

## 王右丞集卷之十六 賦表

### 16.1

#### 白鸚鵡賦

若夫名依西域。  
族本南海。

- 同朱喙之清音。  
4 變綠衣於素彩。  
惟茲鳥之可貴。  
諒其美之斯在。

- 爾其入翫於人。  
8 見珍奇質。  
狎蘭房之妖女。  
去桂林之雲日。  
易喬枝以羅袖。  
12 代危巢以瓊室。  
慕侶方遠。  
依人永畢。  
托言語而雖通。  
16 顧形影而非匹。

## Selected Prose

### From *Juan 16*: Rhapsodies and memorials

#### 16.1

Rhapsody on a white parrot<sup>1</sup>

Though its fame may depend on the Western Regions,  
Its tribe comes originally from the Southern Sea.<sup>2</sup>

Its red beak produces the same clear notes,

4 But it has changed its green jacket for pure-white silk.<sup>3</sup>

But this bird is worthy of treasuring,

No doubt for the beauty it possesses on its own.

Now it has gone within to be the sport of humans,

8 Who value its marvelous essence.

Intimate with seductive girls in their fragrant chambers,

It has left the cloudy sun of its osmanthus woods.

It has traded tall branches for gauze sleeves,

12 Exchanged its lofty nest for garnet chambers.

Longing for companions in distant places,

It must remain until its end among men.

Though it is understood when it speaks its thoughts,

16 It looks on its own shadow, which is not its mate.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Possibly a cockatoo.

2 Southeast Asia.

3 Like the more famous parrots of Gansu, this parrot has a red beak; but unlike them, its coat is white. This is probably meant as a specific contrast with the parrot of Mi Heng's 彌衡 famous "Parrot Rhapsody" (*Yingwu fu* 鸚鵡賦).

4 Its power of speech allows it to communicate its thoughts with an intimate friend, but it has no true mate in captivity.

經過珠網。

出入金鋪。

單鳴無應。

20 隻影長孤。

偶白鷗於池側。

對皓鶴於庭隅。

愁混色而難辨。

24 願知名而自呼。

明心有識。

懷恩無極。

芳樹絕想。

28 雕梁撫翼。

時嘽花而不言。

每投人以方息。

慧性孤稟。

32 雅容非飾。

含火德之明輝。

被金方之正色。

- It passes through the beaded curtains,  
Goes in and out past gilded door-knockers.  
Its solitary cry elicits no response;  
20 with its single shadow it is forever alone.  
It forms a group with the silver pheasants by the side of the pool,  
It matches the white cranes by a corner of the courtyard.  
But it grieves that its colors are mingled with theirs and hard to  
distinguish;  
24 Wishing that its fame be known, it calls out on its own.

- Its enlightened mind has sentience,  
Endlessly grateful for the favor it has received.  
It has severed all thought of its fragrant trees,  
28 As it brushes its wings on the carven rafters.  
At times it falls silent, a flower in its beak,  
Resting only when it finds refuge with humans.  
Alone endowed with a clever nature,  
32 Its refined features are without adornment.  
It contains the bright radiance of fire's virtue,  
Though it bears the proper hue of the metallic direction.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Its beak is red, the color associated with the element of fire and the South; its coat is white, the color associated with the element of metal and the West.

- 至如海燕呈瑞。  
36 有玉筐之可依。  
山雞學舞。  
向寶鏡而知歸。  
皆羽毛之偉麗。  
40 奉日月之光輝。  
豈憐茲鳥。  
地遠形微。  
色凌紈質。  
44 彩奪繒衣。  
深籠久閉。  
喬木長違。  
儻見借其羽翼。  
48 與遷鶯而共飛。

- The sea swallows bring signs of good fortune  
 36 Which one may fulfill in a basket of jade;<sup>1</sup>  
 The mountain pheasant practices its dance,  
 Longing to go home as it faces the jeweled mirror.<sup>2</sup>  
 All these are the magnificences of the feathered ones,  
 40 Who have received the radiance of sun and moon.  
 How can they cherish this bird,  
 From a distant land, with its fragile form?  
 But its hues surpass the quality of taffeta,  
 44 And its splendor competes with garments of silk.  
 It is shut forever within its deep cage,  
 Long deprived of its towering tree.  
 If one could lend it a pair of wings,  
 48 It could rise up soaring with the oriole.<sup>3</sup>

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1 This may allude to a legend told of the times of the ancient emperor Gaoxin 高辛. Two of his consorts were bathing in a river as part of a fertility rite. A black bird flew over and dropped a multicolored egg on them. The two placed a jade basket over it. The older of the two, Jiandi 簡狄, succeeded in swallowing it and became pregnant. She gave birth to Xie 契, the founder of the Shang people.

2 The mountain pheasant was known to dance when it saw its reflection in the water. Someone presented Cao Cao with a pheasant, and he was disappointed when it would not dance. Someone suggested putting a mirror in the cage. When the pheasant saw its reflection, it danced until it dropped dead of fatigue.

3 A cliché indicating rising from lowly status to a high official position. As in Mi Heng's "Parrot Rhapsody," Wang Wei's poem is a thinly veiled allegory of the solitary talent who longs for recognition.

## 16.2

## 賀古樂器表

臣某言。伏見今月七日。中書門下敕牒。道士申太芝奏稱。伏奉恩旨。令臣往名山修功德。去載六月二十日。於南海葛洪居處。至誠祈請。中夜恍惚見一老人。云是茅山羅浮神人。常於七曜洞來往。昔曾於九疑山桂陽石室中藏天樂一部。歲月久遠。變為五野豬。彼郡百姓捉獲。汝可往取獻皇帝。每祈祭。但依方安置奏之。即五音自和。天仙百神。應聲降福。所求必遂。壽命延長。臣奉神言。即往桂陽

## 16.2

A memorial offering felicitations on the acquisition of ancient musical instruments<sup>1</sup>

Your subjects speak:

We have humbly observed that on the seventh day of this month the Secretariat-Chancellery issued an imperial edict, relating that the Daoist Master Shen Taizhi had memorialized the following:

“I received the gracious command from the Emperor that I should go to eminent mountains to cultivate my merit. Last year, on the twentieth day of the sixth month at the residence of Ge Hong at Nanhai, I offered prayers of the greatest sincerity.<sup>2</sup> At midnight I could dimly make out an old man who told me that he was a Divine Man from Luofu and Maoshan,<sup>3</sup> and that he often came and went via the Grotto of the Seven Radiances. Once in the past he had stored away a group of Heavenly Musicians in the Guiyang Stone Chamber of Nine Doubts Mountain.<sup>4</sup> Since then many months and years had passed, and the musicians had turned into five wild boars. Commoners from the commandery there had captured them; I should go there myself, acquire them, and present them to the Emperor. If one were merely to set these instruments out in the right direction and play on them whenever offerings were made, the five notes would naturally harmonize, and Heaven’s Transcendents and the hundred spirits would respond to the sound and bring down blessings. Whatever one wished for would come true, and one’s natural lifespan would be extended.

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1 Composed ca. 748.

2 In his later years, the Daoist polymath Ge Hong moved to Luofu 羅浮 Mountain in the distant south (here, referred to by the Tang district name of Nanhai), because of its accessibility to cinnabar deposits.

3 Maoshan 茅山 (near modern Nanjing) was the source of the scriptural revelations of the Shangqing 上清 school of Daoism, and thus one of the most sacred places of the religion. Both Maoshan and Luofu were said to be the sites of Daoist “Grotto Heavens” (*dongtian* 洞天), utopian spaces located within the mountains themselves. It was said that Transcendents could travel from one grotto heaven to another without leaving the mountains.

4 Nine Doubts Mountain is located in Hunan and is most famous in Chinese lore as the site of the sage Emperor Shun’s tomb.



- 尋問。百姓云。天寶二載。村人常見有五  
 12 野豬。逐之。便走入石室。就裏尋覓。  
 化為石物五枚。眾共驚異。臣取以扣之。  
 音律相和。與神人言不異。今將奉進者。  
 臣聞陰陽不測之謂神。變化無方之謂聖。  
 16 惟神與聖。感而遂通。伏惟開元天寶聖文  
 神武應道皇帝陛下。居皇建之極中。  
 得混成之大道。奉先天之聖祖。玄化協於  
 無為。育率土之群生。至仁侔於陰鷲。  
 20 然猶精意不倦。聖祀逾崇。遍禮群仙。  
 思祐九服。故得龐眉皓髮。遙同入昴之人。  
 真訣玄言。來告馭風之客。棲身七曜。  
 以俟唐堯。藏樂九疑。不傳虞舜。  
 24 留茲石室。思獻玉墀。憑野豕以呈形。  
 表洞仙之屬意。且神物思變。古亦有之。

1 Here Wang Wei quotes from the “Appended Words” of the *Yijing*.

2 Wang Wei employs language from both Confucian and Daoist texts here to portray the ideal ruler.

3 Laozi (whom the Tang royal house considered their founding ancestor).

“I received the god’s speech and went immediately to Guiyang to make inquiries. The commoners there told me: ‘In the second year of Tianbao [743], villagers often would see a group of five wild boars. They chased after them, and they fled into a stone cave. When the villagers went in to look for them, they found that the boars had turned into five pieces of stone. Everyone was astonished and found it strange.’ I took them up and struck them, and found that they were in harmony. All was as the divine man had said. I now present them to the court.”

Your subjects have heard that we call “divine” what cannot be predicted in the cycles of yin and yang, and that “sagely” are the forces of transformation that have no set direction. Only the divine and the sagely will communicate in response to stimuli.<sup>1</sup> I humbly believe that His Majesty, the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Emperor Who Responds to the Way, Sagely in Civil Matters and Divine in Martial Ones, dwells in the august establishment of the highest center and has obtained the great way of undifferentiated completion.<sup>2</sup> He has been entrusted with matters by the sagely ancestor who preceded Heaven,<sup>3</sup> and the profound transformations of his governance is in harmony with non-action. He educates all living beings within the royal domain, and his perfect benevolence is on a par with the hidden standards of Heaven. Thus it is that his sincere thoughts never tire, so that his sagely reign grows ever more eminent; everywhere he gives due honor to the Transcendents, and he broods on how to help the Nine Feudatories.<sup>4</sup> Because of this, he has succeeded in drawing out a white-browed sage, much like those men who entered the Pleiades in far-off times; with secret formulae and profound speech he has brought a wind-rider to come report to him.<sup>5</sup>

He had resided at the Grotto of the Seven Brilliances while awaiting a Yao of Tang to appear. He had stored away the musicians at Nine Doubts, so that they were not transmitted to Shun of Yu. He kept them in a stone chamber, thinking to present them at the palace’s jade stairs; he lodged them in the form of wild boars in order to make them manifest and to display the intentions of the grotto’s Transcendents.

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4 Nine Feudatories: general term for the empire, from the capital to the remotest areas.

5 See 12.3, p. 58n2. Wind-rider: Transcendent. Here Wang Wei is referring to the Divine Man who appeared to Shen Taizhi and told him about the musicians.

- 龍躍平津。實為寶劍。鳧飛葉縣。空餘素履。器非上品。人纔下仙。猶能精誠聿修。
- 28 神變浚若。況殊庭致貺。天老效祥。願授至尊。以享上帝。亦既考擊。動諧律呂。韶濩慚其九奏。雲咸失其八音。翠鳳入于洞簫。殊非雅韻。朱鷺傳于鼗鼓。
- 32 敢比仙聲。天地同和。神祇降福。無窮之壽。永撫寶圖。無疆之休。以康庶績。實由至德斯感。大道玄通。神人親告於休徵。靈仙不秘其空樂。稽之古昔。
- 36 實未見聞。臣等限以留司。不獲隨例拊舞。不任踴躍喜慶之至。

1 Zhang Hua obtained two magical swords. Later when crossing a ford, the swords leapt from his waist and fell into the water, where they turned into dragons.

2 A Han magician and official Wang Qiao 王喬 traveled back and forth between the court and his district of Ye 葉 County by transforming a pair of ducks into magical slippers.

3 Great Shao was the music of Shun's court, and Huo of the Shang dynasty. Cloud Gate was the music of the Yellow Emperor, and Xian Pool that of Yao. A nine-piece suite is mentioned in the *Shang shu* as the music necessary to entice the auspicious phoenix to appear at court. Eight sounds refers to the eight media used to construct musical instruments: metal, stone, silk, bamboo, gourd, earth, leather, and wood.

Moreover, there are also examples in early times of numinous objects that were intent on transforming. Dragons leapt at Yanping ford; they were in reality precious swords.<sup>1</sup> Ducks flew up in Ye County, leaving behind nothing but a pair of silk slippers.<sup>2</sup> These objects were not of highest standards, and the men involved were barely low-ranking Transcendents; yet they were still able to cultivate their purity and sincerity so that their numinous transformations were profound. How much the more so will it be when an otherworldly court presents its gift, and a venerable celestial manifests a good omen which he wishes to present to His Majesty, so that His Majesty might carry out sacrifices to the high god?

In addition, when these instruments are struck they are always in harmony with the pitch-pipes. In comparison, the Great Shao and Huo musics would be ashamed of their nine-piece suites, and the Cloud Gate and Xian Pool musics would have lost their eight sounds!<sup>3</sup> The turquoise phoenix would only have entered with the sounds of the pipe if the harmonies had been elegant; and the “Vermilion Egret” tune would have been transmitted on the *tao* drum only because the bird dared to rival the Transcendents’ melodies.<sup>4</sup> Heaven and Earth have been harmonized, and spirits above and below bestow their good fortune: Inexhaustible longevity, and never-ending possession of splendid policies; infinite tranquility, and peace brought to all affairs. Truly this response has come about due to the Emperor’s perfect charismatic virtue, so that the Great Way permeates all mysteriously. This divine man personally has reported on this with his auspicious omen, and the numinous Transcendent has not concealed this music of the skies. If we examine the past, surely this has never been or heard of before. Even though we are all restricted to our offices in Luoyang, we find ourselves clapping and dancing, unable to regulate our actions; we cannot restrain ourselves from leaping about in the extremity of our joy.

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4 See note to 11.17.7. “Vermilion Egret” was a popular tune – some said it was based on a dance that an egret performed during the reign of King Wei of Chu. Both examples here demonstrate the power of music to move nature and mysterious forces.