NOTES ON
THE SEX OF A YŪAO DRAMATIST
LIU WU-CHI

While discussing Yūan 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 Yūan drama. In three of his major works: *Theatre Chinois*, 1838; *Le Siècle des Youèn*, in *Journal Asiatique*, 1850-2; *Chine Moderne*, Second Part, 1853; Bazin made a complete survey of the Yūan drama. He examined all the one hundred plays in Tsang Mou-hsün’s 壹懋新 *Yūan-ch’ū Hsuan*, 元曲選, which he called by its alternate name, *Yoèun-jin-pi-techong* 元人百種; he made a biographical list of all the Yūan authors, including the dramatists; he also translated four Yūan plays,⁴ one of which is Chang Kuo-pin’s “Joining the Shirt” (合浮杉 *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-koïe-pin trois drames, institulés La Tunique confrontée, Sié-jin-kouéi 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 緋巾詞 ‘compositions des ceintures vertes.’ . . . Néanmoins, Tchang-koïe-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 Youène.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 positon 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* 嬪 and *ch'ang-fu* 嬪奴 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 Tehao-ming-king (Chao Ming-ching 趙明鏡), Hong-tseu-li-erh (Hung-tzu Li-erh 紅字李二), and Hoa-li-lang (Hua Li Lang 花李郎). 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. 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, there are compositions by the *ch'ang-fu* 嬪奴 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 黃臘鴒, Ching Hsin-mo 錦新鵝, Lei Hai-ch’ing 雷海青 and others were famous *ch'ang* 名媚 of ancient times. They were called by their music names 樂名 only, and from old, they had no courtesy names 字. Today, Chao Ming-ching 趙明鏡 is erroneously known as Chao Wen-ching 趙文敏; and Chang K’u-p’iin 張麴貨 as Chang Kuo-pin. These names are incorrect.

2. A list of Yüan Dramatists and their Plays. In this list, Chao Ming-ching, Chang K’u-p’iin, Hung-tzu Li-erh, 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.

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* 嬪 is a vulgar or corrupt form of *ch'ang* 偶. The *Tzu Hai* gives the same explanation. Now, in literary Chinese, the word *ch'ang*, written as 嬪 or 偶, 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.” 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* 偶家 and *ch'ang-chi* 偶妓, 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 \textit{ch'ang} as actor or musician is a male or a female. In this connection, the
commonest use of \textit{ch'ang} is in its combination with \textit{yu} to form the compound
\textit{ch'ang-yu} or \textit{yu-ch'ang}. It happens that in one passage Bazin himself used the
term \textit{ch'ang-yu} and translated it as "comédiennes."\footnote{14} This clue being im-
portant, let us investigate further the historical usage of the expression. We
soon discover that \textit{ch'ang-yu} or \textit{yu-ch'ang} was a common literary expression going
as far back as \textit{Kuan-tzu} 蘇子,\footnote{15} \textit{Shih Chi} 史記,\footnote{16} \textit{Han Shu}, 漢書,\footnote{17} and \textit{Shuo Yuan} 說苑.\footnote{18} But in all these classical writings, there is no indication what-
soever of the \textit{ch'ang-yu} or \textit{yu-ch'ang} being an entertainer of the female sex.\footnote{19}
On the other hand, in several instances, when the term is used in conjunc-
tion with \textit{chu-fu} 侏儒 (dwarf), it may best be interpreted as meaning a court
fool or clown. There are also instances in which \textit{ch'ang} is definitely a male
entertainer. The \textit{Shih Chi}, for example, has the following two entries:

1. Yu chan 俊 нар (Actor Chan), a \textit{ch'ang} of Chin (dynasty) was a
dwarf.\footnote{20}

2. In Emperor Wu's time, he had a favorite \textit{ch'ang}, Kuo She-jen 郭舍人
(Kuo, the retainer).\footnote{21}

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

As for the term \textit{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 infor-
mation about the sex of Chang Kuo-pin and the other three Yuan play-
wrights 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 \textit{fu} 夫 serves a formative function in compounds such as \textit{chang-fu} 夫夫,
nung-fu 农夫, \textit{chie-fu} 乘夫, etc. In all these cases, \textit{fu} denotes invariably a male
person whether he is a husband, a farmer, a carter, or some other kind of
worker.\footnote{23} So even if we are uncertain about \textit{ch'ang}, its combination with \textit{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 tsu*, or “compositions des ceintures vertes,” as Bazin phrased it. Here again, the explanation in *Tzu Yu* and *Tzu 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 (緑頭布) (obviously, 內 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.” 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. 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. 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* in the early Ming dynasty.

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 bona fide man. The first group consists of three actors, Huang Fan-ch’o, Ching Hsin-mo, 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 men actors, Chang Kuo-pin, by virtue of the company he kept, could not but be a man actor. We know that Huang Fan-ch’o was a favorite entertainer in the court of the Brilliant Emperor 明宗 (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’o, was a *pi-pa* (lute) virtuoso. Ching Hsin-mo lived during the period of the Five Dynasties. He was a boon companion of Emperor Chuang 經宗 (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-erb, 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 魏鬼狐 by Chung Szu-ch'eng 鍾壽成 and A Supplement to the Lu Kuei Pu 魏鬼狐續編 by Chia Chung-ming 賈仲明,\(^3\) we learn that Chao Ming-ching was a head-actor 色長 of the Training Bureau while Hua Li Lang and Hung-tzu Li-erb were both son-in-laws of Liu Yao-ho 劉要和 (sometimes also written as Liu Shua-ho 劉要和) of the same Bureau. As for Chang Kuo-pin, he was a manager of the Training Bureau 城坊勾當\(^2\) 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 旋管 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.\(^3\) He is said to have written five plays, of which three are extant.\(^2\) 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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2. Also known as Chang K'u-p' in 張酷蒼.
3. Le Siècle des Youën was later published as a separate book by Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1834.


G. Soulié also follows Bazin by calling Chang Kuo-pin “courtisane et
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9. Bazin translated some of these extracts, which he mistakenly called “Pré-
face 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 period
(1115-1234). In early writings, it was used loosely to denote plays of the
Yüan and Chin periods.

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士; II. Aноnymes 無名氏; III. courtisanes 嬌夫. *Théâtre Chinois*, Introduction,
pp. (li)-lxiii.


14. Bazin wrote in *Le Siècle des Youèn*: “On a dit que les Chinoises n’avaient
jamais paru sur le théâtre; c’est une erreur. Je suis sûr qu’il y avait
des actrices à la Chine pendant le règne des empereurs mongols. On les
appelait 嬌優 ‘comédiennes,’ vulgairement: 獸舞 Nao-nao ‘guenons.’” *Journal

15. *Kuan-tzu, chüan* 卷 21, *Szu-pu Ts’ung-k’an (SPTK)* 閔部叢刊 Edition: “然則國諱
有誤, 則優倡侏儒起而議國史矣.” 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”: “有婦,
齊有司會進詩: 諷刺宮中之樂。景公曰: ‘託.’ 優倡侏儒為樂而議.” *Shih Chi, SPPY*

17. In the “Life of Kuan Fu” 潛夫傳, *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

18. According to *Shuo Yuan*, the hundreds of palaces built by the First Em-
peror of Chin “皆有鍾磬椎軸，婦女倡優.” *Shuo Yuan, chüan* 20, *SPTK*

19. Both *Tz’u Yuan (ZY)* 湊源 and *Tz’u Tsung (TZ)* 湊通 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* 亁, p. 214, and *TZ*, *chüan* 11,
p. 2. *ZH* merely says “musical entertainers” 樂人 without specifying their
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. “媚妓之家長，兼親屬男子，囊羞頤巾." See ZY, II, Section Wei 未, p. 75; and ZH, p. 1048, under the phrase “lu-t’ou-chin.”
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 Su-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 Su-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-ou to call Chang Kuo-pin “le directeur d’une maison de plaisir.” Lee-you Ya-ou, Le Théâtre Classique en Chine et en France, Paris, 1937, p. 29.
32. Besides the three extant plays mentioned by Bazin, Chang Kuo-pin is also known to have written two popular historical plays, Chi-li T’an 七里灘 and Kuo-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

在元人瞿汝稷氏的中國文學史內，他寫道：“元明中有一部四折的劇本，名《合汗衫》，是一個受過教育的妓女叫做張國賓撰的；那部劇本所以特別有趣，也許就因為作者的性別的緣故。”在瞿汝稷以後，差不多每個西學作家，談到張國賓的，沒有不把他當作妓女看待。事實上，早在瞿汝稷以前，在十世紀中葉，就已靚專攻元曲聞名的法人梅巖，稱張國賓為“倡妓與女伶”，並說那類女性所作的劇本，都叫做“綠窗詞”。因此，張國賓的性別，在西文書中成了問題，不可以不辨。

細察梅巖在元詩文集的書中，也曾把合汗衫著為劇文一所引證的，發現他實在是誤讀了元曲選本所載的“吳興集子多詞曲”及“訃軼之詩”真倉文字，而引起誤會的。趙子昂說：“此中有楊夫詞，名曰‘綠窗詞’。⋯⋯如黃摘作、詩人孫、雷蘭，皆古名婦，⋯⋯今則明德死楊文敬，張國賓號張國賓，皆非也。”訃軼子在他的元劇目錄中，亦稱趙明德、張國賓、雷車李二、酒宋元四人為“倡夫”，不得與名士並列。原來，西學學者以張國賓等四人為妓女，是因為上文用“倡夫”二字，尤其是倡夫的邊旁有一女字，就認定他們為女性了。

但是，在中文中“倡”與“倡”二字時常互用。在康熙字典內，亦說倡為倡的俗寫。如此，似不必拘泥唱字必指女性。同時我們知道，古籍中用倡字二字頗多，屡見史記、漢書、詮志等書；而在那幾個文字內，倡或倡之是普通指演員者，不分性別。事實上，從各文的話語看來，尤在文中所引證的人物，似指男演員為多。所以，為了倡字遂指張國賓及其他三位元曲作家為女性的一說，是不能成立的。何況倡夫二字中的夫字，不明明明白白是男人的統稱嗎？

至于綠窗中，亦作青青中，亦不足引為是妓女的佐證。元曲上有這樣一條：“至元五年，春中書省劄，倡妓之家，家長並親屬男子著青巾”。那麼，在元曲青青巾正是男子所戴的，雖然在明初似有樂戶亦唱妓須戴綠巾的制度。
我們知道，趙子昂所稱為雙叐的幾人，如黃香緒、韓新垣、雷海青，都是唐宋
有名的藝人，然而張國賓同時的趙明卿、紅字輩三人，也都是教坊中人
士。張國賓呢，據《倉頡聲訓編》所載，是一位教坊勾管，或總
管；大概因自己是個演員及管事的人，與劇作家時有來往，所以也熟
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，在談論元明的文字中時常提到他，而他的《倉頡聲訓編》也被譯
成了英法二國的文字，在西洋的文壇上流傳着。