

NOTES ON
THE SEX OF A YÜAO DRAMATIST

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While discussing Yüan drama in the *History of Chinese Literature*, Herbert A. Giles wrote:

A four-act drama, entitled "Joining the Shirt," was written by one Chang Kuo-pin, an educated courtesan of the day, the chief interest of which play lies perhaps in the sex of the writer.¹

We agree with Giles that the chief interest here is indeed the sex of the playwright Chang Kuo-pin 張國賓.² But what, after all, is Chang Kuo-pin's sex? To answer this, we must go back to Bazin Aine, a French Sinologist of the nineteenth century. Though writing more than one hundred years ago, he is still an important writer on the Yüan drama. In three of his major works: *Theatre Chinois*, 1838; *Le Siècle des Youên*,³ in *Journal Asiatique*, 1850-2; *Chine Moderne*, Second Part, 1853; Bazin made a complete survey of the Yüan drama. He examined all the one hundred plays in Tsang Mou-hsün's 臧懋循 *Yüan-ch'ü Hsüan*, 元曲選, which he called by its alternate name, *Yoëun-jîn-pé-tchong* 元人百種; he made a biographical list of all the Yüan authors, including the dramatists; he also translated four Yüan plays,⁴ one of which is Chang Kuo-pin's "Joining the Shirt" (合汗衫 *Ho Han-Shan*) with the French title "La Tunique Confrontée." In all these writings, Bazin referred to Chang Kuo-pin as "courtisane et actrice." Then he added:

On a de Tchang-koë-pin trois drames, intitulés La Tunique confrontée, Sié-jîn-kouci et Les Aventures de Lo-li-lang. Comme la police obligeait toutes les courtisanes à porter des ceintures vertes, on appelait, dans le style familier, les pièces de théâtres écrites par des courtisanes 綠巾詞 'compositions des ceintures vertes.' . . . Néanmoins, Tchang-koë-pin, Tchao-ming-king, Hong-tseu-li-cul et Hoa-li-lang doivent être mises au nombre des femmes beaux esprits de la dynastie des Youên.⁵

Ever since then, the sex of Chang Kuo-pin seems to have been fairly well established in Western writings.⁶ The above quotation from Giles, therefore, is merely one of the many statements of a generally recognized fact.

Confronted with such an impressive array of authorities, one feels diffident in maintaining a position that is different. We assert, nevertheless, that Chang Kuo-pin was as good a man as any of those who said that he was not. To prove this point, or rather to disprove the assertions of these Sinologists,

we begin by a search of the primary source from which they got their information. The clue to this quest is found in Bazin's use of the Chinese words *ch'ang* 娼 and *ch'ang-fu* 娼夫;⁷ in his reference to the *lu-chin tz'u* 綠巾詞 or "compositions des ceintures vertes;" and in his mentioning Chang Kuo-pin together with Tchao-ming-king (Chao Ming-ching 趙明鏡), Hong-tseu-li-cul (Hung-tzu Li-crh 紅字李二), and Hoa-li-lang (Hua Li Lang 花李郎).⁸ All these references point to Bazin's familiarity with the introductory section in Tsang Mou-hsün's *Yüan-ch'ü Hsüan*, which contains extracts from a number of Yüan and Ming writings on the drama.⁹ We discover that Bazin's information came from two sources:

1. Chao Tzu-ang 趙子昂 on the Drama. Chao Tzu-ang, who lived in 1254—1322, was an important writer and artist of the Yüan period. As a contemporary authority, his words have great bearing on the Yüan drama and deserve quotation in full: "In the *yüan-pen* 院本¹⁰, there are compositions by the *ch'ang-fu* 娼夫 known as *lu-chin tz'u* 綠巾詞 (compositions of the green sash). Though some of these were exceedingly good, they should not be called *yo fu* 樂府. For instance, Huang Fan-ch'o 黃番綽, Ching Hsin-mo 鏡新磨, Lei Hai-ch'ing 雷海青 and others were famous *ch'ang* 名娼 of ancient times. They were called by their music names 樂名 only, and from of old, they had no courtesy names 字. Today, Chao Ming-ching 趙明鏡 is erroneously known as Chao Wen-ching 趙文敬; and Chang K'u-p'in 張酷貧 as Chang K'üo-pin. These names are incorrect."¹¹

2. A list of Yüan Dramatists and their Plays. In this list, Chao Ming-ching, Chang K'u-p'in, Hung-tzu Li-crh, and Hua Li Lang are mentioned together as *ch'ang-fu*, whose plays should not be listed together with those of the famous scholars 名士.¹²

Thus we learn that it is from the words *ch'ang* and *ch'ang-fu* in the original text that Bazin got the idea of Chang Kuo-pin's being a courtesan. In view of this fact, the crux of the question seems to be the meaning of these two terms. To study them, we start with the *K'ang-hsi Dictionary*, which tells us that *ch'ang* 娼 is a vulgar or corrupt form of *chang* 倡. The *Tz'u Hai* gives the same explanation. Now, in literary Chinese, the word *ch'ang*, written as 娼 or 倡, means "music" 樂. In his annotation of the word "P'ai" 俳 in *Shuo Wen*, Tuan Yü-ts'ai, a famous eighteenth century linguist, wrote: "As far as it relates to drama, it is called *p'ai*; as far as it relates to music, it is called *ch'ang* or *yu* 優. Actually, they are the same thing."¹³ So originally, *ch'ang*, like *p'ai* or *yu*, was either a singer or a player. It was only much later that it acquired the meaning of a courtesan in combinations such as *ch'ang-chia* 倡家 and *ch'ang-chi* 娼妓, which obviously influenced Bazin and Giles in their

assertion of Chang Kuo-pin's sex and profession. We must remember, however, that in the Chinese sources just mentioned, the writers were talking about drama and dramatists, and not about the house of pleasure. Though there is no reason why courtesans could not be playwrights, there is more reason that actors should become playwrights. But the question remains as to whether the *ch'ang* as actor or musician is a male or a female. In this connection, the commonest use of *ch'ang* is in its combination with *yu* to form the compound *ch'ang-yu* or *yu-ch'ang*. It happens that in one passage Bazin himself used the term *ch'ang-yu* and translated it as "comédiennes."¹⁴ This clue being important, let us investigate further the historical usage of the expression. We soon discover that *ch'ang-yu* or *yu-ch'ang* was a common literary expression going as far back as *Kuan-tzu* 管子,¹⁵ *Shih Chi* 史記,¹⁶ *Han Shu*, 漢書,¹⁷ and *Shuo Yuan* 說苑.¹⁸ But in all these classical writings, there is no indication whatsoever of the *ch'ang-yu* or *yu-ch'ang's* being an entertainer of the female sex.¹⁹ On the other hand, in several instances, when the term is used in conjunction with *chu-ju* 侏儒 (dwarf), it may best be interpreted as meaning a court fool or clown. There are also instances in which *ch'ang* is definitely a male entertainer. The *Shih Chi*, for example, has the following two entries:

1. Yu chan 優旃 (Actor Chan), a *ch'ang* of Chin (dynasty) was a dwarf.²⁰
2. In Emperor Wu's time, he had a favorite *ch'ang*, Kuo She-jen 郭舍人 (Kuo, the retainer).²¹

In both cases we know the sex of actor Chan and retainer Kuo to be male. In another passage, *Shih Chi* refers to the men of the Chung-shan 中山 district as those who were apt to become *yu-ch'ang*, and the women of that district as those who were ready to enter the harem.²² Since literary Chinese was based upon authorities like these, the writers of the Yüan and Ming periods could not have differed widely in their use of such expressions.

As for the term *ch'ang-fu*, it is not found in any of the dictionaries, and no early authority for its use can be cited. It does not seem to have been a common expression, but it is certainly most important in our case as it is from this compound term in the Chinese text that Bazin derived his information about the sex of Chang Kuo-pin and the other three Yuan playwrights who were classified together with him. Happily for us, the meaning of this expression is not far to seek in modern Chinese usage. Thus the character *fu* 夫 serves a formative function in compounds such as *chang-fu* 丈夫, *nung-fu* 農夫, *ch'e-fu* 車夫, etc. In all these cases, *fu* denotes invariably a male person whether he is a husband, a farmer, a carter, or some other kind of worker.²³ So even if we are uncertain about *ch'ang*, its combination with *fu*

should make it explicitly clear what the sex of *ch'ang-fu* is. We believe it is this neglect in observing the full force of the word *fu* that has led the two Sinologists and those who followed them into giving a false identity to Chang Kuo-pin's sex.

Next, we come to the expression *lu-chin tz'u*, or "compositions des ceintures vertes," as Bazin phrased it. Here again, the explanation in *Tz'u Yüan* and *Tz'u Hai* is inconclusive. The quotation from a 1263 edict during the reign of Kubla Khan seems to support Bazin's contention as the said edict did stipulate the use of green headdress 青頭巾 (obviously, 青 here is green, not blue) for the courtesan house. But a closer examination shows that in the original decree, the wearers of the green headdress were actually to be men, not women. To be exact, the imperial order was that "the head of the courtesan house and his male relatives are to wear a green headdress."²⁴ This kind of head cover may seem outlandish, but it was not an innovation of the Mongols. Historically, green headgear had long been considered in China as a badge of humiliation and disgrace for men. As early as the Han dynasty, the wearing of a green turban was a sign of contemptibility.²⁵ A story of the T'ang dynasty gives an instance of a certain magistrate who used to punish his delinquent subordinates by making them wrap their head in green cloth.²⁶ It is evident that the green headdress was not a desirable ornament for either sex, and no one would put it on unless forced to as in the case of the members of the courtesan house in the Mongol period or in the case of the actors of the *chiao fang*²⁷ in the early Ming dynasty.²⁸

Lest after all this discussion, there should still be some modicum of doubt in the reader's mind regarding the sex of Chang Kuo-pin, we shall now present several body witnesses to prove our case that he was a bonafide man. The first group consists of three actors, Huang Fan-ch'ò, Ching Hsin-mò, and Lei Hai-ch'ing, all of whom were mentioned by Chao Tzu-ang in the passage above as famous *ch'ang* of the ancient times. Their testimony was that since they themselves were man actors, Chang Kuo-pin, by virtue of the company he kept, could not but be a man actor. We know that Huang Fan-ch'ò was a favorite entertainer in the court of the Brilliant Emperor 明皇 (712-756) of T'ang, and that his wit and humor had amused not only the emperor, but posterity as well. Lei Hai-ch'ing, a contemporary of Huang Fan-ch'ò, was a *p'i-pa* (lute) virtuoso. Ching Hsin-mò lived during the period of the Five Dynasties. He was a boon companion of Emperor Chuang 莊宗 (923-926) of the Later T'ang dynasty, who was himself an amateur actor and who lost his throne because he was more interested in acting than in governing his kingdom.

The second group of witnesses consists of men who were Chang Kuo-pin's

contemporaries. They were Chao Ming-ching, Hong-tzu Li-erh, and Hua Li Lang, all members of the *chiao fang*, or Training Bureau, which was established in the T'ang dynasty for the training of palace entertainers such as musicians, actors, and dancers to perform at imperial banquets, on birthday anniversaries and other festive occasions. This T'ang institution, which proved to be highly useful to pleasure-seeking emperors, was continued in the Sung and Yüan dynasties. It was natural that some talented actors of the *chiao fang* should aspire to be playwrights; quite a few did become playwrights. From authoritative source materials on the Yüan drama such as the *Lu Kuei Pu* 錄鬼簿 by Chung Szu-ch'eng 鍾嗣成 and *A Supplement to the Lu Kuei Pu* 錄鬼簿續編 by Chia Chung-ming 賈仲明,²⁹ we learn that Chao Ming-ching was a head-actor 色長 of the Training Bureau while Hua Li Lang and Hung-tzu Li-erh were both son-in-laws of Liu Yao-ho 劉要和 (sometimes also written as Liu Shua-ho 劉耍和) of the same Bureau. As for Chang Kuo-pin, he was a manager of the Training Bureau 教坊勾管³⁰ during the reign of Ta-teh 大德 (1297-1307). In an elegy on Chang Kuo-pin, Chia Chung-ming spoke of the general manager 總管 as living at a time when the years were plentiful and three coppers could buy a peck of rice. So being well-fed and having nothing else to occupy his mind, he began to write plays.³¹ He is said to have written five plays, of which three are extant.³² This then is the story of the man who, because of a misunderstanding concerning his sex, happily attracted the attention of Western writers and thus became internationally known. Let us hope, however, that all students of the Yüan drama will always remember him, not as "an educated courtesan," but as an actor-manager and playwright.

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1. Giles, *History of Chinese Literature*, London, 1901, p. 274.
2. Also known as Chang K'u-p'in 張酷貧.
3. *Le Siècle des Youên* was later published as a separate book by Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1854.
4. Bazin also translated the play *Le Pi-pa-ki, ou L'Histoire du Luth*, Paris, 1841.
5. Bazin, *Le Siècle des Youên*, in *Journal Asiatique*, Mai-Juin, 1852, IVe Série, Tome XIX, pp. 482-3.
6. S. W. Williams, translator of Chang Kuo-pin's "La Tunique Confrontée" from Bazin, refers to its author as "a clever woman of the 13th century." *The Chinese Repository*, March, 1849, Vol 18, no. 3, p. 116.
H. Cordier quotes Bazin's list of Yüan dramatic authors, adding: "d'après cette liste le nombre des auteurs se monte a 81, des auteurs-femmes 媚夫 a 4...." *Bibliotheca Sinica*, Paris, 1906-7, Vol. III, p. 1784.
G. Soulié also follows Bazin by calling Chang Kuo-pin "courtesane et

- actrice." *Essai sur la Littérature Chinoise*, Paris, 1912, p. 245.
7. Bazin, *Théâtre Chinois*, Paris, 1838, Introduction, p. lxxiii.
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. Bazin translated some of these extracts, which he mistakenly called "Préface de L'Éditeur Chinois." *Théâtre Chinois*, pp. lv-lviii. Actually, these were written by writers other than the editor Tsang Mou-hsün, whose name Bazin did not seem to have noted.
 10. A term now used for the drama of North China in the Chin 金 period (1115-1234). In early writings, it was used loosely to denote plays of the Yüan and Chin periods.
 11. *Yüan-ch'ü Hsüan* 元曲選, *Szu-pu Pei-yao* (SPPY) 四部備要 Edition, Vol. I, *Lun* 論 I, p. 12.
 12. *Ibid.*, *Lun* II, p. 12. Bazin rearranged this list into three divisions: I. Lettres 士; II. Anonymes 無名氏; III. courtisanes 娼夫. *Théâtre Chinois*, Introduction, pp. (lix)-lxiii.
 13. Quoted in *Tzu Hai* (ZH) 辭海, *Ho-ting-pen* 合訂本, 1948, p. 114.
 14. Bazin wrote in *Le Siècle des Youên*: "On a dit que les Chinoises n'avaient jamais paru sur le théâtre; c'est une erreur. Je suis affirmer qu'il y avait des actrices à la Chine pendant le regne des empereurs mongols. On les appelait 娼優 'comédiennes,' vulgairement: 狻狻 Nao-nao 'guenons'." *Journal Asiatique*, Mai-Juin, 1852, IVe Serie, Tome xix, p. 481.
 15. *Kuan-tzu, chüan* 卷 21, *Szu-pu Ts'ung-k'an* (SPTK) 四部叢刊 Edition: "然則國適有患, 則優倡侏儒起而議國事矣." p. 11.
 16. The words *ch'ang-yu* and *yu-ch'ang* are mentioned a number of times in *Shih Chi*. Here we give one example from the "Biography of Confucius": "有頃, 齊有司趨而進曰: '請奏宮中之樂.' 景公曰: '諾.' 優倡侏儒爲戲而前." *Shih Chi*, SPPY Edition, Vol. 14, p. 7.
 17. In the "Life of Kuan Fu" 灌夫傳, *Han Shu* writes: "所好音樂狗馬田宅. 所愛倡優巧匠之屬." *Han Shu*, SPPY Edition, Vol. 19, p. 9. This is actually a verbatim quotation from *Shih Chi*, SPPY Edition, Vol. 21, p. 8.
 18. According to *Shuo Yüan*, the hundreds of palaces built by the First Emperor of Chin "皆有鍾磬帷帳, 婦女倡優." *Shuo Yüan, chüan* 20, SPTK Edition, p. 95.
 19. Both *Tzu Yüan* (ZY) 辭源 and *Tzu Tung* (TZ) 辭通 explain *ch'ang-yu* as "female musicians" 女樂. But the quotations they give do not seem to tally with the explanation. See ZY, I, Section *Tzu* 子, p. 214, and ZT, I, *chüan* 11, p. 2. ZH merely says "musical entertainers" 樂人 without specifying their sex. ZH, p. 114.

20. The original passage reads: “優旃者，秦倡，侏儒也。” *Shih Chi*, *SPPY* Edition, Vol. 23, p. 4.
21. “武帝時，有所幸倡郭舍人。” Also from *Shih Chi*, *SPPY* Edition, Vol. 23, p. 5.
22. *Ibid.* Vol. 24, p. 7.
23. One exception is *fu-jen* 夫人, or madame. But here *fu* is the first word, and not the second, in the combination.
24. “娼妓之家長，並親屬男子，裹青頭巾。” See *ZY*, II, Section *Wei* 未, p. 75; and *ZH*, p. 1048, under the phrase “lu-t'ou-chin.”
25. *Han Shu*, in a note on “Tung-fang Shuo's Life” 東方朔傳, *SPPY* Edition, Vol. 65, p. 9.
26. Mentioned in *ZH*, under the entry *lu-t'ou-chin*, p. 1048.
27. For a discussion of the *chiao fang*, see p. 7 of the article.
28. In an imperial edict of 1370, the actors were required to put on green turbans to distinguish themselves from the scholars and the common people. See *Hsü Wen-hsien T'ung-kao* 續文獻通考, *Wan-yu Wen-k'u* (WYWK) 萬有文庫 Edition, Vol. 1, p. 3626.
29. Chung Szu-ch'eng was a dramatist in the last years of the Yüan dynasty, while Chia Chung-ming, three of whose plays are included in the *Yüan-ch'ü Hsüan*, flourished in the early years of the Ming dynasty. In Chung Szu-ch'eng's *Lu Kuei Pu* (The Ghost Register), there were several lists of Yüan dramatic authors with brief biographical notices and elegies mourning them. In his *Supplement*, Chia Chung-ming extended the lists to his own time and composed more elegies on those about whom his predecessor had failed to write. As contemporary documents, *The Ghost Register* and its *Supplement* were the most authoritative accounts of Yüan drama and Yüan dramatic poets.
30. In the Sung-Yüan period, the theaters, which were usually enclosed by beautiful railings, were known as kou-lan 勾欄. It is only in modern usage that *kou-lan* comes to mean a courtesan house. A misunderstanding of this term has led Lee-you Ya-oui to call Chang Kuo-pin “le directeur d'une maison de plaisir.” Lee-you Ya-oui, *Le Théâtre Classique en Chine et en France*, Paris, 1937, p. 29.
31. The elegy appeared in Chia Chung-ming's *A Supplement to the Lu Kuei Pu*. See “New Annotations of *Lu Kuei Pu*” 錄鬼簿新校注 by Ma Lien 馬廉 in the *Bulletin of the National Library of Peiping* 國立北平圖書館館刊, May-June, 1936, Vol. 10, no. 3, p. 75.
32. Besides the three extant plays mentioned by Bazin, Chang Kuo-pin is also known to have written two popular historical plays, *Ch'i-li T'an* 七里灘 and *Kao-tsu Huan-hsiang* 高祖還鄉, both of which are lost.

關於一個元代劇作家的性別問題

柳 無 忌

在英人翟爾斯的中國文學史內，他寫道：“元曲中有一部四折的劇本，合汗衫，是一個受過教育的妓女叫做張國賓撰的；那個劇本所以特別有興趣，也許就因為作者的性別的緣故。”在翟爾斯以後，差不多每個西洋作家，談到張國賓的，沒有不把他當作妓女看待。事實上，早在翟爾斯以前，在十九世紀中葉，就已有專攻元曲聞名的法人拔常，稱張國賓為“倡妓與女伶”，並說那類女性所作的劇本，都叫做“綠中詞”。因此，張國賓的性別，在西文書中成了問題，不可以不辯。

細察拔常在他幾部談元曲的書中，他也曾把合汗衫譯為法文一所引證的，發現他實在是因讀了元曲選卷首所載的“吳興趙子昂論曲”及“涵虛子論曲”幾段文字，而引起誤會的。趙子昂說：“院本中有娼夫詞，名曰綠頭中詞。……如黃番綽、鏡新磨、雷海青華，皆古名娼。……今趙明鏡說傳趙文敬，張酷貧說傳張國賓，皆非也。”涵虛子在他的元劇目錄中，亦稱趙明鏡、張酷貧、紅字李二、花李郎四人為“娼夫”，不得與名士並列。原來，西洋學者以張國賓等四人為妓女，是因為上文用“娼夫”二字，尤其是娼字的邊旁有一女字，就認定他們為女性了。

但是，在中文中“倡”與“娼”二字時常互用。在康熙字典內，亦說娼為倡的俗寫。如此，似不必拘泥娼字必指女性。同時我們知道，古籍中用倡優二字頗多，屢見史記、漢書、說苑等書；而在那幾段文字內，倡優或優倡是普通指演戲者，不分性別。事實上，從各文的語氣看來，尤其在文中所引證的人物，似指男演員為多。所以，為了娼字遂直指張國賓及其他三個元曲作家為女性的一說，是不能成立的。何況娼夫二字中的夫字，不明明白是男人的統稱嗎？

至于綠頭中，亦作青頭中，亦不足引為是妓女的佐證。元典上有這麼一條：“至元五年，准中書省劄，娼妓之家，家長並親屬男子裹青巾”。那麼，在元朝青頭中正是男子所戴的，雖然在明初似有樂戶即娼妓須戴綠中的制度。

我們知道，趙子昂所稱為娼夫的幾人，如黃番綽、鏡新磨、雷海青，都是唐代有名的藝人，而和張國賓同時的趙明鏡、紅字李二、花李郎三人，也都是教坊中人士。張國賓呢，據賈仲明在錄鬼簿續編的悼詩中所描寫的，是一位教坊勾管，或總管；大概因為他自己是個演員及管事的人，與劇作家時有來往，所以也駕輕就熟的寫出了幾本流行的戲劇。不料因為西洋的學人弄錯了他的性別，反而引起了一般的注意，在談論元曲的文字內時常提到他，而他的合汗衫也就被譯成了英法二國的文字，在西洋的文壇上流傳着。