl and a line of gold eyeliner will make the amber flecks stand out,’ she’d pointed out the last time she’d sat on her mother’s bed watching Evie get ready to go out with Simon. ‘Yes, and make me look like mutton dressed as lamb,’ Evie argued. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** “một chút phấn mắt màu đen và đường kẻ mắt màu vàng sẽ khiến những điểm màu hổ phách nổi bật lên” nó phân tích trong lần cuối cùng nó ngồi trên giường của mẹ nhìn Evie trang điểm để đi chơi với Simon. “phải rồi, và nó sẽ khiến mẹ trông giống con trâu cưa sừng đi làm nghề” Evie tranh luận. (Kelly, 2003)

[a little bit of kohl and a line of gold eyeliner will make the amber flecks stand out,’ she explained in the last time she sat on her mother’s bed watching Evie doing her make up to go out with Simon. ‘Yes, that will make me look like a water buffalo in a calf’s outlook’ Evie argued.]

The translation of the idiom “mutton dressed as lamb,” is an example of translation, where the translator uses direct translation but replaces the foreign

metaphor by a local metaphor. Both the original text and translation provide a picture of a woman making an effort to look younger before going on a date with a man. However, there is a slight difference in the way the two women describe themselves. In Vietnam, this idiom is used more as a means of criticising either men or women who overact or overdress to hide their true identity in terms of both age and personality so it has a negative meaning and the character in this context appears to be a serious and self-critical person. In the English original, “mutton dressed as lamb” was originally a derogatory way of describing a woman aiming to make men believe that she was still in childbearing age at a time when marriage for women was for economic necessity. With the economic and social development, the usage of this idiom has changed from the indication of marriageability to the boosting of self-esteem (Phrasefinder, 2014). Putting such usage in this light, the woman in the English original appears to be a person who is making an effort to be more self-confident before going on a date and at the same time she has a good sense of humour yet she is self-deprecating of all her own effort.

It is obvious from this example that applying cultural equivalence to render cultural references leads to a loss of SL cultural colour but it can also have greater pragmatic impact on representing and illustrating the characters in target language. However, it is the only example of the use of cultural equivalent found in material

chosen for analysis. Further studies and more examples should be analysed in order to fully understand how cultural equivalent works.

### 5.2.5 Translation Couplet

Translation couplet is a procedure of translating cultural references which combines two, three or four of the methods mentioned above. Let us now examine how this method is used in the Vietnamese translation and their impact on representing protagonists of Irish contemporary female popular fiction.

**ST:** I was looking for one who didn't look at me askance when I mentioned *The Partridge Family* [...] not one who made me feel inadequate because I couldn't tell the difference between **Piat d'Or** and **Zinfandel**. (Keyes, 2003: 6)

**TT:** Người đó sẽ không nhìn tôi như một đứa dở hơi nếu tôi nhắc đến bộ phim truyền hình sitcom dài tập *The Partridge Family*. Không phải mấy tên làm tôi ngượng chín người vì tôi không phân biệt rượu Piat d'Or và Zinfandel (Keyes, 2010: 11)

[I looked for a person who would not look at me as if I was silly if I mentioned TV sitcom series *The Partridge Family* [...] not those guys who made me feel so embarrassed because I couldn't differentiate between wine Piat d'or and Zinfandel]

*The Partridge Family* is an American series, which was shown on Irish television in 1970s, mainly for children and girls in their early teens, with the central figure of Keith Partridge as a male heart-throb. Piat d'or and Zinfandel are two cheap brands of wine in the UK, originating from France and America respectively. The presence of these cultural references is aimed at portraying Claire as an ordinary woman, who enjoys sitcom series and has no idea about the differences between types of alcohols. The direct translation gives target language audiences a basic understanding of what these cultural references mean, but the

target audience may not be able to understand why it is silly to mention a sitcom or why the main character feels embarrassed when she cannot tell the difference between two brands of wine.

**ST:** God, I was horrific! I looked as if I was wearing my big sister's **Michelin Man suit**. (Keyes, 2003: 34)

**TT:** Trời ơi! Tôi hoảng sợ. trông tôi giống như Michelin Man\*.

( \*: hình người biểu tượng cho hãng sản xuất lốp xe Michelin (Pháp) nổi tiếng trên thế giới, được cách điệu từ hình các lốp xe nên trông như người béo (Keyes, 2010: 31)

[Oh God. I was scared. I looked like Michelin Man\*

( \*: the symbol of the world famous tyre production company Michelin ( France), which was designed based one the shape of tyres, therefore it looks like a fat person) ]

The Michelin Man, which is sometimes used ironically as a term to describe someone who is obese, is mentioned in this example to refer to the body of Claire after giving birth to her baby. It is a characteristically feminine self-deprecating image of having excessive weight in the Western world, and it reflects a typically female preoccupation with one's figure. It is interesting to observe that, in the source text, Claire describes herself as if she was wearing a Michelin Man suit, while in the target text, she looks like Michelin Man. The footnote explanation used in translation has helped the target audience to understand how the main character looks and feels in this case. This example illustrates the couplet characteristics of this method when a culture specific reference is translated directly into the target language and is coupled with an explanation for target readers. According to Newmark (1998), this translation procedure is the most accurate and

complete. This example is also an example of the didactic function that translation may have.

**ST:** I would read my child feminist diatribes instead, I decided.[...] **The Female Eunuch for example.** (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Tôi sẽ đọc cho Kate những thứ liên quan đến tư tưởng nam nữ bình quyền. Nhất quyết thế. [...] *The Female Eunuch chẳng hạn\** (\*: sách của tác giả người Úc Germaine Greer, góp phần quan trọng trong phong trào đấu tranh đòi bình quyền nữ giới) (Keyes, 2010)

[I would read Kate things about man-woman equality. That is for sure. Read The Female Eunuch \* (\*: a book by an Australian author Germaine Greer, which contributed an important part to the campaign for the equality of women)]

The translator may have assumed that *The Female Eunuch* may appear to be an unknown cultural reference to Vietnamese readers, therefore the translator uses transference with a footnote to explain the meaning of the term for Vietnamese readers. Thanks to this method, Vietnamese target readers can fully understand the cultural reference and therefore, understand the heroine's idea of reading books on feminism to her child. However, it should also be noticed that while for Irish readers, it can be seen as the heroine's sense of humour since she finds herself too dependent on her husband and she is self-deprecating; the Vietnamese reader may not see that sense of self-deprecation.

**ST:** She never let anyone else get a go of the Patrick Cox shoes, not even the girls with size-five feet. And her generosity with bitchy and untrue personal comments had earned her the nickname Slanderella.

**TT:** Cô chưa bao giờ chia sẻ những đôi giày Patrick Cox với bất kì ai, kể cả những cô nàng có cỡ chân số năm. Và sự hào phóng đưa ra những lời nhận xét riêng tư, bịa đặt, đầy ác ý về người khác đã mang lại cho cô biệt hiệu Slanderella. \*

\*Gọi chêch đi từ từ Slander có nghĩa là kẻ vu cáo, đặt điều

[she never shared Patrick Cox shoes with anyone, even the girls who had size five feet. And her generosity of giving private, fabricating, ill will comments about others has brought her the nickname Slanderella \* ]

[\*coming from the words slander, which means fabricating a false story or telling lies]

In the original, the female character appears to be a greedy and mean person. She loves expensive shoes and making up stories about other people. Patrick Cox is not a well-known brand in Vietnam, so readers of the translation may not understand why she never allows anyone to acquire these shoes. It is interesting that a bossy person who never lets anyone wear certain shoes in the original version becomes a selfish person who never shares in the translation. A footnote coming with an explanation gives readers a full understanding of what the heroine's nickname Slanderella, means but the humorous tone is lost since readers with little or no background in English may not recognise that her nickname is a combination of Slander and Cinderella and in a way it functions as a pun to portray the heroine as a type of evil character with Cinderella look, which to some extent illustrates how good at disguising herself the female character is.

As can be seen, the method of translation couplet using footnotes, turns out to be an effective way of rendering cultural references because the nature of this method helps readers not only know what the cultural references involved in various contexts means but also know the original SL name so he/she can identify it.



### 5.2.6 Omission

Some passages, which contain some cultural references, are not presented in the Vietnamese translation.

**ST:** **Christmas** two years ago Holly had gone shopping with Sharon for a dress for the **annual ball** they attended at the **Burlington Hotel**. (Ahern, 2004: 12)

**ST:** That Christmas Holly had spent a disgraceful amount of money in **Brown Thomas** on the most beautiful white dress she had ever seen. (Ahern, 2004: 13)

**ST:** “Well, as long as you don't want **Jennifer Aniston's hairstyle**, you'll have no problems. (Ahern, 2004: 29)

**ST:** Buy the damn thing. **It's Christmas after all, the season of giving and all that.** (Ahern, 2004: 13)

These extracts come from Holly's flashback when she thinks about the time when her husband was still alive. These cultural references are important in the way they provide readers with another side of Holly's character, as she used to enjoy shopping, the holiday season and have an interest in fashion and style when her husband was still alive. These references also offer a contrastive insight into Holly's life and how it has changed since the death of her husband.

There are also several examples in which extracts with cultural references are rendered into Vietnamese, but the cultural references are omitted.

**ST:** There's a few biscuits there to go with your tea. **Jammie Dodgers**, your favorite. (Ahern, 2004: 19)

**TT:** Có một ít bánh quy để cậu dùng kèm với trà. Loại bánh mà cậu thích nhất đấy. (Ahern, 2007: 25)

[There are some biscuits for you to go with your tea. Your most favourite biscuit]

**ST:** Her parents' house was situated directly across the road from **Portmarnock** beach, **the blue flag bearing testament to its cleanliness**. (Ahern, 2004: 27)

**TT:** Ngôi nhà thơ ấu của Holly nằm cạnh bờ biển Portmanock. (Ahern, 2007: 19)

[the house of Holly's childhood is situated next to beach Portmanock]

Jammie Dodgers are a popular brand of biscuits, named after a character from a comic. Portmarnock beach is situated in County Dublin and is considered to be an up-market, affluent part of the county. These references reveal part of Holly's identity including her family background. The additional information about "blue flag" status of Portmarnock beach helps source text readers to understand how clean this beach is. Neither of these culture specific details has been rendered into Vietnamese.

Due to these omissions, information or effect from the ST is omitted. Since it has impossible to find out the reasons for such omission due to the unwillingness to give an interview and answer emails of the translators/editors, it can only be assumed that the omitted information may appear to be unimportant to the editors/translators and that they wanted to focus on other features of the text. However, since these cultural references play a certain role in representing the female character, readers of translation may not have full understanding of the

representation of the female protagonist (her background, her contrast life before and after the husband's death).

### **5.2.6 Conclusion**

The short analysis of cultural references selected for the purpose of this research has revealed that certain features on the social and educational background of heroines in Irish Chick Lit are not fully represented in Vietnamese, no matter which method of translation is applied. When certain social norms or phenomena are similar in both cultures, and when some cultural elements have global characteristics, the translation tends to be more accurate and much closer to the original. At the same time, when some cultural references are unfamiliar, unimportant or when some norms are not socially accepted in the target culture, they are often treated in two ways, either by literal translation or omission. The former procedure is used when the references relate to the identity of the main character, and translations are sometimes accompanied by footnote explanations, whereas the latter procedure is applied when it is assumed by the translators that these references are not of importance. Consequently, this leads to the fact that the personality or the background of the female characters is not fully represented in the translation. In other words, it can be said that no matter which strategy is applied, there are always cases when the cultural references do not function in the similar way as they do in the SL culture due to the cultural gap between the SL and TL. However, it is vital to keep in mind that the analysis of cultural references

in this thesis is short and the number of examples is small and representative, therefore my conclusions can be only tentative.

### **5.3 The representation of women in Vietnamese translation**

This section conducts a comparative analysis of the representation of women in five chosen texts mentioned in the methodology chapter of this thesis namely *P.S I Love You*, *Never too Late*, *Watermelon*, *Where Rainbows End*, and *Sushinfor Beginners*. A detailed comparison of the source textual material and its Vietnamese renderings will be conducted so that the main aim of investigating the representation of women in Vietnamese translation of Irish Chick Lit can be achieved.

#### **5.3.1 Women and Diligence**

The Vietnamese concept of women's diligence, according to Hy (1992) and Nguyen (2013), means undertaking every task given, both inside the home and at work, proceeding with it in an orderly and efficient manner, and completing it on time. This subsection will analyse how women are represented in relation the concept of diligence in Vietnamese translation.

Images of working women are provided in the extracts below:

**ST:** Like many companies in the Western world, Randolph Media rewarded hard work with poor pay, increasing workloads, demotions, and on-a-second's-notice redundancies. But Lisa was different. She'd paid her dues at *Femme*, and made sacrifices that even *she'd* never intended to make: starting at seven-thirty most mornings, doing twelve-, thirteen-, fourteen-hour days, then going to evening press

do's when she finally switched off her computer. Often she came to work on Saturdays, Sundays, even bank-holiday Mondays. (Keyes,2004: 4)

**TT:** Như nhiều công ty khác ở phương tây, Randolph Media tưởng thưởng cho sự làm việc chăm chỉ bằng khoản lương bèo bọt, khối lượng công việc ngày càng tăng, giáng chức và buộc thôi việc thông báo vào phút chót. Nhưng Lisa thì khác. Cô làm tròn phận sự của mình ở Femme, đã chấp nhận những hi sinh mà cô còn chưa bao giờ có ý định phải chịu đựng: hầu như sáng nào cũng đi làm từ bảy rưỡi, những ngày tháng làm việc mười hai, mười ba hay mười bốn tiếng đồng hồ, rồi khi cuối cùng cũng được tắt máy tính, cô lại phải tới dự những cuộc họp báo vào buổi tối. Cô thường xuyên đi làm vào thứ Bảy, Chủ Nhật và thậm chí là cả những thứ Hai trùng vào dịp nghỉ lễ. (Keyes,2009: 13)

[Like other companies in Western world, Randolph Media rewarded hard work with poor salary, daily increasing workload, demotions and last minute redundancies. But Lisa was different, She completed all her responsibilities in Femme, and accepted to sacrifice for what she never intended to suffer: going to work at half seven most mornings, working twelve, thirteen, fourteen hours a day, then when it was allowed to turn off the computer, she had to go to press conferences in the evening. She usually went to work on Saturday, Sunday and even on Monday of holiday time.]

**ST:** Evie gave Davis Wentworth a quelling glance at the very notion that a report which he needed by twelve wouldn't be ready by that time. Honestly, after seven years as his personal assistant didn't he realise that she'd work her fingers to the bone rather than be late with any piece of work? (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Evie trao cho David Wentworth một cái nhìn nén nhịn đầy hàm ý rằng một bản báo cáo mà ông ta cần vào lúc mười hai giờ thì đến giờ này chưa xong được. Thành thực mà nói, sau bảy năm làm trợ lý riêng cho ông, chẳng lẽ ông không nhận ra rằng cô thà đánh máy đến trơ xương tay còn hơn để muộn một tý công việc nào? (Kelly,2003: 8)

[Evie gave David Wentworth a quelling glance with the notion that a report he needed at twelve would not be ready. Frankly speaking, after seven years working with his personal assistant, didn't he know that she would rather type to her last bone than be late for any work?]

Both examples represent the image of women at work. In the first example,

Lisa appears to be an industrious and dedicated employee, who does her best to perform all the tasks given to her in both extracts. However there is a slight difference in Lisa's attitude to work between the English original and the Vietnamese translation. In the translation, the heroine appears as though she agrees

to do everything because all is compulsory at work, which in a way could be interpreted as meaning that she is not willing to work particularly hard but she has to do so because she has no other choice, while the English version gives the impression that Lisa actively chooses to work hard because she has a burning drive and ambition to succeed and she is willing to sacrifice herself for her goals. In the second example, Evie is also represented as a diligent, conscientious employee, who tries to meet all the deadlines and other tasks as a personal assistant to the manager. It is noticeable that the translator either misunderstood the idiom “work her fingers to the bone” or deliberately translated the idiom literally; in either case, the translation does not fully convey Evie’s dedication to work.

**ST:** Anyway, I loved working there. It thrilled me to the middle-class marrow of my bourgeois bones. It seemed so decadent and exciting to wake at one in the afternoon every day and go to work at six and finish at twelve and get drunk with the barmen and busboys afterwards. While at home in Ireland my poor mother wept bitter tears at the thought of her daughter with the university education serving hamburgers to pop stars. (Keyes, 2003:8)

**TT:** Nhưng nói chung tôi thích làm ở đây. Mọi thứ làm tôi mê tít, sung sướng đến tận tuỷ, cái phần tuỷ của dân trung lưu, nằm bên trong những cái xương vốn thói trường giả của mình. Thức dậy vào lúc một giờ trưa, đi làm lúc sáu giờ tối, xong việc lúc nửa đêm rồi tiếp theo là bí tỉ với đám pha chế rượu và dọn bàn đúng là vừa loạn lạc lại vừa sung sướng. Trong khi đó ở Ireland, mẹ tôi, tội nghiệp, đang cay đắng sụt sịt nghĩ đến cảnh cô con gái đường hoàng tốt nghiệp đại học phải phục vụ hamburger cho các ngôi sao ca nhạc. (Keyes, 2010: 12-13)

[But in general I liked working here. Everything thrilled and excited me to my marrow, the marrow of middle-class people, which was deep inside my snobbish bone. Waking up at 1 in the afternoon, going to work at 6 in the evening, finishing at midnight and followed by heavy drinking with the barmen and table cleaners was exciting and decadent. Meanwhile in Ireland my mother, poor her, was bitterly crying when thinking about her daughter, who graduated from university, was serving hamburgers to pop stars.]

After graduating from university, the heroine decides to come to London, and works as a waitress in a restaurant. She uses a self-deprecating tone to describe her job, her background and her mother's reaction to what she does. In the context of Western society in 1995, it would be unusual for a person with higher education to work as a waitress; this can be gleaned from the female character's description of her mother's bitter tears. Therefore, the heroine has presented herself as a rebellious young woman who decided to do what she really wanted to do, no matter how society would react to her choices. She is also conscious of her own decision to work in this kind of job as a waitress and how much of a contrast it forms to her middle-class background, which normally implies working as a professional in a prestigious job. The way she deprecates her background and her job reveals her attitude towards conventional expectations and stereotypes of being a middle-class person. Such a representation makes her appear as a strong-willed, independent and risk-taking woman, who puts her personal interest as her top priority, knows what she wants to do and enjoys it. The heroine sees herself as an independent and risk-embracing woman who is aware of her personal values and individual desires. The Vietnamese version renders a similar image of the heroine. The translation emphasises the enjoyment that the female character obtains from working as a waitress, as in the Vietnamese version the work not only thrills the heroine but also makes her excited. However, this self-deprecating aspect may not be understood by Vietnamese audiences, since the social classes in Vietnam have been developed on the basis of education and

occupation, which consists of the ruling classes, scholarly classes, working classes including both farmers and manual workers, then business or merchant classes while in Western countries the social class system is usually based on birth, financial power, political authority, and sometimes even skin colour (Nguyen, 2013). Therefore, the Vietnamese audience may not see the sense of humour in the heroine's personality.

The representation of women in the domestic sphere can be observed in the following examples:

**ST:** The pre-Christmas panic meant the shelves were virtually bare and she was now left with prehistoric parsnips Stephen would hate. Still, she'd manage to revitalise them somehow. What was the point of being a home economics teacher if you couldn't rustle up something wonderful in the kitchen? (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Con khủng hoảng trước Giáng Sinh có nghĩa là tất cả các ngăn hàng hoá đều sạch trơn và bây giờ chỉ còn lại cho cô vài cây cải vàng thời tiền sử mà chắc chắn Stephen sẽ không ưa. Cô sẽ cố gắng cứu chữa chúng để chúng tươi tỉnh lên tí chút. Làm giáo viên kinh tế gia đình để làm gì nếu cô không tạo được điều kì diệu trong chính căn bếp của mình cơ chứ? (Kelly, 2003: 40)

[the crisis before Christmas meant all shelves of goods were clear and there was a few prehistoric radish left which Stephen would not like . She would try to cure them so that they would look fresher. Being a home economics teacher was for what if you couldnot create miracle in your kitchen]

In both the original and translated extract, readers are given a picture of a woman doing her shopping during Christmas time, who is stressed because there are no fresh parsnips left. What makes her worried is not the lack of fresh vegetables but her husband's reaction. This detail reveals that it is important for the female character to satisfy her husband. That is similar to what a Vietnamese woman feels in her position of "minister of the interior" at home. It is interesting



to notice that parsnip is replaced by radish, which is a functional equivalent method of translating cultural references as in Vietnam there is no parsnip.

**ST:** She was in a rush but, as usual, she found time to put everything in the right place. Jars and tins stuffed higgledypiggledy into cupboards was not the way Evie Fraser did things. The antique pine kitchen in her tiny redbrick two-up, two down may have been what even an estate agent would describe as ‘compact’, but it was meticulously tidy. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Cô chả vội vàng gì nhưng như thường lệ, cô luôn giành thời gian thu dọn, xếp đặt mọi thứ theo đúng chỗ, Bình, lọ, đồ hộp xếp đống trong chạn không phải là kiểu của Evie Fraser. Cái bếp cũ kĩ bằng gỗ thông trong căn nhà gạch hai trên, hai dưới của cô có thể được cả nhân viên bán hàng tạp hoá thán phục về độ gọn gàng, ngăn nắp. (Kelly, 2003: 23)

[she was not rush at all but as usual, she spent time collecting and arranging everything in the right order. Jars and tins just stuffed in the shelves was not the style of Evie Fraser. Her old pine kitchen in a brick house two up, two down could make the shop assistant admire for its tidiness and neatness]

**ST:** No wonder the school’s selection of prehistoric cookers never fazed her - after learning to cook on the Lodge’s rackety appliances, Olivia could have whipped up a four course meal with a single gas flame and two saucepans. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Những nồi niêu xanh chảo cổ lỗ ở trường học không bao giờ làm cô nao núng. Sau khi học được cách nấu nướng bằng những đồ dùng ở Lodge thì Olivia có thể sử soạn bốn bàn ăn chỉ với một bếp ga đơn và hai chảo nhẹ như lông hồng. (Kelly, 2003: 44)

[the ancient cooking and frying pans at school never fazed her after she learnt how to cook by appliances in Lodge, Olivia could prepare four dining tables with a single gas flame and two saucepans easily]

There used to be a tendency to describe women as “homemakers”, who is responsible for turning the house into an “aesthetic and comfortable sphere” (Milestone and Meyer, 2012: 104-105). These two extracts emanating from Irish Chick Lit still illustrate an image of women working in the home as domestic workers by making them involved in traditional tasks of cleaning and cooking. These extracts provide a picture of women which Irish Chick Lit is often credited

with perpetuating. In terms of translation, it is noticed that there are a few mistranslations in the two examples: a four course meal is rendered as four dining tables, an estate agent becomes a shop assistant while cookers are recreated as cooking and frying pans. It is also interesting to notice that the way Evie arranges her kitchen in English indicates that she is a person who maintains high domestic standards in spite of her “her tiny redbrick two-up, two down”, but this connotation is missed in Vietnamese because in common Vietnamese understanding, a two floor house is rather spacious, and therefore, she is more likely seen to be a tidy person rather than somebody who knows how to utilize the space. However, these details do not influence the global representation of the two heroines who have excellent skills in domestic tasks in general.

Examples in this subsection reveal that in terms of work the positions that women hold at work are normally not high and they rarely occupy positions of power or influence. One female character works as a school teacher and the other is a personal assistant of a director. In the description of women in the home, women are described as caring, considerate and loving characters. These examples related to work at home show that when norms are similar in two cultures, there will be no shift in translation. On the other hand, there are some differences when it comes to women’s attitude in workplace. The women in Vietnamese translation appear to be more submissive to her boss even though they do not want that, while

for women in the original, it is their choice to work and follow the employers' demand.

### 5.3.2 Women and Self-Representation

In Vietnamese ideology, self-representation is signified by women's natural beauty, the way they dress and also their personality (Van, 2013). This aspect of self-representation in Vietnamese culture is very similar to the popular feminine stereotype in Western culture, according to which women's beauty is usually judged by criteria including bodies, clothing and appearance in general (Birtwistle and Tsim, 2005: 664-665). This subsection, thus, analyses how women are represented within the context of self-representation in Vietnamese translation.

**ST:** And although I might not have been model material, I suppose I had a certain, shall we say, natural kind of charm—you know—short shiny brown hair, blue eyes, freckles, big smile, that kind of thing. And I was so unworldly and naïve. I never realized when I was coming face to well-made-up face with the stars of stage and television. (Keyes, 2003: 7-8)

**TT:** Và mặc dù không có hơi hướm gì kiểu người mẫu nhưng tôi cho là mình cũng có một nét riêng nào đó, thôi thì gọi là duyên tự nhiên đi nhé- tóc ngắn màu nâu huyền óng ả, mắt xanh, da trắng thoáng tang nhang, nụ cười tươi tắn, Và tôi cực kì ngây thơ, trong sáng. Tôi không hề biết cho đến khi cái mặt mộc của tôi được diện kiến những khuôn mặt phấn son dày cộm của các ngôi sao sân khấu điện ảnh. (Keyes, 2010: 12)

[And even there's no feature of a model in me, I think I have my own grace. Call it natural charms- short hair of shiny brown colour, blue eyes, some freckles on my skin, fresh and bright smile. I was innocent and naïve. I never knew until my unmade-up face sees the full and thick made up face of stage and TV stars]

This paragraph is a self-description of the heroine in Keyes's *Watermelon*.

The usage of the modal verb “*might*” and the verb “*suppose*” reveals a level of

uncertainty on the part of the female character. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *might* is used to express the possibility that something may happen or may be true but the speaker is uncertain and *suppose* is used to say something is true, although the speaker is unsure. These words create an understanding that the woman in question is not fully confident about her appearance. She is aware of her distinctive features but, at the same time, unsure of their values. In the target text paragraph, the modal verb is omitted and the verb “to think” is used, which suggests that the translated heroine appears to be more confident about her appearance.

Another noteworthy point is that while in the source text, the character says that she has freckles on her face, in the Vietnamese translation, she only has *some* freckles. This could be explained by the fact that freckles are considered quite a normal thing for Western people with a fair complexion whereas they are perceived as a negative factor affecting beauty for Vietnamese women.

The other point of difference is in the description of personality. In the source text, the heroine says that she never realised how inexperienced and innocent she was until she had to face the pretentious, insincere people around her. In the translation, the well-made up faces are mistakenly translated and the woman in the translation appears to be somebody who never uses make-up to make herself look better. In this way, the heroine appears to be a good character because, according to traditional Vietnamese beliefs, an elegant woman should be somebody who has

natural beauty, a beautiful soul and is well-behaved, and the image of a woman who wears make up is always associated with an insincere personality.

Proper self-representation can also be discerned from the way a woman dresses:

**ST:** If anything, her eccentric style of dress heightened her unusual looks. Fashionable, tight and sexy clothes were too brash and in-your-face for someone like Olivia, who was more at home in antique chiffon blouses and long Edwardian dresses she picked up in flea markets than in the chic modern clothes Stephen liked her to wear. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Chính kiểu trang phục lập dị lại càng làm cô trông hơn người. Các kiểu váy áo bó chặt và gợi tình thời thượng cô thấy quá xác xược và chào mời. Phần lớn thời gian ở nhà cô thường ưa mặc áo cánh the với chân váy kiểu Edward, những thứ mà cô mua ở chợ trời hơn là những món đồ sang trọng thời thượng mà Stephen thích cô mặc.

[It was the eccentric clothes that made her look better than other. To her, tight, sexy and fashionable dresses were disrespectful and inviting. At home most of the time she preferred wearing blouses and Edward style skirts which she buys from flea market rather than the luxurious elegant and trendy things Stephen likes her to wear]

This example illustrates the importance of styles of clothes to a woman, if she knows what suits her, she will stand out from the crowd. The heroine in the extract appears to be a person who is fond of vintage style and tends to wear what she wants, and not what others want to see her in. The mention of men in this example is remarkable, because, to some extent, it highlights the fact that women dress not only for themselves but also to attract men's attention. It is interesting to see that while in the original, there is a description of Olivia's style of dressing in general, the translation presents it as what the female character wears at home. It seems that

the translator has misunderstood the phrase “to be at home” in the original context; therefore in the translation of the extract, Olivia appears to be a woman who only stays at home and tries to wear clothes that will satisfy her husband’s taste. Another noticeable point is in the translation of *Edwardian* dresses as Edward style skirts. Such a translation gives target text readers the impression that “Edward” is a fashion brand or Olivia’s favourite designer while in fact it actually indicates that it is a vintage style originally dating from time of King Edward of United Kingdom in 1900s – the Edwardian era. This error in translation has an undeniable effect on the representation of the woman in the example because the audience may not imagine what the heroine actually wears or understand why such style seen so eccentric.

Proper self-representation is important for a woman not only in her daily dresses but also on events such as engagement or wedding as illustrated in the following example:

**ST:** It felt a bit weird to be getting engaged at her age. Evie always associated engagements with besotted twenty something who’d been longing for a wedding pageant complete with seventeen bridesmaids since they were primary schoolgirls playing with Barbie in her wedding dress. Upholding her outwardly conservative image, she’d pointed out that most older brides stuck to sedate cream two-pieces, demure hats and register office affairs. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Việc đính hôn ở độ tuổi của cô cũng hơi kì cục. Evie luôn gắn chuyện đính hôn với độ tuổi hai mươi đầy si mê mong đợi một đám cưới trọng thể và nhộn nhịp với mười bảy cô phù dâu trong bộ đồ cưới. Luôn khẳng khăng giữ trong lòng cái hình ảnh tung bừng hào nhoáng về các đám cưới, cô cho rằng những cô dâu già dặn hơn sẽ cứng đờ đờ trong bộ vét màu kem dịu, chiếc mũ kín đáo và với khách khứa là những người cùng văn phòng. (Kelly, 2003: 19)

[Engagement at her age was a little bit weird. Evie always associated engagement with crazy age of twenties, who always longed to have a solemn and bustling wedding with seventeen bridesmaid in wedding dress. Always holding in her heart such concept of those flashy and jubilant weddings, she thought that older brides should stick to two-pieces of cream colour, demure hats with guests, who were colleagues from office.]

As can be seen from the above extract, the heroine is engaged and thus, is about to get married. What comes to her mind is not the happiness of being a bride, but how to maintain her image on her wedding day so that she can avoid prejudice and judgements for getting married in her late thirties. It is noticeable that in the English original, her choice of her wedding dress is not a matter of personal principle or because she wants to uphold her conservative image in public, it is more likely her sarcastic viewpoint of how the society sees older brides. The Vietnamese heroine decides to do that because of the prejudice she has against weddings. Another mistranslation occurs with *register office affairs*, which is rendered into Vietnamese as *guests, who are colleagues from office*. In the original context, the heroine is discussing what she will wear at the official ceremony of her marriage while the translation makes it sound like the reception is a part of the wedding. In my assumption, this mistranslation may be a result of cultural gap where the translator does not have a sufficient understanding of the source culture to properly interpret the source culture allusion.

It may also be said that proper image can become a major obsession for women, judging from the following examples:

**ST:** She was her masterpiece, her life's work. Not that she was ever complacent about her appearance: she was also her own harshest critic. Long before it was ever visible to the naked eye, she could tell when her roots needed to be done. She could *feel* her hair growing. And she always knew—even if the scales and the tape measure disagreed—when she'd put on even an ounce of fat. She fancied she could hear her skin stretch and expand to accommodate it. (Keyes, 2004 : 286)

**TT:** Cô là kiệt tác của chính mình, là công trình của đời cô. Nói thế không phải là có lúc nào đó cô lấy làm tự mãn về vẻ bề ngoài của mình: cô cũng là nhà phê bình nghiêm ngặt nhất của chính mình. Từ rất lâu trước khi con mắt thường kịp nhận ra, cô đã có thể biết rằng khi nào những nếp nhăn của mình cần được o bế. Cô có thể cảm thấy tóc mình đang mọc dài ra. Và cô luôn biết- ngay cả khi những chiếc cân và cái thước dây không nhất trí quan điểm- khi nào thì cô vừa tăng cân dù chỉ một ounce mỡ. Cô hình dung cô có thể nghe thấy tiếng da mình căng ra và giãn nở chỉ để chứa chỗ mỡ đó. (Keyes, 2009: 335-336)

[She was her own masterpiece, her life's work. Saying that does not mean at time she was complacent about her appearance: she was also her own cruelest critic. Long before the normal eye can spot, she could know when her wrinkles should be hidden. She could feel her hair growing. And she always knew—even if the scales and the tape measure disagreed—when she put on even an ounce of fat. She imagined she could hear her skin stretch and expand to accommodate it]

**ST:** She paused and narrowed her eyes. Was that a line she saw on her forehead? The merest whisper of a hint of a wrinkle? It was! Time for another Botox injection. She was from the Attack Is the Best Form of Defense school of beauty therapy. Get it before it gets you. (Keyes, 2004 : 286)

**TT:** Cô dừng lại và nheo mắt. Có phải cô vừa nhìn thấy một đường thẳng trên trán mình không nhỉ? Tiếng thì thầm mơ hồ nhất của lời ám chỉ về một nếp nhăn chẳng? Chính xác! Đến lúc cho một liều tiêm Botox khác rồi. Cô xuất thân từ trường phái liệu pháp làm đẹp tấn công là cách phòng ngự tốt nhất. Tiên hạ thủ vi cường.

[She paused and slightly closed her eyes. Did she just see a line on her forehead? The merest whisper of a hint of a wrinkle? Exactly! Time for another Botox injection. She was from the school of beauty therapy of Attack Is the Best Form of Defense .the first who attacks gets the advantage.]

**ST:** Before they left, Lisa went to the ladies' to do her hourly check on her appearance. Sweeping a cruelly appraising eye over her slender, tanned reflection in a white Ghost dress, she was pleased. This was no misplaced arrogance. Even her worst enemy (and competition was stiff) would have acknowledged that she looked good. (Keyes, 2004 : 286)

**TT:** Trước khi họ lên đường, Lisa vào phòng vệ sinh nữ để thực hiện màn kiểm tra hàng giờ về vẻ bề ngoài của mình. Lướt con mắt đánh giá đầy khắt khe qua hình



bóng phản chiếu thon thả và rám nắng của mình trong chiếc váy trắng hiệu Ghost, cô lấy làm hài lòng. Không một chút kiêu căng không đứng chỗ nào. Thậm chí cả kẻ thù tồi tệ nhất của cô ( và sự cạnh tranh thật khốc liệt) hẳn cũng phải công nhận là trông cô rất ổn

[Before they hit the road, Lisa went to the ladies' to conduct her hourly check on her appearance. Scanning her strictly evaluating eyes over her slim and tanned reflection in the white dress of Ghost brand, she felt pleased. No arrogance in wrong place. Even her worst enemies (and competition was really fierce) would have to accept that she looked very fine]

These three examples, both original and translation, reveal the importance of looking good to women. Traditionally, it has always been a common idea that women are defined by their physical appearance, but popular culture, and particularly contemporary female popular fiction, has brought this belief to a new level, in which it is no longer an idea of looking good but an obsession. The female heroine in these extracts appears to be obsessed by the importance of looking attractive. She does hourly checks on her appearance, feels every single change on her body and in order to maintain the “looking good” factor, her beauty procedure involves also minor surgery processes with the botox injections. The significance of having a proper physical appearance seems to be a competition in the heroine's words; she makes efforts not only for herself, but also to win over her enemies in beauty battles. This idea becomes even more intensive in the translation, especially with the usage of the idiom *tiên hạ thủ vi cường* (the first who attacks gets the advantage in war), which comes from a Chinese ancient book on military tactics named *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu as a translation for the phrase *get it before it gets you* in the original. The Vietnamese verbs used in translation

“scan, strictly evaluate” in comparison with the original “sweep, cruelly appraise” also play a role in portraying a woman who longs to have the best physical appearance.

The texts seem to communicate that women, who do not possess such natural beauty, have to struggle harder to appear attractive. Such ideas are illustrated in the following extracts and translation:

**ST:** Determined not to look like a whale-sized lump of lard in her bikini, Evie had drawn up an anti-cellulite plan which would give her just over nine months to turn her orange-peeled rear end into a smooth, supple, peach skinned thing fit for exposure. Over one week into the no-coffee-except-on-special-occasions regime, Evie felt very virtuous. But, God, it was hard.

**TT:** Với lòng quyết tâm không để mình trông giống như một tảng mỡ lợn khổng lồ trong bộ bikini, Evie đã vạch ra một kế hoạch tiêu mỡ nhằm chỉ trong vòng chín tháng phải cải thiện mặt hậu như quả cam vừa bị lột vỏ của cô trở thành một thứ mượt mà, mềm mại, hồng hào khả dĩ đem ra phơi. Trong vòng một tuần lễ của chế độ không một giọt cà phê, chỉ trừ những dịp thật đặc biệt, Evie cảm thấy tự hào. Nhưng lạy Chúa, điều đó thật là khó khăn. (Kelly, 2003:6)

[With determination not to let herself look like a giant lump of lard in bikini, Evie had drawn a plan to get rid of anti-cellulite in 9 months which would improve her rear that looked like a peeled orange to become something smooth, soft, pink for exposure. During a week of no single drop of coffee except on special occasion, Evie felt proud. But worship to God, this was hard.]

It can be seen from both texts that the heroine is completely resolute in her choices and adheres to a strict dietary regime to transform herself and have a better appearance. The difference between the English and Vietnamese Evie lies in the way she feels about her choices. While the Vietnamese Evie only feels pleased and proud that she has maintained a strict diet, Evie in the English original considers what she is doing to be an honest and moral way of life. The similar attitude

towards the choice to improve their physical appearance in both texts highlights the importance of the “looking good” factor to femininity in both Vietnamese and Western societies. It is noticeable that the way the two women describe themselves is also slightly different. The Western heroine seems to exaggerate her state of being overweight by describing herself as looking like “a whale-sized lump of lard” while in Vietnamese it is simply as a “giant”. This exaggeration, according to Weston Joyce, is a characteristic of English, where this figure of speech is used for humorous purpose (Weston Joyce, 1910). Putting the two heroines in this light, the female character in the original appears to have a greater sense of humour, while the Vietnamese heroine sounds drier and less funny.

**ST:** From behind, her rear looked like a relief map of the Moon - not the sort of thing to expose to all and sundry on the romantic isle of Crete. Unless lunar landscaped bums suddenly became the latest holiday ‘must-have’, on a par with a simply knotted sarong, sun-kissed skin and jelly flip flops. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Từ phía sau, trông mặt hậu của cô không khác gì bản đồ địa hình mặt trăng, không phải là cái của có thể đem khoe ra dưới ánh nắng mặt trời của một hòn đảo xinh xinh thơ mộng của vùng Crete. Trừ khi bất thành hình địa hình mặt trăng thay đổi và trở thành hình dạng thời thượng phải có cho những kì nghỉ, ở cái mức có thể khoác một cái sà rông một nút, nước da bánh mật và mang dép xỏ ngón (Kelly, 2003: 6)

[From behind, her back face had no difference with a terrain map of the Moon, not something that could be shown under the sun of the beautiful and romantic island of Crete. Unless suddenly Moon terrain changed and became a trendy, must have shape for holiday on a par with one knot sarong, swarthy complexion and flip flops.]

In both the English original and Vietnamese translation, the character appears to have an inferiority complex about her body before going on holiday. However, it is remarkable that there are some alterations in the Vietnamese translation. The

usage of informal words such as “rear” and “bum” is omitted and replaced by more neutral words in the Vietnamese translation. The constant replacement of informal words or slang by more neutral and formal words reaffirms the importance of female virtues in speech for Vietnamese women as mentioned in the subsection 5.2.7 dealing with the translation of swear words. Another noticeable point is the recreation of “sun kissed skin” as “a swarthy complexion”. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines sun-kissed as referring to “a person whose appearance is attractive because they have recently been in the sun”, and swarthy complexion as “dark skin” (Cambridge, 2014). This alteration has led to significantly different understandings of the representation in this context. Taking into account the context of Western society, sun kissed skin, to some extent, may represent a woman, who just came back from a holiday in a sunny place, and it is also a sign of beauty and attractiveness. Traditionally, in Vietnamese culture, beauty is always connected with snow white skin, as described in one the most significant works of Vietnamese literature: “In quiet grace, Van was beyond compare: her face a moon, her eyebrows two full curves; her smile a flower, her voice the song of jade; her hair the sheen of clouds, her skin white snow” (Nguyen Du, 1983), whereas swarthy complexion is never seen as a sign of beauty and is often related to lower class people who earn their living by doing manual jobs outdoors. Therefore, the strategy used in translation can be assumed as the way the translator chooses to introduce a Western idea of beauty to Vietnamese audience.

The idea of beauty is also demonstrated in the following examples:

**ST:** Evie longed to look autocratic: she dreamed of having Slavic cheekbones, a ski-jump nose she could stare down and a steely gaze that reduced people to quivering wrecks. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Evie muốn có vẻ bề ngoài lạnh lùng kiêu sa: cô mơ có gò má cao như người Slavơ, mũi nhọn hoắt và ánh mắt thép có thể hạ gục bất cứ ai thành đồng giẻ rách run rẩy. (Kelly, 2003: 15)

[Evie wants her outlook to be reserved and classy, she dreamed of having high cheekbone as Slavic people, a sharp-pointed nose and steely eyes that can defeat and make any people become shaking cloth]

**ST:** She hated being cute, which was one of the reasons she frequently set her face into a frosty glare, her ‘cross old cow’ face as Rosie laughingly called it. She sighed and was trying to imagine herself four inches taller, a stone thinner and with a sophisticated short haircut when a tall striking woman with a patrician profile walked past the salon reception desk. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Cô rất ghét bị coi là xinh xắn, đó là một trong những lí do khiến cô luôn tạo cho mình một bộ mặt lạnh tanh, bộ mặt “lạnh như bom” như Rosie thường gọi đùa. Cô thở dài và cố thử hình dung ra chính mình với chiều cao tăng cả chục phân, mảnh mai săn chắc với một mái tóc được cắt tỉa cầu kì khi một phụ nữ cao, hấp dẫn, có dáng vẻ quyền quý đi qua bàn lễ tân của salon. (Kelly, 2003: 16)

[she hates being seen as cute, that is one of the reasons she always set face into a frosty glare, “a frosty as ice” face as Rosie always calls it. She sighs and tries to imagine herself 10 centimeters taller, slim, and toned with sophisticated haircut when a tall, attractive and classy look walks by the reception desk]

A sophisticated haircut, high cheekbones, a slim body, cold and classy appearance with a steely gaze or in short a model’s appearance – all the aspects of beauty mentioned in the two examples can be seen as a reproduction of what Milestone & Meyer (2012) and Negra (2009) call “gender stereotypes”. According to these scholars, various popular forms, including movies, magazines, fiction and advertisements have spread these gender stereotypes globally and as a result, all women have their idea of beauty constructed on the basis of these concepts which put pressure on them. It can be observed in the original extracts that such pressure can be seen through the usage of strong verbs : *Evie longed to look autocratic, she hates being cute, she sets her faces, she tries to imagine*. The sequence of verbs

used gives readers an impression of a woman who appears to be far from satisfied with her looks and longs to improve her physical appearance. It is noticeable that these concepts of beauty do not exist in Vietnamese culture, and the translator has preserved these concepts into Vietnamese by notions as *look autocratic, a ski-jump nose, a stone thinner and a woman with a patrician profile* so that the idea of Western beauty can be presented to Vietnamese readers. It has to be highlighted that in the Vietnamese traditional understanding of feminine beauty, some features of the Western ideal beauty are not signs of beauty in Vietnam. For example, high cheekbones are seen as a curse for women as it is believed that high cheekbones are signs of masculinity of women or unsuccessful marriage. Therefore, it can be said that there is a clash of ideals of beauty in Western countries and Vietnam. The translator retained the ideals of the ST, this may be assumed as she either wanted to introduce the Western idea of beauty to her readers or simply she wanted her audience aware of the fact they are reading translated novel. In addition, certain features of beauty have spread globally due to the widespread pervasiveness of popular culture, so Vietnamese readers will have no difficulty in understanding such notions of beauty, as well as the dreams of the heroines.

### **5.3.3 Women and Speech**

There is a Vietnamese saying that “Lời nói không mất tiền mua, lựa lời mà nói cho hài lòng nhau” (speech costs nothing so use your language to please others – my translation). Speech is a form of communication skills; therefore, this skill is considered to be an important attribute of Vietnamese women, who are supposed to speak with grace and tenderness. It is obvious that nothing like informal words or slang and swearing can be acceptable. The following examples chosen in this

subsection will aim at demonstrating how women in certain contexts have to control their speech for the sake of their work and family.

**ST:** Still, it was one thing thinking up all the tough things she'd like to say to her pushy, inconsiderate in-laws. It was another thing entirely actually saying any of them. And being so blunt would hurt Stephen dreadfully because he idolised his parents. Olivia wouldn't hurt him for the world. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Nhưng còn một điều canh cánh trong cô về những còn người huênh hoang, vô ý tứ đó. Nếu quá ư thẳng thừng với họ thì sẽ xúc phạm kinh khủng đến Stephen. Anh lí tưởng hoá cha mẹ mình. Dù thế nào, Olivia cũng không thể làm tổn thương đến anh (Kelly, 1999: 52)

[But there was a thing that haunted her about these bragging and inconsiderate people. If she was blunt to them, it would be dreadfully disrespectful towards Stephen. He idolised his parents. No matter what, Olivia could not hurt him]

This extract provides a portrait of a woman who is really upset with her in-laws but there is nothing she can do about that because any action she takes may harm her relationship with her husband. This example indicates the dedication of a woman when it comes to the well-being of their relationship. It shows that the heroine has to accept anything that is related to her husband no matter how much she dislikes it. Such issues sound even more serious when translated into Vietnamese. Being blunt with the husband's parents only hurts the husband in English, while in Vietnamese it is an act of disrespect. The wife in the English context would not hurt her husband, as this is her choice, but, in Vietnamese she has no right to do such things. It may not be the translator's intention to represent the heroine in such a way, but as a matter of fact, married women in Vietnam are expected to behave and treat their husband and parents in-laws with respect. Under no circumstances can women say or do anything that could be seen as

disrespectful to their husband's family, because it will destroy not only her reputation but also her own family (Nam, 2012). Therefore, a woman must always keep her feelings in check. Taking this fact into account, the replacement of verbs in the translation can be seen as a culturally-based decision rather than a mistranslation. In other words, such shifts in translation can be said to have made the translation appear proper in the target context.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the following example:

**ST:** She could have told him about her hellish week in school, about the horrible kids in 3A or about how Cedric and Sheilagh had sabotaged her entire shopping plans by landing unannounced at the apartment. But she didn't. She'd tried to be the perfect wife to the busy executive by standing smiling at the door to greet him with freshly washed pale gold hair flopping around her shoulders, wearing the elegant silk shift dress he loved and that she hated because it rode up her thighs when she walked. What a pity he didn't appreciate her efforts. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Cô muốn được nói với anh về cái tuần lễ địa ngục vừa rồi, về bọn trẻ quỷ sứ ở lớp 3A, về việc Cedric và Sheilagh đã phá hoại kế hoạch mua sắm của cô bằng việc tình hình xuất hiện. Nhưng cô đã không nói. Cô đã cố gắng làm một người vợ hoàn hảo của một cán bộ chủ chốt với nụ cười tươi đứng chờ bên cửa, mái tóc vàng rực gội sạch sẽ phủ xuống bờ vai, bộ váy lụa thanh nhã mà anh yêu thích, cái váy mà cô thực sự không thích nó vì nó bó vào đùi mỗi khi cô bước đi. Thật đáng buồn anh đã không để mắt đến mọi nỗ lực của cô. (Kelly, 1999: 59)

[She wanted to be able to talk to him about the hellish week, about the evil children of class 3A, about how Cedric and Sheilagh ruined her shopping plans by their unexpected appearance. But she didn't. She tried to be a perfect wife of an important executive, standing at door waiting for him with fresh smile, cleaning gold hair flopping on her shoulder, and wearing the elegant silk dress that he liked, but she really hated because it rode up her thighs when she walked. It was so sad that he did not pay attention to her efforts]

In the English original, the heroine has the possibility of talking to her husband but she chooses not to, while in the translation, the character wanted to have that possibility but it was not given to her. In addition, the heroine wants to be



appreciated for her efforts and she feels disappointed when this does not happen in the English extract, but in the translation, the same woman merely wants her effort to be noticed, and when her husband does not do that, she is upset. So it seems that the woman in translation sounds more burdened and powerless. Both examples have shown that there is an expectation of women's manner of speaking in the domestic sphere. A certain level of oppression of women in both texts can be observed but the nature of oppression in the source context and the target context is different.

**ST:** She opened the fridge, wishing she'd kept quiet earlier. Her and her big mouth. She should have said nothing. Now Stephen was in one of his moods and the drive home would be hell. (Kelly, 1999)

**TT:** Cô mở tủ lạnh, ước gì lúc trước cô ngậm miệng. Cô và cái mồm quàng quạc của cô. Đáng ra cô không nên nói gì. Bây giờ thì chộc tức Stephen rồi, và chuyến đi sắp tới sẽ rất tồi tệ. (Kelly, 1999: 59)

[She opened the fridge, wishing earlier she had closed her mouth. She and her being loud-mouthed. She should have said nothing. Now she irritated Stephen and the coming trip will be very bad.]

This example illustrates a situation in which a woman cannot control her speech and gets into trouble because of that. It is obvious that both women feel guilty, but the Vietnamese translation seems to boost the guilt of the woman. “cái mồm quàng quạc”- being loud-mouthed has a purely negative meaning in Vietnamese and is often used to describe a person (mostly women or when the speaker wants to indicate that a man has this womanly feature) who speaks or complains constantly about things. So to an extent, the translation seems to reinforce the heroine's bad manners. It is also remarkable to see that, in the

English extract the husband is in his bad mood because he does not like arguing with his wife, while in Vietnamese, the impression is given that it is the female character who annoys the husband and she is to blame for everything. Another interesting point is the replacement of “hell” by “bad”. Both indicate that the two will have an unpleasant time ahead but hell is a more informal lexeme in this context than bad. Taking the fact mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, it can be said that the translator has chosen to neutralise the heroine’s speech. These translational shifts observed in these examples reveal that in terms of speech, women in both texts are oppressed but in different ways, the oppression in the speech of Western women seems to be rooted in self-oppression, while for the Vietnamese women, it is the culture and social expectation that oppress her freedom of speech.

Let us now examine women and their speech in the working environment:

**ST:** The world lapsed into slow motion as Lisa realized that this was a fait accompli. She had no choice in it at all. Fixed in a frozen scream, she needed several long seconds to understand that there was nothing she could do except hobble from the room. (Keyes, 2004)

**TT:** Thế giới đổ sụp như một cảnh quay chậm khi Lisa nhận ra rằng đây là sự đã rồi. Cô hoàn toàn không có sự lựa chọn nào khác. Mắc kẹt trong một tiếng hét đông cứng lại, phải mất vài giây dài đằng đặc để cô hiểu ra rằng mình không thể làm gì ngoài việc lê bước ra khỏi căn phòng này. (Keyes, 2009: 16)

[The world collapsed like a slow motion when Lisa realized that it was fixed. She absolutely had no other choices. Stuck in frozen scream, she needed several everlasting seconds to understand there was nothing else she could do but dragged herself from the room]

This extract is the description of Lisa's feeling after receiving the director board's decision to relocate from London to Dublin. It is undeniable that in the working environment, one should behave professionally and cannot show too much emotion, but in this case, it looks like the female character's emotions are frozen because of a *fait accompli*. Both the original and translation represent an image of a disenchanted and helpless woman, who cannot speak her mind. However, there is a slight difference between a woman who is "fixed in a frozen scream and hobbles out of the room" and one who "stuck in a frozen scream and is dragged from the room." According to *Longman Contemporary Dictionary* (2014), both drag and hobble are verbs used to describe a movement made with difficulty, but one hobbles when his/her legs or feet hurt, while he/she drags when he/she is tired or unhappy. Bearing this usage of word in mind, it can be said that the character in the Vietnamese translation seems to be more emotional than the English one.

Let now examine swearing as a feature of speech.

It can be said that to a certain extent all languages in the world have a range of swear word used for expletives. According to Ghassempur (2009), swear words can be divided into three categories (cathartic, abusive and social swearing) depending on the function of the swear words in a specific context. Cathartic swearing is used to express one's pleasant or unpleasant surprise, or shock, disbelief, outrage, irritation, disapproval or worry (ibid: 75). Abusive swearing is

used to insult in an intentional way as a result of anger. While cathartic swearing does not need an audience, the abusive swearer requires a target (ibid: 97-98). Social swearing can be used in situations that completely lack negativity (ibid: 120). Putting the swear words in Irish Chick Lit in this light, following is an analysis on how they are translated into Vietnamese.

**ST:** “Smug bitches,” I thought sourly (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Mấy mụ vênh váo ( Keyes, 2010: 23)

[Vainglorious hag]

**ST:** That *bitch!*” I exclaimed. (Keyes, 1995)

**TT:** Con mụ quỷ cái (Keyes, 2010: 24)

[The evil hag]

According to Ghassempur’s, “bitch” is categorised in an abusive category, and is used with an aggressive intention (Ghassempur, 2009: 39-67). In the original context, it is used to show Claire’s bitter attitude towards women around her in the hospital, and towards her husband’s lover. In the Vietnamese translation, it is translated in the form of *adj + hag* in order to show the character of a woman rather than describe the aggressive attitude of the main character towards others. It is probably explained by the cultural fact that Vietnamese women are supposed to follow what was known as the “four virtues” including diligence at work, modesty in manner, propriety in speech and adherence to the expected moral standards. Therefore, it would be shocking in Vietnam for a woman with a university degree

like Claire to swear or use abusive language. However, it must be noticed that the pronoun *mụ* (hag – my translation) is commonly used as a negative term to address women in Vietnamese culture. Therefore, it can be said that the Vietnamese translations fulfill the same function as in the source texts.

**ST:** Yes, I'm hhhhowwwwwcch!" she yelped as she stubbed her toe against the bedpost. "Shit, shit, shit, fuck, bastard, shit, crap!" (Ahern, 2004: 8)

**TT:** "ôi" cô kêu lên khi vấp vào chân giường, "đau quá". (Ahern, 2007: 18)

[“Ouch” she yelped when stubbing her leg against the bed post, “that hurts”]

The swear words in the above example extracted from Cecelia Ahern's work is used with cathartic function to express the heroine's unpleasant feeling when stubbing her toes against the bedpost. They are all replaced in the translation by the phrase “that hurts”. It is another example that reveals the role of four virtues in Vietnamese culture in general and it also illustrates the idea that a woman is supposed to speak politely in Vietnamese. In addition, such replacement can lead to an assumption that the translator has no understanding of the function of swear words in English and s/he just omitted them and used a phrase that has a function of expressing feeling so that the translation is acceptable in Vietnamese context.

The analysis in this section has provided some understanding of how the speech of women are translated into Vietnamese. First of all, it can be seen that there is a tendency to neutralise or omit informal words or slang when the speech of women is translated from English into Vietnamese. Secondly, both the original and translation have revealed certain social standards of women's behaviour and

speech. It seems that in both societies, women are expected to be well-behaved and eloquent when it comes to their personal speech and this creates some oppression on women. The translational shifts have revealed that these expectations and standards of speech for women are much stricter for Vietnamese women. It is important to mention that the number of examples analysed are small and the conclusion is, therefore, tentative. However, taking into account the facts that examples come from different novels and these novels are translated and published by different publishing houses at different time, it can be concluded that for the way speech women are often adapted so that her speech appear proper to target audience.

#### **5.3.4 Women and Courtesy**

Courtesy is the one of the most important values that Vietnamese culture places on women and women are always judged by such criteria. The following subsection analyses how Western women are represented within the concept of courtesy in Vietnamese translation.

**ST:** I sat back in my seat, my baby on my lap. I suppose I must have looked just like a normal mother to all the other passengers. But—and the thought struck me quite forcibly—I wasn't. I was now a Deserted Wife. I was a statistic. I had been lots of things in my life. I had been Claire the dutiful daughter. I had been Claire the scourge of a daughter. I had been Claire the student. I had been Claire the harlot (briefly—as I said, if we get the time, I'll fill you in). I had been Claire the administrator. I had been Claire the wife. And now here I was being Claire the deserted wife. And the idea did not sit comfortably with me at all, I can tell you.(Keyes,2003: 38)

**TT:** Tôi ngả lưng ra ghế, em bé đặt trong lòng. Tôi đã từng là cô con gái Claire chăm ngoan. Là đứa con gái Claire tai họa. Là cô sinh viên Claire. Là con nhỏ Claire ăn đêm (ngần gọn thôi. Như tôi có nói, nếu có thời gian tôi sẽ kể chi tiết cho bạn nghe). Là cô quản lý Claire. Là cô Claire vợ hiền. Và bây giờ thì tôi là cô vợ Claire bị chồng bỏ. Nói thật với bạn, tôi không thích cái Claire cuối cùng tí nào.( Keyes, 2010: 34)

[I pushed my chair back, put my baby on my lap. I used to be well-behaved daughter Claire. Was catastrophic daughter Claire. Was student Claire. Was “night-hunter” Claire (briefly . As I said, if I have time, I will tell you the details). Was manager Claire. Was virtuous wife Claire. And I was Claire, the wife who was left by husband. Honestly speaking with you, I did not like the last Claire at all.]

This extract is another self-description by Keyes’s heroine. She is so devastated by the fact that her husband has left her that she feels insecure and has lost all her self-confidence. The line “I suppose I must have looked just like a normal mother to all the other passengers” reveals her state of anxiety and also shows how important it is for a woman to maintain her public appearance. A sequence of repetitions of the structure “I had been” emphasises the contrast between her current situation and how she had previously been, which gives readers an understanding of her pain and suffering. It is also very interesting to note that the heroine chooses the word “*harlot*” to describe herself. Harlot is a Middle English word, which is used as a euphemism to refer to a promiscuous woman or prostitute in the King James Bible (*Etymology Dictionary*, Online). The usage of this old-fashioned word underscores the well-educated background of a woman who has a degree in English and Literature and knows how to describe herself properly at one point and at the same time it is also probably an ironically

chosen word because it also expresses Claire's attitude towards Victorian and Catholic morals.

The omission in translation of the first few sentences leads to the absence of the pessimistic, uncertain state of mind of the main character in the target text. It is also remarkable to observe how Claire - "the dutiful daughter", "the harlot", "the administrator" and "the wife" has been recreated in the Vietnamese translation. In the English source text description, Claire appears to have been a disobedient child when she was small, then a playful adult, then a woman who has a job and a family, or in short, an ordinary woman with an ordinary life, while in the Vietnamese translation Claire is represented not only as an obedient but also as a well-behaved daughter, not just as a wife but as a virtuous wife, not just as an administrator but as a manager. In this way, the Vietnamese Claire appears as a woman who has a successful career but still adheres to her traditional role of being a virtuous wife. This image of Claire is very close to the understanding held by Vietnamese audiences of women who are expected to balance work and family life. The translator seems to have adhered more to Vietnamese norms of female behaviour than to Western ones. It is also noticeable that the way in which the word "harlot" is rendered into Vietnamese has led to some translation loss. While the English usage highlights Claire's well-educated background and sense of humour, the Vietnamese rendering represents only the connotative meaning of the



English original but loses the background detail provided in the source language usage.

**ST:** major pang of guilt—she was crying because I wasn’t breastfeeding her. Maybe she deeply resented being fed from a bottle. Yes, I know, you’re probably outraged that I didn’t breast-feed her. You probably think that I wasn’t a proper mother. But, long ago, *before* I had my baby, I had thought it would be permissible to have my body returned to me after I had loaned it out for nine months. I knew that I wouldn’t be able to call my soul my own now that I was a mother. But I had kind of hoped that I might be able to call my nipples my own. And I’m ashamed to say that I was afraid that, if I breast-fed, I would be a victim of “shrunk, flat, droopy tit” syndrome. (Keyes, 2003: 30)

**TT:** tôi thấy tội lỗi vô cùng, bé khóc vì không được bú mẹ. Chắc là bé ghét bú bình. Tôi biết bạn sẽ giận dữ khi biết tôi không cho em bé bú ti. Chắc bạn nghĩ tôi là một bà mẹ không ra gì. Nhưng đã từ lâu, rất lâu trước khi sinh em bé, tôi nghĩ mình sẽ được phép lấy lại thân thể của mình sau khi đã đem cho mượn suốt chín tháng. Tôi biết bây giờ là mẹ rồi thì tôi chẳng được xem linh hồn mình là của riêng nữa. Tôi xấu hổ quá phải thú nhận với bạn là tôi sợ nếu cho bé bú ti, tôi sẽ thành nạn nhân của chứng “vú sệ, teo tóp” (Keyes, 2010: 29)

[I felt very guilty, the baby cried because she didn’t get breastfeed. Maybe she hated sucking the bottle. You would get angry when knowing that I didn’t breastfeed my baby. Surely you think that I was not a good mother. But it has been long, very long before giving birth to my baby, I thought I was allowed to get my body back after lending it for the whole nine months. I knew I was a mother I couldn’t even think my soul was mine. I was ashamed to confess to you that I was afraid that if I breastfed my baby, I would become the victim of shrunk and droopy breasts]

**ST:** Everything really *does* change when you give birth. I never thought I’d see the day when I’d put anyone else’s needs before the attractiveness of my tits. So if my little sweetheart didn’t stop crying soon, I was going to consider breast-feeding her. If it made her happy, I’d put up with cracked nipples, leaky tits and sniggering thirteen-year-old boys trying to get a look at my jugs on the bus. (Keyes, 2003: 31)

**TT:** Sinh con rồi mọi thứ đúng là thay đổi cả. Trước đây tôi chưa từng nghĩ sẽ có một ngày mình đặt nhu cầu của bất cứ ai lên trên cái hấp dẫn của đôi núm hoa của mình. Vậy nên nếu em bé yêu không ngừng khóc, tôi sẽ suy nghĩ cho bé bú ti. Nếu bé ung, tôi sẽ chấp nhận chuyện hai vú rỉ sữa với hai đầu ti nứt nẻ. Tôi sẽ chỉ cười khẩy nếu đám ranh con trên xe buýt ráng nhìn cho bằng được bình sữa của tôi. (Keyes, 2003: 29)

[Giving birth changes everything. Before I never thought one day I would put anyone’s needs before the attractiveness of my breast. So if my baby didn’t stop crying, I would breastfeed her. If she liked that, I would accept to have leaky

breast with crackled nipples. I would just snigger if the young teenagers on the bus tried to look at my jar of milk]

These two extracts depict a woman who is undecided when it comes to breastfeeding as she is really aware of her body, and in particular, the beauty and function of her breasts. In the first extract, the woman understands her role and responsibility as a mother, but on the other hand, she is more concerned about her own body and she still puts her own beauty before the baby's need to be breastfed while in the second extract she makes a compromise between her body and her baby's needs. The Vietnamese translation has fully rendered her confusion, but it is also noticeable that there are some differences between the translation and the source text. In terms of language usage, the original character uses an informal word for her breasts such as *tits*, while in the Vietnamese translation the slang is translated only as breast, which is a polite and formal term in Vietnamese in spite of the fact that equivalent slang does exist in Vietnamese language. This could be explained by the traditional expectation placed on Vietnamese women, who are expected to follow what is known as the "four virtues", which are diligence at work, modesty in manner, propriety in speech and adherence to the expected moral standards. Therefore, the neutralisation of slang can here be seen as an effort to represent the woman as a decent mother.

It is also noticeable that the sentence "*But I had kind of hoped that I might be able to call my nipples my own.*" is omitted in the translation, which can be explained by the assumption that the female body is a sensitive issue in

Vietnamese culture and the whole context of the extract has represented the heroine properly. This sentence in English highlights the self-obsession of the heroine and her relationship to her body and the fact that it is not translated into Vietnamese is another example of the translator adhering to target cultural norms.

A noteworthy shift in translation is the attitude of the female character towards the teenagers staring at her breasts on the bus. In the original, she puts up with those sniggering teenagers and tolerates such attitudes, while in the translation she sniggers at those boys who stare at her. This mistranslation leads to the different reception of the female character between source and target readers. In the source language, the female character is no longer affected by the way those teenagers look at her, as she understands her role and her responsibility as a mother, while in the translation the heroine still seems to pay attention to such things.

Sexuality has always been set as a fundamental for judgements of women and their courtesy (Skeggs, 1999; Myer and Milstone, 2012). Let now examine the way women and her sexual desire are portrayed and translated.

**ST:** Occasionally she allowed herself a little treat, and had a quick fling with one of these gorgeous no-hopers, but never made the mistake of thinking there was any future in them. They were human Milky Ways—the man you can eat between meals without ruining your appetite. (Keyes, 2004; 158)

**TT:** thỉnh thoảng cô cho phép mình để dãi một chút, và có một màn yêu đương chớp nhoáng với một trong những kẻ không hy vọng này, nhưng không bao giờ phạm sai lầm đi nghĩ rằng ở họ có chút tương lai nào đó.. Họ là những thanh sô cô

la MilkWay – loại đàn ông bạn có thể ăn vặt giữa những bữa chính nhưng không sợ mất đi cảm giác ngon miệng. ( Keyes, 2009: 191)

[Sometimes she allowed herself to be amenable and had a quick love with one of these no-hopers, but never mistakenly thought that they had any future. They were bars of chocolate Milk Way, kind of man you could eat as snacks between meals without worrying that you would lose your appetite ]

**ST:** She felt wicked and decadent—sometimes what a girl really needs is fast and furious sex with a total stranger. And what's the point of having a fabulous, starved body if someone doesn't get to see it occasionally? (Keyes, 2004: 292)

**TT:** Cô cảm thấy thật đều giả và suy đồi- nhiều lúc cô gái thực sự cần là một màn ái ân dữ dội và chớp nhoáng với một người đàn ông xa lạ. Và việc sở hữu một cơ thể mỹ miều, chết đói liệu có ích gì nếu ai đó không thì thoáng được nhìn thấy nó. (Keyes, 2009: 342)

[she felt wicked and decadent – there were times when a girl really needed to make love in a fast and furious way with a totally strange man. What would be the point of having a fabulous,starved body if somebody didn't see it sometimes ]

**ST:** She felt great. Glowing! Anyone who said that a one night stand with a complete stranger left you feeling cheap and shitty was wrong. She hadn't felt so good in ages! (Keyes, 2004: 296)

**TT:** cô cảm thấy tuyệt vời. Rực rỡ ! Ai mà nói tình một đêm với một người hoàn toàn xa lạ khiến bạn cảm thấy rẻ mạt và dơ bẩn thì thật là nhầm to. Lâu lắm cô mới cảm thấy tuyệt vời thế. (Keyes,2009: 346)

[she felt wonderful. Glowing! Anyone who said one night love with a complete stranger would make you feel cheap and dirty was totally wrong. For ages she hadn't felt this great]

Traditionally a respectable woman's representation has always been tied with being sexually innocent, shy and modest in both Western and Vietnamese cultures. This issue becomes even more acute in the contexts of Vietnam, in which female behaviour has been traditionally framed within the Four Virtues, and Ireland, where the role of women has been circumscribed by the Catholic Church. In recent times both societies have undergone profound social change and women's sexuality is no longer taboo to such an extent. Seen in this light, these three examples provide a most interesting subject for analysis. These examples illustrate an open and confident sexual woman, who is sexually active and looks at men as

objects of desire. The original English version successfully describes a woman who is actively seeking and experiencing pleasure. She is straightforward about what she wants from men rather than passively waiting from them to approach her. She challenges the social prejudice towards one- night stands by saying that it is wrong and she also overcomes the feeling of being wicked and guilty by understanding that sexual pleasure is the need of every woman. It is remarkable that English words involving sexual relationships such as *fling*, *fast and furious sex*, and *one night stand* are rendered into Vietnamese with words that related to love : *quick love*, *love making*, *one night love*. This can be explained by the fact that in Vietnamese culture, it is still strictly felt that sex is fundamentally related to marriage, which is supposed to be a mutual relationship. It is also interesting to observe that while in English, the female character allows herself to have a little treat, which indicates that this is her active choice because she thinks she deserves it, the Vietnamese translation indicates that she allows herself to be amenable, which implies that this may not be her active choice, the heroine is simply willing to accept without arguing. In this way, the Vietnamese translated heroine does not appear to be as active as her English counterpart. The replacement of the original adjective “shitty” by “dirty” in the Vietnamese translation in the last example once again reaffirms the importance of proper speech and behaviours for Vietnamese women.

Interestingly, sexual freedom in Western Chick Lit is given not only to single protagonists but also to married women, who are traditionally expected not only to be committed and faithful but also to sacrifice themselves in marriage for the sake of their family.

**ST:** *Affair*. Her breath spasmed in her chest—she was *having an affair*. She swayed with vertigo at its enormity. What if she got caught? What if Dylan found out? Her heart nearly seized up at the thought. She was going to stop this now. Right now. She hated herself, she hated what she was doing, and if she stopped before anyone found out, she could make everything all right, almost as if it had never happened. (Keyes, 2004: 400)

**TT:** Ngoại tình ! Hơi thở cô thắt lại trong ngực – cô đang ngoại tình. Cô lao đảo, choáng váng trước sự nghiêm trọng của vấn đề. Nhờ may cô bị bắt quả tang thì sao? Nhờ may Dylan phát hiện ra thì sao? Tim cô gần như thắt lại trước ý nghĩ đó. Cô sẽ dừng chuyện này lại Ngay bây giờ. Cô căm thù chính mình, cô căm thù những gì cô đang làm, và nếu cô dừng lại trước khi người đó phát hiện ra, cô vẫn có thể làm cho mọi chuyện đâu vào đấy, gần như là nó chưa bao giờ xảy ra. (Keyes, 2009: 465)

[affair! Her breath spasmed in her chest—she was having an affair . She was dizzy and dazed at the seriousness of the issue. Unfortunately if she was caught in the act? Unfortunately if Dylan found out? Her heart nearly seized up at the thought. She would stop this now. Right now. She loathed herself, she loathed what she was doing, and if she stopped before anyone found out, she still could put everything in order, almost as if it never happened.]

Both the original and the translation describe a woman who is full of self-hatred and confusion for cheating on her husband. The repetition of the subject *she* intensifies the guilt and nervousness the woman is feeling. In the Vietnamese translation, such a feeling seems even more intense. In replacement of the original's "swayed in vertigo" is "dizzy and dazed", which adds the additional state of being confused and unable to think clearly. In addition, she not only hates herself as in English, but she loathes herself, so that a level of self-hatred and some

anger is added in translation. Since it has proven impossible to conduct an interview with the translator to see if this translation was made intentionally or unintentionally, it can only be assumed either that because the translator of this novel is a male, he may have a stricter look at a married woman who has an affair or that the idea of a married woman with an affair is unacceptable in Vietnamese culture so the translator has adapted the text to the target culture. What is undeniable in this example is that translational shifts are made to match the target cultural norms.

### **5.3.5 Conclusion**

The analysis of the representation of female characters in Western Chick Lit set in Ireland both, in original and translation, has led to the following conclusions:

In terms of analysing the source material as a reflection of Western culture and society, it can be said that the authors seem to stand between a traditional concept of femininity and a modern one. It can be observed that they tend to situate their heroines somewhere in between these two poles. On the one hand, it can be said that their writing encourages and supports conventional 'role-models' of femininity, the heroines of which are making their best efforts to fulfil their roles both in the domestic and working spheres. They try to be good wives, caring mothers and industrious employees. On the other hand, the Irish authors introduce a new concept of rebellious female characters, who struggle and challenge the

traditional ideology of womanhood. They are ambitious young women who want to escape from the burden of domestic responsibility and live a life where choices are made based on personal needs and desires. The contradiction between traditional femininity and a new generation of strong, subversive heroines can be said to be a reinforcement of the new identity of women of our time.

As for translation, it can be concluded that, a number of translational shifts have occurred especially when it comes to the speech or the courtesy of the female characters, which can be explained by the difference in the social norms existing in Vietnamese and Western cultures. Some mistranslations have also been detected in the analysis process, but it cannot be concluded that the mistranslations were caused by a misunderstanding of the original texts or were the intentional shifts of the translators because there was no possibility to conduct any interviews with the translators. It has also been noticed that in a number of instances the translators have adhered to target cultural norms. The original representation, therefore, has been shifted when it is recreated into Vietnamese. The Irish women in Vietnamese translation appears to be more passive and submissive – or in the case of adultery, more guilty



## **Part IV:**

## **Conclusions**

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.0 Research Summary**

The primary aim of this dissertation was to investigate the representation of women in Vietnamese translations of Irish Chick Lit. It sought to find out how these representations were recreated in Vietnamese, what translation strategies were employed, what the translational shifts in the process of translating were and what these shifts showed us about the relationship between culture, translation and literature. Another subsidiary question of this research was to observe how a number of cultural references existing in current Western culture and paratextual elements were rendered into Vietnamese and how the recreation of these elements affected the representation of Western women in the Vietnamese translated texts.

The thesis started with the study of popular fiction and its characteristics, the aim of which was to create a foundation for the analysis of translation. It has pointed out that the conventions and inventions are used to create a connection between readers and the novels. These elements are highly cultural and that would pose a challenge for translation. This chapter also studied the relationship between Chick Lit and popular culture. This chapter of the thesis has argued that any form of popular culture is worth researching because it represents the voice of the people and the times in which they live. Chick Lit as a chronicle of women in our

modern time, has a crucial role not only in popular culture but also in academic research as it is a part of the record of women's lives in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The research has also explained the popularity of Chick Lit in Vietnam despite the Western and Vietnamese cultural gap.

This thesis then moved on to study representation and translation. It argued, first, that the representation of women in contemporary female popular fiction, like translation, is norm-governed and is indeed the reflection of social norms that affect women in their daily life. The representation of women, therefore, is a synthesis of several elements including an author's description of women, the way a female character thinks, acts, speaks and sees the world. Among several components of representation, cultural references play a crucial role because in-depth understandings of these elements provide insightful information about a character's identity. It also acknowledged that certain paratextual elements of a fictional work, namely authors' brandnames, book covers and book titles, can also be seen as a form of representation.

The study has demonstrated that when a text is translated from one language into another, several changes are made so that the translated text can meet the needs of the target culture and due to these changes, the translated text may have the new values that are different from its original ones. Because of this, the research made use of Toury's viewpoints that translation is a product of the target culture in order to answer the main research question. It was, therefore,

argued that the representation of women in Vietnamese translation should be approached from the viewpoints of a target culture. Stating in this way my major research question - the representation of women in Vietnamese translation - a set of criteria was established for selecting material that are related to the primary aim of the dissertation, which was to conduct a comparative analysis. The comparative analysis was divided into several subsections. The first section of this analysis investigated the translation of paratextuality, the second section analyses the translation of cultural references into Vietnamese. It was followed by a section which analysed the representation of women in translated novels based on the four traditional virtues of Vietnamese women, which are diligence, self-representation, speech and courtesy.

## **6.1 Research Findings**

The analysis chapters have led to the following findings:

As regards to cultural references and paratextuality, it has been revealed in the analysis chapter that these elements contribute a great deal to the representation of female characters in contemporary female popular fiction. These elements as used in those texts are deployed not only for the purpose of creating an atmosphere of Western culture in the content, but they also revealed a part of protagonists' identity. The analysis of cultural references in Vietnamese translation demonstrates that when certain social norms or phenomena are similar in both

cultures, and when some cultural elements have global characteristics, the translation tends to be more accurate and much closer to the original. At the same time, when some cultural references are unfamiliar and unimportant or when some norms are not socially accepted in the target culture, they are often treated in two ways, either by literal translation or omission. The former procedure was used when the references are related to the identity of the main character, and translations are sometimes accompanied by footnote explanations, whereas the latter procedure was found to be applied when these references are not of importance. As a result, some cultural references may either obtain a new meaning or lose the original meaning that they had in the source context. The analysis conducted in this thesis has also revealed that a lack of cultural understanding may lead to a false perception or representation. In addition, when the translators failed to understand some of the cultural references, it may not prevent the readers from understanding the plot, but it can be seen to diminish the reader's enjoyment by reducing the humour (e.g. the Tara reference or Slanderella) or omitting the detail (e.g. the proposal scene) of the original. Additionally, it is vital to keep in mind that the analysis of cultural references in this thesis is short and the number of examples is small and representative, therefore the findings are tentative.

Regarding the representation of women in contemporary female popular fiction in English, it can be seen from the analysis that, despite several social changes and movements in Western countries and in Ireland in particular over the last two decades, the traditional concept of a woman stills carries some weight.

Irish contemporary female popular fiction writers tend to stand between the tradition and the progressive. It can be observed that the heroines of Chick Lit written by Irish writers are always put between these two poles. They are either traditional women with a secret hope for rebellion or rebellious women who hide the desire of being just a good wife and a caring mother deep inside. Such conflict between traditional femininity and a new strong, subversive generation of women can be said to be a reinforcement of the new identity of women in our time. At the same time, the findings of how women are represented in Chick Lit written by Irish writers reveal that there are some similarities between Vietnamese and Western culture. This can be either accounted for the common viewpoints about women of Western and Vietnamese culture or for the fact that the issues of women that mentioned in chick lit are global and therefore, any group of readers can identify a part of themselves or their life in this genre and for this reason, Chick Lit became a global publishing phenomenon.

As to the recreation of representation in Vietnamese translation, it can be observed that there are a significant number of translational shifts, especially when certain social norms of the two cultures clash. The translators tend to adapt the foreign norms rather than fully omit them. Such findings show that (1) the existing ideological system in Vietnam is not self-contained or insular, but sufficiently flexible to welcome new ideas, (2) and Western and Vietnamese cultures appear to be divergent on the surface, yet the two cultures share some common viewpoints on women. It is also remarkable that translational shifts occurred more frequently

when it comes to the speech or the courtesy of the female characters, which can be explained by the fact they are two most common categories that women are judged by in Vietnamese culture. Some mistranslations have also been detected in the analysis process, but it cannot be concluded that the mistranslations were caused by a misunderstanding of the original texts or were the intentional shifts of the translators because there was no possibility to conduct any interviews with the translators. It has also been noticed that in a number of instances the translators have adhered to target cultural norms. The original representation, therefore, has been shifted when it is recreated into Vietnamese. The women in Vietnamese translation appears to be more passive and submissive – or in the case of adultery, more guilty. On the other hand, the translation may be said to be introducing several Western norms of behaviour and liberal values, which are new to Vietnamese readers. Such findings highlight the importance of translation as a bridge to introduce new ideas and bring the global understandings to people of different nations and cultures.

On the basis of these findings, the following results could be identified as the strength of this dissertation. Firstly, the tentative findings related to the representation of women in this research could be added to an emerging body of contemporary female popular fiction research, as well as to research in popular culture and representation of gender, more generally and especially in Asia. (Rollins, P.&Rollins,S.,1995; Hollows,2000; Milestone & Meyer, 2012;

Chingamuka & D Glenwright,2012; Lent; 2013 ). It is expected that this research can pave the way for future study in the Vietnamese context to establish whether or not the findings of this thesis can be corroborated by other scholars.

Secondly, as has been stated in the introductory chapter, this is one of the first pieces of doctoral research on English – Vietnamese translation of Chick Lit, this dissertation has provided some initial understanding of how paratextual elements, cultural references and textual linguistic norms operate in Vietnamese translation. Furthermore, the present thesis has reinforced the idea that translation and representation are norm-governed activities. Representation in the SL texts is constructed based on the existing norms that are accepted in a society and an author's personal viewpoints and experience. In translation, the original is reconstructed not only on the foundation of the source material but also the translator/editor's personal perception. Unfortunately, due to the unwillingness of these two bodies, it was impossible for the researcher to have in-depth investigation into the translation process. However, from what is presented in the final product, it appears that translational shifts are made so that the translated texts will obtain social acceptability of the target culture.

## **6.2 Translation approaches and strategies**

One of the subquestions of this research is to find out the strategies employed by translators to translate contemporary female popular fiction into Vietnamese. Although the segments used for analysis in this research is representative and



restricted to four main themes namely women's diligence, self-representation, speech and courtesy, investigating the construction of representation through various aspects including paratextuality and cultural references has allowed the researcher to draw some tentative conclusions related to various translation approaches and strategies. It is evident from the analysis that the Vietnamese translators tend to adapt the translations to the target context and translation shifts are made when some norms related to behaviour, speech or courtesy are not acceptable for Vietnamese society. Some most common strategies found in the analysis part include omitting items or norms of SL texts which were assumed to be either difficult or unimportant for the target readers or improper norms for the target culture and making contextual adjustments wherever necessary. On the other hand, there are also cases when translators appear to preserve the source cultural norms. Some most common strategies used found in the analysis include providing some precise and concise explanations by footnotes; or keeping the translation close to the SL texts by avoiding making changes or adjustments.

### **6.3 Translational norms and Toury's analysis model**

The theoretical background of translation norms was discussed in 3.1. Here I would like to give a further analysis. In terms of the initial norm suggested by Toury, the fact that the five selected books were permitted to publish indicates the fact these books are subjected to the norms of the Vietnamese culture.

Preliminary norms control the translation policy and directness of translation. The translation policy determines the ST selection and the language it is translated

into. As has been shown, there has been no official study of chick lit as a genre in Vietnam so to some extent, it can be assumed that the publishing houses are not aware of all the discussion related to the values of chick lit, they choose to translate these books into Vietnamese either by their status of global best sellers or through agencies. Regarding the directness of translation, all translation versions are direct translations from English – the SL.

Two types of norms, matricial norms and textual-linguistic norms fall under the umbrella of operational norms, which describe the presentation and linguistic matter of the TT. In terms of matricial norms presented by the book covers and titles, the analysis demonstrates that the bright, colourful covers of the Vietnamese translations, to some extent, echo the Irish and UK covers. The Vietnamese publishing houses appear to make an effort to establish a connection between the Vietnamese translations and the current existing trend of female contemporary popular fiction. However, there are some differences in the way the source and target texts have been marketed. In Ireland and the UK, it is the names of the authors that are marketed on the covers, while the publishing houses' name and logos, if they appear, are in very small typeface and almost unnoticeable. It is also remarkable that there are certain English phrases, either the original title or a line which read “the international bestseller”, appear on the covers of the translated fiction. This can be seen as a reflection of the prestigious status of English language in Vietnam. In terms of textual-linguistic norms, a number of translational shifts have occurred, the root of which is the differences in the social

norms existing in Vietnamese and Irish cultures. Some mistranslations have also been detected, but it cannot be concluded that the mistranslations were caused by a misunderstanding of the original texts or were the intentional shifts since there was no confirmation from the translators/editors.

The three step model to describe translation proved to be useful for the nature of this research as it helped to identify the differences between the SL and TL texts as well as the strategies used by translator to render the SL elements. In addition, for a corpus like this research, the model suggested by Toury also helped to gain some understanding of why some translation shifts were made or why some strategies were applied in the translation process by taking into accounts the context of TL culture.

#### **6.4 Future Research**

It would be worthwhile to follow this up with a study of the translated works of one writer to ascertain whether a more in-depth study confirms the results obtained here. Alternatively, it would be interesting to see if a study of the translated works of other writers in this genre would produce similar results.

It would be also useful to hear the views of translators, editors and publishers about the translation of female popular fiction in Vietnam. While it was not possible to secure the cooperation of such actors in the translation process for this thesis, I would be hopeful that as Translation Studies develops in Vietnam, this may become possible.

This thesis has opened up the possibility of conducting research on the influence of the Vietnamese translations of Chick Lit on the emerging genre of ‘Chick Lit’ in Vietnam.

Finally, while female popular fiction has frequently been the object of harsh criticism in certain literary circles, it is hoped that this thesis has demonstrated that it is a fertile ground for research in Translation Studies.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Publications & Presentations from this Research Project**

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2014 (forth coming). The construction of gender in Irish contemporary female popular fiction and its translation. Book chapter in an edited book *Asia Studies – Within and Without*.

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2013. The construction of gender in Irish contemporary female popular fiction and its translation. The 5th Annual Conference of Asia Studies Ireland Association, Dublin, Ireland.

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2013. An investigation of the translation of Irish contemporary popular fiction into Vietnamese. New Research in Translation and Interpreting Studies. Intercultural Studies Group- Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, Spain.

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2012. Women's life in Chick Lit: Life as we know it or utopia? Annual Post Graduate Conference in Education and Humanities, St. Patrick's College, Dublin, Ireland.

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2012. In Search of Contemporary Irish man: representations of masculinity in Irish chick lit and its Vietnamese translation. Gender and Irish Society in the 19th and 20th century: New perspectives and new ideas, Moore Institute, National University of Galway, Ireland

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2012. Representation of Irish Chick Lit heroines in Vietnamese translation. The 2nd Biannual International Conference in Sexuality Studies, Dublin City University, Ireland. (poster presentation)

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2011. The translation of a concept of sexuality in English and Vietnamese Chick Lit. 4th Annual SIBEAL Conference: Feminism, Activism and Creativity, University of Limerick, Ireland.

Nhat Tuan Nguyen, 2011. The reception of Irish Chick Lit in Vietnam. Postgraduate Conference in Humanities and Education, St. Patrick's College, Ireland.

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