

Research article

## Ho Xuan Huong's Nom Poetry and Its Significance to the Current Issues of Gender Equality

Vu Hong Van

University of Transport and Communication, Hanoi, Vietnam

[vanvh\\_ph@utc.edu.vn](mailto:vanvh_ph@utc.edu.vn)

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**Abstract**

Ho Xuan Huong was a famous Vietnamese poet who lived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. She left behind many unique poems with a poetic style that is both *thanh* (right and pur vulgar) or *tục* (vulgar and dirty) and was dubbed "the Queen of Nom Poetry". While nom poetry is a genre of poetry passed down from generation to generation without original text, Huong is considered one of the unique poets of Vietnamese literature. Many of her works have been lost; up to now, her poems still in circulation are mainly oral Nom poems. Her poetic system focuses primarily on promoting the role of women under the harsh regime of the feudal dynasty which is expressed to honor women while mocking and pointing out the negative aspects of the regime of "*trọng nam khinh nữ*" (male chauvinism, to value men above women). Using qualitative research methods and referencing several previous studies combined with a survey of some historical data, is the main method of this research. Researching feminism in Huong's nom poetry allows future generations to have a more complete and comprehensive view of the condition of women under feudalism, ideas that are ahead of their time and humanely profound; from there, determine its value and significance to the current issue of gender equality.

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**Keywords**

Feminism; Feudalism; Gender Equality; Ho Xuan Huong; Nom Poetry.

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**Article history**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ho Xuan Huong is a unique female poet in Vietnam's literature and once honored by poet Xuan Dieu (a famous Vietnamese people poet of the 20th century) as the "Bà Chúa thơ Nôm" (the Queen of Nom Poetry). Ho Xuan Huong's nom poetry has made literary life exciting, with hundreds of articles and hundreds of different opinions about her poetry (Anh, 2022). Especially in the area of nom poetry, there are many opinions that her poetry has lewd and vulgar elements, but as time passes, people gradually understand and appreciate the female poet's talent and human qualities more.

Ho Xuan Huong's name and status are now placed next to great poets such as Nguyen Du and Nguyen Trai, thereby also proving that she has a special position in the literary communities in particular and in the hearts of all Vietnamese people in general (Vien, et al., 1979). Huong is also known as "the poet of women" (Ngoc, et al., 1991) because her poetry is the voice of women; very ordinary women in the old society who had to endure many disadvantages and misfortunes, but no one dared to speak up and fight. The issue of women is a topical issue of literature during this period. The issue of women is raised on a profound scale and illuminated from many very subtle angles. It can also be said that Huong is the first poet in the history of a national literature to bring to poetry the voice of women (Vien, et al., 1979; Ngoc, et al., 1991).

Today, we are living in a more civilized, progressive society, and women are also promoted and respected. Nevertheless, there are still fates of women who suffer misfortune in life. In Vietnam, the rate of women participating in the labor force is 71.2%, but women's work status is still low, of which 52.1% are simple workers and 66.6% are family workers. Therefore, the average income of women is 5.22 million VND/month, equal to only 81.1% of the average income of men (Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2020). According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the world needs 257 years to eliminate the economic gap between the sexes. Only 55% of women 15-64 years old participate in the workforce while men account for 78% and in particular, in senior leadership positions globally, women account for less than one-third (about 29%). A notable number of the report in year 2020 has shown that there are 72 countries that do not allow women to open bank accounts or get credit (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Therefore, Ho Xuan Huong's nom poetry still retains its value and relevance. Reading her nom poetry, we do not only sympathize and share but also contemplate

and reflect. From then on, we feel even more respect and sympathy for the fate of unfortunate women.

## 2. METHODS

To research Ho Xuan Huong's nom poetry and its significance to the current issues of gender equality, the author focuses on her poems that have been published as books, focusing on specialized research books, especially reference on Ho Xuan Huong's Poetry by author Kieu Thu Hoach (2008), as it is a fairly comprehensive research project and a relatively complete collection of Ho Xuan Huong's poems.

The author also focuses on understanding previous research on Ho Xuan Huong which have been done by some authors such as Balaban (2000): "Spring Essence: The Poetry of Ho Xuan Huong. Port Townsend", Balaban (2010): "Letter", Bednarik (2010): "Letter", Chin (2010): "Reply to the letter of Joseph Bednarik"; Ngoc & Correzc (1991): "Anthologie de la poésie Vietnamienne"; Van (2010): "Come On, Girls, Let's Go Bail Water': Eroticism in Ho Xuan Huong's Vietnamese Poetry"; Vien, Hoan, & Ngoc (2000): "Anthologie de la littérature Vietnamienne"; Wilcox (2005): "Women and Mythology in Vietnamese History: Le Ngoc Han, Ho Xuan Huong, and the Production of Historical Continuity in Vietnam", and so forth. The research results are used by the author to compare, contrast, and make comments.

Based on the assessments of previous authors, this study compares and contrasts to find similarities and modern values in Ho Xuan Huong's nom poetry. However, due to different conditions and circumstances, these judgments are only relative. In addition, this article also uses several interdisciplinary research methods such as logic-history, comparison-contrast, interpretation-induction, synchronicity-diachrony, and so forth. Those research methods have been used by the author throughout the research process.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Overview of Ho Xuan Huong and Her Nom Poetry

Female poet Ho Xuan Huong is a poet of the 18th - 19th centuries, belonging to the classical poetry genre, honored as the "Bà Chúa thơ Nom" (the Queen of Nom Poetry), and is an outstanding female poet of Vietnam. Not many facts are written about Ho Xuan Huong's life, but most of her biography comes from her poems. Many domestic

and foreign scholars (Vien, et al., 1979&2000; Hoach, 2008; Hong, 2022) believe that she was born into a Ho family in Quynh Doi village, Quynh Luu district, today part of Nghe An province. Her father was Mr. Ho Phi Dien (1703-1786), worked as a Mandarin in Thang Long Citadel, and her mother was a simple person from today Hai Duong province, named Ha, just a *vợ lẽ* (concubine or second wife) of Mr. Dien. Huong was born in Khan Xuan ward, Thang Long capital (present-day Hanoi), near West Lake (Hanoi's largest lake with many different names such as Dam Dam Lake and Xac Cao Lake, associated with many thrilling legends). According to the explanation of many researchers (Vien, et al., 1979; Ngoc, et al., 1991; Van, 2010), her name means "Spring flavor".

The researches have shown that she was motherless as a child, so she had to support herself and finally focus on writing poetry. Orally distributed anecdotes of local folklore say that she was very intelligent and sensitive; she got married twice and both times as a *vợ lẽ*. Both of her husbands died early, and she wrote poems full of mourning for them (Dam, 2024). Even though she had never been the *vợ cả* (first or main wife), she expressed her feelings in her poems. It is also important to add that, in ancient feudal society, the concept was that: "*trai anh hùng năm thê bày thiếp, gái chính chuyên chỉ có một chồng*" which means that a talented man must have many wives and concubines while the virtuous woman can only have one husband. With such a concept, many women will share the same husband. Among them, the *vợ cả* is considered the most powerful person and managing all other wives (Giau, 1983; Ngoc, 2002).

Folk tradition also says that she was a smart woman but did not have much formal education. She socialized widely with friends, especially friends from the poetry communities and Confucian families; an extremely limited thing for women under Vietnam's feudal dynasties. Commenting on this issue, poet Xuan Dieu once wrote (VOV05, 2022): "This is something completely different from the harsh regulations of the Confucian patriarchy." Huong is also someone who has traveled to many scenic spots in the country. She is a talented woman with a strong personality, but her private life has many misfortunes. It can be seen that Ho Xuan Huong was not an ordinary woman of the feudal era but had a life full of difficulties and hardships.

In Ho Xuan Huong's poetic legacy as well as in the literary poetry of that time, more than 200 years ago under the feudal regime, she was the only Vietnamese female poet, the first person who dared to speak up and fight strongly for women's rights through poetic works (Son, 2023). The masterpieces she left behind are not only honored domestically but have world influence. Up to now, more than 10 countries

have translated and introduced Ho Xuan Huong's nom poetry (Vietnam News Agency, 2022).

In the legacy left by Ho Xuan Huong, the concept of women, the role and position of women, and women's desire for equality in family, society, in love, and so forth, of Ho Xuan Huong is vast in content. From the beginning of the 21st century until now, there have been hundreds of works on the collection, research, and life of female artist Ho Xuan Huong, with many national and global-level academic conferences attracting attention and concern of many academics. Researches from many social science perspectives, mainly from literature, culture, history, ethics, politics, sociology, and so forth, were conducted on Ho Xuan Huong in general and the timeless nature of her concept of women's rights need to be thoroughly researched and answered.

For Ho Xuan Huong is an unusual and extraordinary phenomenon, she has been associated with many mysteries and attracted the global attention. On November 23, 2021, the UNESCO General Assembly passed Resolution 41C/15: "Honoring and participating in the commemoration of the 250th birth anniversary of Ho Xuan Huong (1772-1822) - Cultural celebrity and great poet of Vietnam Female" and identified seven core points about the famous person Ho Xuan Huong as follows:

1. Ho Xuan Huong has a deeply humanistic ideology with the core of claiming the right to life for humans - humans as entities existing on the ground with all needs and aspirations for life.
2. Ho Xuan Huong is a special cultural and aesthetic phenomenon with a unique system of concepts through poetic works.
3. Ho Xuan Huong has made great contributions to feminism and women's equality.
4. Ho Xuan Huong's legacy is not only poetry but also a system of behavior - spirit - consciousness for good progress.
5. Ho Xuan Huong not only fights and protects, but also consciously warns, criticizes, opposes, and negates what prevents human progress.
6. Ho Xuan Huong and her legacy have a strong vitality, pervasive power, and inspiration to many people and countries.
7. Ho Xuan Huong's works have been recognized and translated into their languages by researchers in many countries (by 2021, they will be translated into 12 languages).

### 3.2. Feminism in the Poetry of Ho Xuan Huong

Ho Xuan Huong does not directly mention the role, position, rights, and obligations of women. However, through her works, she expressed her views quite clearly. Her concept of women's rights therefore needs to be placed in the specific historical context of the era in which she lived, as well as the ahead-of-time contributions of a talented person. Ho Xuan Huong's timelessness regarding women's rights can be affirmed through studying her poetic legacy:

Firstly, Ho Xuan Huong was the first woman to use poetry to affirm the role, position, and capacity of women in society boldly and uniquely. Vietnam's society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a feudal society in which women were treated unfairly (Tran Van Giau, 1984; Nguyen Tai Thu, 1997). In the family, sovereignty is in the hands of men while women do not have any authority. With the choice of Confucianism as the social ethical standard, society advocates "*nam tôn nữ ty, nữ nghi ngoại tộc*", and "*trọng nam khinh nữ*" (male chauvinist, to value men above women), and women's status is suppressed to the point of inferiority.

Famous Vietnam's literature in feudal times is full of negative ideas about women such as: "*Đau đớn thay phận đàn bà! Lời rằng bạc mệnh cũng là lời chung* (Nguyen Du – *Kieu Story*; Chinese characters - 斷腸新聲; Nom characters - 傳翹), or, "*Thuở trời đất nổi cơn gió bụi /Khách má hồng nhiều nổi truân chuyên*" (Dang Tran Con - *Chinh Phu Ngam* - 征婦吟曲), or "*Oán chi những khách tiêu phòng/Mà xui phận bạc nằm trong má đào*" (Nguyen Gia Thieu - *Cung Oan Ngam Khuc* - 宮怨吟曲). There are also "*Gia Huan Ca*" (Nguyen Trai - 家訓歌), "*Tam cuong, Ngu thuong*" (三綱五常), and so forth of Confucianism also teaches women and girls to settle for a secondary and dependent role in society.

Vietnam's feudal system is heavily influenced by Confucian ideology, therefore traditions of values and cultural standards are set to serve men. Society affirms the position of men as well as the fact that women must accept a role inferior to men because God has ordained it that way. Faced with such a society, Ho Xuan Huong cleverly used literature as a weapon to fight against those oppressive orders.

*"Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn  
Bảy nổi ba chìm với nước non  
Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn  
Mà em vẫn giữ tấm lòng son"*

(*Bánh trôi nước*-HỒ XUÂN HUƠNG)

*"My body is powdery white and round*

*I sink and bob like a mountain in a pond*

*The hand that kneads me is hard and rough*

*You can't destroy my true red heart"*

(*Floating Sweet Dumpling*-TRANSLATED BY MARILYN CHIN, 2008)

In Ho Xuan Huong's poetry, she clearly expressed her concept of the role and position of women. Faced with the constraints of society, she sometimes dreamed of breaking free from harsh customs, rituals, and feudal ideologies to create more illustrious careers. In the article "*Đề đên Sâm Nghi Đống*", she wrote: "*Vì đây đổi phận làm trai được/thì sự anh hùng há bấy nhiêu*" (If I could change my destiny to be a man, how much more heroic would it be) (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008) and there were times when she also wanted to "*đỡ tay với thử trời cao thấp/xoạc cẳng đo xem đất ngắn dài*" (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008). In Ho Xuan Huong's opinion, many *quân tử* (magnanimous; gentlemanlike) were very paltry, so she did not shy away from saying "sister" to them: "*này này chị bảo cho mà biết...*", or "*lại đây cho chị dạy làm thơ*" (Come here and let me teach you how to write poetry...). For Ho Xuan Huong, the *quân tử* class that society gave many privileges, she loudly and courageously responded.

Ho Xuan Huong's anti-feminist poems seemed very normal to Westerners in the late 20th century, but in her time they were dangerous. She was truly a pioneer in speaking up for women. Women fight against the oppression of the patriarchal system, affirming the equality of women.

*Secondly*, Ho Xuan Huong was the first person to use poetry to affirm women's equal rights and proactive rights in expressing emotions, love, and sex. In the relationship between men and women, Ho Xuan Huong is the first woman in history to boldly express her emotions, ego, and initiative. She went a long way ahead of her time and her standpoint created endless debates. She proactively "*Mời trầu*" (Offering Betel-a famous poem by Ho Xuan Huong) to affirm her feelings and identity: "*Này của Xuân Hương mới quyết rồi/ có phải duyên nhau thì thăm lại...*" (This is Xuan Huong's new relationship/If we are destined for each other, we will love each other again, ...") (Translated by Nguyen Khac Vien, 1979).

It should be added that in Vietnamese folk culture, "*miếng trầu là đầu câu chuyện*" (the betel pieces is the beginning of the story), before talking, people will "invite each other to betel". Areca and betel are the two main ingredients to create *miếng trầu* (betel pieces) and are also the first two bride-price gifts that are required for the groom's

family to ask to marry the bride's family. Thus, the "betel piece" symbolizes the initiative of men towards women in love relationships.

The poet "*Mời trầu*" (Offering Betel) shows the initiative of Ho Xuan Huong (female), towards men (an almost taboo in feudal society (Tran Van Giau, 1984). Thus, Ho Xuan Huong was not gentle at all, but strong and determined to assert his sovereignty over the betel that was just offered to him. She put lime on it so it belongs to Ho Xuan Huong. A verse that sounds like a blunt statement. She understands what she wants and what she is doing. Therefore, she could not hesitate to call her name like that. At the same time, it shows that in a male-dominated society, Ho Xuan Huong still strongly dares to assert what belongs to her. And, with "*Mời trầu*", Ho Xuan Huong did not hesitate to ask the other person "*Có phải duyên nhau thì thăm lại*" (are they destined for each other). Even though she is a woman, she took the initiative to find love. Ho Xuan Huong did not sit around waiting for *bố mẹ đặt đâu còn ngồi đó* (the husband is chosen by the parents and forced to marry the daughter), but instead searched for and decided the couple's happiness. She also shows her resilience when she first asks if they were destined to be together, then she proactively asks "*đừng xa như lá bạc như vôi*" (shows the ungratefulness of the human heart).

Ho Xuan Huong loves beauty and desires marital happiness (Marilyn Chin, 2008). She sympathized with the fate of women in the old society. She dared to stand up to find her love. Promote beauty, encourage voluntary love between couples, and criticize bad habits in life. Her sincerity and strength, sharpness, and tenacity in love are a great encouragement for women to assert their equality and initiative in love.

Not only in the feelings of love, Ho Xuan Huong was also the first person who dared to use poetry to glorify a very taboo issue in literature that is sexuality, in a way full of aesthetic value. History has proven that her resistance and sympathy for the condition of women is the right path. Ho Xuan Huong used literature to speak out against the society that gave all privileges to men. She is proud and affirms women's initiative and equality in their emotional lives, love, and sex. Ho Xuan Huong did not accept excessive emphasis on *Yang* (man) and contempt for *Yin* (woman). Why is it that everything related to *Yang* is considered right and pure, while everything related to *Yin* is considered vulgar and dirty?

To counter that notion of right and pur/vulgar and dirty, Ho Xuan Huong proclaimed taboo images in her poems as a challenge to men. She has displayed the actions and parts of male and female genitals through metaphorical images. Ho Xuan Huong uses very ordinary scenes or images such as Tran Quoc Pagoda, Perfume

Pagoda, Ba Doi Pass, Cac Co Cave, Kem Trong Cave, stuffed snails, crabs, jackfruit, floating cakes, coins, fans, and so forth, and daily activities such as weaving, splashing water, swinging, and playing chess to describe taboo sexual stories in a very comfortable way with humble but very vivid and evocative words. All of these customs are directed by her towards a clear goal: to honor the role and position of women in society to counteract the unique status of men that has been unfairly recognized by feudal society.

Whether looking at Ho Xuan Huong's poetry in the direction of *thanh* (right and pur vulgar) or *tục* (vulgar and dirty), most people agree that Ho Xuan Huong's poetry is very "*khinh bạc mà tài tình*" (Someone who does not care about anyone but is very talented and emotional) (Anh, 1930). Just re-reading Ho Xuan Huong's poem "*Ba Doi Pass*" is enough to see her poetic talent. Through Ho Xuan Huong's poetry, sex is normal and natural, nothing is taboo or evil. If it is bad, why is it that "*Hiên nhân quân tử ai mà chẳng/Mỏi gối chôn chân vẫn muốn tròn*" (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008) and not only the common people but also the kings "*Chúa dẫu vua yêu một cái này*" (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008).

Ho Xuan Huong directly dialogues with the hypocritical actions of a patriarchal society. Ho Xuan Huong knew the value of the body and *this* (a woman's genitals), so she did not hesitate to bring out women's weapons to express her point of view. Like the feminist movements in the United States, in many street protests, women sometimes flaunted the beauty of their bodies as a weapon of struggle. Ho Xuan Huong did not hesitate to boast that "*Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn*", or "*Chành ra ba góc da còn thiếu/Khép lại đôi bên thẹn vẫn thừa*" (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008), and so forth. In addition, according to Ho Xuan Huong, the role of women in creating harmony between *yin* and *yang* according to the principles of creation is something worthy of honor. Ho Xuan Huong's bold ideas about "*chuyện chăn gối*" (sexual relations between husband and wife) affirms that *Yin* and *Yang* are in harmony, and women are completely equal to men in real life, which is a thing completely taboo in feudal society and people find ways to hide it, considering it evil.

*Thirdly*, Ho Xuan Huong sympathizes with the *yếu đuối* (feeble) and *nỗi niềm* (concerns) of women in an arrogant and brave way. The concept of women's rights is also affirmed by Ho Xuan Huong through sympathy, understanding the burdens and pains of women and showing sympathy when she believes that women have the right to be *yếu đuối*, feel sorry for yourself and be able to make your own choices or decide your problems. Ho Xuan Huong, through the poem "*Kem Trong*", delicately describes the activity of women's *vượt cạn* (giving birth) and at the same time speaks of the noble

duty of women to give birth to children, a duty far superior to that of women because men cannot do it. In addition, in the two concluding sentences “*qua cửa mình ơi, nên ngắm lại/ nào ai có biết nổi bụng bồng*” (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008), Ho Xuan Huong also wants to send a message to all men to “look again” at themselves. to remember that all men have passed through “that door” (woman’s genitals) and not to forget the hard “caring” of a mother or woman. The way to call “*mình ơi*” is feminine, filled with gentle weakness, but the reminder and advice “*nên...*” (should...) still exude arrogance, equality, and a strong request.

Ho Xuan Huong especially vehemently opposed the polygamy regime of contemporary society. From her own experience after getting married twice to Mr. Tong Coc (first husband) and Mr. Vinh Tuong (second husband), she saw that polygamy, which is very common in feudal society, is an injustice of patriarchal society. Men have five wives and seven concubines, while women must have only one husband. Therefore, the status of women, especially concubines, is pitiful, no different from being a slave or a tool for men. Even though she has a reputation as a wife, in terms of normal physiology, a concubine does not have the right to make demands: “*Kẻ đắp chăn bông, kẻ lạnh lòng/ năm khi mười họa, nên chẳng chớ/ một tháng đôi lần, có cũng không*” (Kieu Thu Hoach, 2008). Ho Xuan Huong did not suffer silently but spoke clearly and directly about women’s feelings. It is also a demand for compensation or understanding or opposition. Empathizing with, sharing with women’s burdens, and talking about women’s pain and suffering, Ho Xuan Huong’s speaking style still exudes arrogance and bravery.

### ***3.3. Huong’s Poetry and the Current Issues of Gender Equality***

About 200 years ago, Ho Xuan Huong has spoken boldly about women’s rights and demands for women’s equality. Researching the legacy of Ho Xuan Huong has great significance for humanity in the journey of affirming equality and ensuring women’s rights. Today, with their qualities, intelligence, and creative labor, women have contributed to creating material and spiritual wealth for the progress of humanity and the nation. Currently, many countries are making efforts to realize women’s political rights, considering it the most important measure of gender equality. In 2022, New Zealand for the first time in history already had a female-dominated parliament with 60 female and 59 male parliamentarians. This is not only a special milestone for New Zealand but also brings the number of countries with a gender balance ratio or more women than men in parliament to 6 countries, double the number in 2020

(Nhandan, 2024). To continue promoting achievements in ensuring women's rights, implementing gender equality, promoting the role of women in socio-economic development, and making new steps to meet practical and economic requirements. To achieve the country's gender equality goals, especially in the Vietnam national context but not limited to be implemented wherever else, in the author's opinion, we need to pay attention to the following directions:

*Firstly*, mobilizing resources and participation of responsible agencies throughout the political system, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to successfully implement key projects of the Government to successfully implement key projects of the National Program on Gender Equality. In addition, it is necessary to improve the quality of activities of Women's Unions at all levels for the advancement of women in departments, branches, and localities; and ensure close connection between State management agencies on gender equality at all levels and inter-sectoral coordination organizations for the advancement of women, in accordance with the administrative reform process.

*Secondly*, building a political and legal corridor strong enough to protect and enforce gender equality. First of all, pay more attention to practical surveys and listen to women's thoughts and aspirations to adjust legal documents accordingly and not discriminate in recruiting female workers. The Civil Code, Labor Code, and Gender Equality Law with specific regulations on female workers, women's rights, and sanctions against violations and gender discrimination need to be resolutely implemented.

*Thirdly*, increasing the priority of improving women's qualifications. In a situation where gender inequality still exists today, priority policies on education and training to continue improving the intellectual level of women need to be emphasized. At the same time, prioritize and assign women to scientific research.

*Fourth*, women themselves must be aware of their gender roles and need to make many efforts, from cultivating cultural knowledge, having a sense of progress, being independent, and having life skills, confidence, creative, knowing how to plan, knowing how to cope with pressure, etc. This knowledge can be learned through many channels, from participating in courses at schools, organizations, clubs, and community learning centers; to participating in social activities to accumulate knowledge and life experience. For women to be able to take on their roles and at the same time develop their full potential to develop in modern times, each woman's self-esteem is very important. Only when women's positivity and initiative are aroused

can women both handle social work well and maintain strong and happy family relationships.

A series of solutions to achieve gender equality and improve the social status of women in Vietnam currently receive social consensus. However, from those solutions associated with Asian cultural values, Vietnamese women are still under much pressure from traditional gender stereotypes and roles so that women can have the conditions to develop their intellectual capacity, confidently participate, and perform well in the role of promoting intellectual resources to serve socio-economic development. Therefore, it is necessary to synchronously implement solutions from the policy mechanism, from society, and from the family.

Ho Xuan Huong is unique in Vietnamese literature. So much ink has been said about her. There are many mixed opinions when it comes to her poetry. Depending on the concept of social ethics, Ho Xuan Huong is one or the other. However, over time, Ho Xuan Huong became a person ahead of her time, someone who knew how to use talent intelligently with unique poems that always contained double meanings to mock a class virtue, to expose the absurdities of a feudal society, as well as boldly oppose the absurd customs that prohibited and bound Vietnamese women physically and mentally at the end of the 18th century.

In France, in 1968, the work *L'oeuvre de la poétesse Vietnamiennne Ho Xuan Huong* (the Works by Vietnamese female poet Ho Xuan Huong) by Maurice Durand was edited and published by the Paris Institute of the Far East and Classics after Maurice Durand's death. Maurice Durand once held the position of Head of the Cultural Department of Indochina University, leader of the Far East and Ancient Hanoi in the years 1954-1957, and lecturer of Vietnamese history and philology at the Institute for Advanced Study (EPHE) in Paris. As an excellent Indochina and Vietnamese scholar, he is someone who can "grasp the entire Vietnamese culture from the inside and is an expert on what affects him from the outside" (Nguyen Khac Vien & Huu Ngoc, 1979).

In the past two decades, the influence of the globalization trend has opened wide doors for introducing and spreading Vietnamese literature to international friends. Thanks to that, Ho Xuan Huong's poetry has the opportunity to reach many foreign readers through many different channels. For example is John Balaban, who is a professor at the University of North Carolina and a famous poet who has won awards for outstanding poetry from the Academy of American Poets. He once went to Vietnam and encountered the poetry of Ho Xuan Huong. He has spent many years translating Ho Xuan Huong's poetry into American and published it in a book titled

“Spring Essence: The Poetry of Ho Xuan Huong” to introduce it to Western readers (John Balaban, 2000). Not only that, former US President Bill Clinton, at a state banquet in Hanoi during his visit to Vietnam in November 2000, commented: “Globalization is bringing the world to Vietnam and also bringing Vietnam to the world. ...The 200-year-old poems of Ho Xuan Huong are published in America, in English, in Vietnamese, and even in the original Nom, the first time ancient Vietnamese script has come off a printing press” (William J. Clinton, 2000). Ho Xuan Huong is not only honored by books and newspapers in many countries, but many domestic and world cultural information programs have introduced her poetry.

In 2004, fifteen poems of Huong translated by Jean Sary were published in IF Magazine in Marseille, a magazine specializing in discovering contemporary French and foreign literary works. Then, in 2011, the entire translation was posted on the translator’s page. Jean Sary is a poet and former French teacher (L’Espace) in Hanoi. Many years of living in Vietnam have allowed the translator to understand the Vietnamese language, Vietnamese culture, and Ho Xuan Huong’s poetry. Jean Sary’s translation is the basis for Romanian translations by translator Lon Rosioru, published in Bucharest Literature and Arts magazine in 2016.

Next, in 2008, Dong Phong (Nguyen Tan Hung), a French scientist, historical and philological researcher, poet, and translator, tried his hand at six Ho Xuan Huong poems published in the collection “*Des poètes de ma terre lointaine*” (Poets from my distant homeland). Soon after, another Vietnamese-French scientist, a research expert in the field of biogeography, published in 2009 the poetry collection *Poèmes de Ho Xuan Huong* (poems of Ho Xuan Huong) under the pen name Van Hoa. The translation includes 45 traditional poems by Ho Xuan Huong (or considered to be by Ho Xuan Huong).

The website “The Poetry Foundation” (American Poetry Association) has chosen to translate and solemnly introduce 5 poems by Ho Xuan Huong: “*Bánh trôi nước*” (Floating Sweet Dumpling), “*Quả mít*” (Jackfruit), “*Ốc nhồi*” (Snail), “*Ong tò vè*” (Wasps), and “*Đĩ người đàn bà khóc chồng*” (Lamenting Widow) with comments from the translator, poet Marilyn Chin: “When I came across Ho Xuan Huong’s lyrics, I immediately recognized the structure of the Chinese quatrain—four-lined and eight-lined poems; seven-character lines; parallelism; reduplication of characters for sonic emphasis or refrain; set internal and external rhyme and tonal patterns. I recognized the well-worn symbols—the ripe fruit and the dumpling representing the woman’s body. After the initial gloss of the text, though, I was happy to find the variations: the vocabulary that was very “un-Chinese”; strange becomes and word combinations;

characters that appeared archaic or nonsensical but sounded out the transliterated Vietnamese vernacular. Indeed, I came to understand that I was reading not Classical Chinese in its pure form, but Nom, a Chinese-Vietnamese fusion” (Marilyn Chin, 2008).

Evaluating the ideology and artistic value of Ho Xuan Huong’s poetry, Marilyn Chin (2008) commented that: “Ho Xuan Huong’s father was a Confucian scholar and her mother was a concubine. She also became the concubine of two minor mandarins. All women in the oppressed Confucian family structure have a marginal position, but perhaps it is this oppression that has caused Ho Xuan Huong to use her intelligence and natural poetic talent to produce poems that bring eroticism reaches great heights. One can read her poetry as a modern feminist poet by interpreting the poems through psychoanalytic symbols, in which female divinity serves as a weapon against patriarchy”.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In the eyes of readers and scholars, Ho Xuan Huong and her poetic legacy are a unique phenomenon of Vietnamese literature in particular and Eastern culture in general. Approaching Ho Xuan Huong most completely is a parallel and consistent approach between literature and culture. Because, with such an approach to the problem, we can find traces of folk poetry - the spiritual power of village culture. The most important and most important thing is the sense of desire for autonomy from the formation and development of Nom literature, overcoming the influence and coercion of Chinese culture.

Ho Xuan Huong is a unique phenomenon of Vietnamese Literature. She wrote things that other poets of her time did not dare to write. Her poetry is unique and imbued with Vietnamese cultural identity. Her poetry can move us today as it moved Vietnamese people more than two centuries ago. Huong’s poetic voice has transcended space and time to connect Vietnam with the global audience. As a world celebrity, the values that her legacy left behind include the desire for a new social order in which women in particular, and people in general must be equal and be free to express their abilities. Modern Vietnamese women, if they receive active support from all levels of government and unions along with their efforts, will have the opportunity to contribute more and more to the cause of national development, affirming their image, noble moral qualities as portrayed on Huong’s nom poetry: self-respect, confidence, loyalty, and dedication.

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