

Conceptual Metaphor of Time in *Transient Days* by Zhu Ziqing:

a case study

MÉTAPHORE CONCEPTUELLE DU TEMPS DANS LES *JOURS TRANSITOIRES* DE ZHU ZIQING :

UNE ÉTUDE DE CAS

朱自清作品《匆匆》中關於時間的概念隱喻
—— 一個個案研究

Zhu Shanshan
朱珊珊

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Abstract: This paper tries to explore the conceptual metaphor of time in *Transient Days*, an essay about time written by a famous Chinese writer, Zhu Ziqing, to address such problems as (1) Is there any linguistic evidence in *Transient Days* supporting the universality of the conceptual metaphor models (TIME IS A THING/ENTITY, TIME PASSING IS MOTION (THROUGHN SPACE) and TIME IS MONEY (A VALUABLE COMMODITY/LIMITED RESOURCE)) established by the previous studies?; and (2) Concerning the TIME PASSING IS MOTION model, are there more TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in it?

Key words: Conceptual metaphor, time, *Transient Days*

Résumé: Le présent article tente d'explorer la métaphore du temps dans les *Jours transitoires*, un essai sur le temps écrit par un écrivain célèbre chinois Zhu Ziqing, pour poser des problèmes, tels que : (1) Est-ce qu'il y a des preuves linguistiques dans les *Jours transitoires* supportant l'universalité des modèles de métaphore conceptuelle (Le temps est une chose/entité, l'écoulement du temps est un mouvement (à travers l'espace) et le temps est l'argent (un article d'usage valable/ une ressource limitée) établis par les études précédentes ? (2) En ce qui concerne le modèle que l'écoulement du temps est un mouvement, est-ce qu'il y a plus de métaphores sur le fait que l'écoulement du temps est un objet mouvant que sur le fait que l'écoulement du temps est un mouvement au dessus d'un paysage ?

Mots-Clés: métaphore conceptuelle, temps, *Jours transitoires*

摘 要: 本文通過分析著名中國作家朱自清的散文《匆匆》中關於時間的概念隱喻來解決以下兩個問題：(1)《匆匆》中是否有語言事實支援在以往研究中建立的時間概念隱喻的模型：時間是一個事物/實體，時間流逝是移動（穿過空間），時間是金錢（有價值的商品/有限的資源）；(2)鑒於時間流逝是移動這一概念隱喻模型之下又可分為兩個小模型：時間流逝是一個移動的物體和時間流逝是穿過空間的移動，本文同時探究在《匆匆》中哪個小模型的時間隱喻更多一些？

關鍵詞: 概念隱喻；時間；《匆匆》

1. INTRODUCTION

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) established the framework of metaphor in the famous *Metaphors We Live By*. They claimed that the main point of the cognitive

linguistic paradigm is that we use our bodily based, concrete experiences to interpret and encode non-bodily based, abstract phenomena. When we do so, we are using conceptual metaphors. Conceptual metaphors are often so embedded in our language and ways of thinking about the world, that we do not consciously realize we are structuring the world in a particular way. For example, they used the conceptual metaphor, TIME IS MONEY (A VALUABLE COMMODITY/LIMITED RESOURCE), to illustrate how metaphors were conceptualized. Since then, a lot of researches concerning the conceptual metaphors of time have been done in English, Chinese, Japanese, etc (Lakoff, 1993; Ahrens and Huang, 2002; Gentner and Imai, 1992; Huang 1977; Huang; 1981; Shinohara, 1999), and several conceptual models have also been established. The results of these researches show that the metaphors of time in different language share respectable similarities in conceptualization. However, there are also slight differences due to different cultural background (Eubanks, 1999; Ahrens and Huang, 2002; Gong, 2005).

Based on the framework established by the previous researches, this study tries to examine the models of time conceptual metaphors in *Transient Days*, a famous classical essay written by Zhu Ziqing. One of the main purposes of this research is to adopt the contemporary metaphor theory to characterizing the models of time in *Transient Days*, whose main theme is concerning time. Furthermore, this study will also test whether there are more TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT metaphors than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in *Transient Days* which had been put forward by Gong (2005). In terms of this purpose, a more desirable research is a cross-cultural comparison of time conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese. However, since there is not enough time to collect and analyze proper English data, this paper will only illustrate the established conclusion with some English examples. This is one of the limitations of the present research. Further efforts will be made to conduct a cross-cultural study using comparative English and Chinese texts to explore the different use of conceptual metaphor models of time in the two cultures.

This paper is organized as follows: first, some related literature is reviewed; second, the methodology is discussed; and third, the analysis of the time metaphor conceptualization in the text *Transient Days* is discussed in detail. The paper ends with a conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to illustrate their viewpoint of conceptual metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) took TIME IS MONEY as an example to show the conceptualization

of metaphors. They also collected some examples of metaphorical expression of time in English; of course these examples only focused on the pair of time and money. The following sentences are from their book:

TIME IS MONEY

You're *wasting* my time.

This gadget will *save* you hours. I don't have the time to give you.

How do you *spend* your time these days?
That flat tire *cost* me an hour.

I've *invested* a lot of time in her.

I don't have enough time to *spare* for that.
You're running out of time.

You need to *budget* your time.

Put aside some time for ping pong.

Is that *worth your while*?

Do you have much time *left*?

He's living on I *borrowed* time.

You don't use your time, *profitably*.

I *lost* a lot of time when I got sick.

Thank you for your time.

According to Lakoff, time in west culture was a valuable commodity and it was a limited resource that people used to accomplish their goals, so TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE and TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY were all metaphorical concepts. They formed a single system based on sub-categorization, since in west society money was a limited resource and limited resources were valuable commodities. These sub-categorization relationships characterized entailment relationships between the metaphors: TIME IS MONEY entailed that TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, which entailed that TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY.

Later, Lakoff (1993) claimed that time in English was conceptualized in terms of space. The ontology was that time was understood in terms of things (i.e., entities and locations) and motion and the background condition was that the present time was at the same location as a canonical observer. In his opinion, within the conceptual metaphor, TIME PASSING IS MOTION, there are two special cases: TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT and TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE. The following examples were given by Lakoff (1993):

Special case 1: TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT

The time will come when...

The time has long since gone when...

The time for action has arrived.

That time is here.
In the weeks following next Tuesday, ...
On the preceding day, ...
I'm looking ahead to Christmas.
Thanksgiving is coming up on us.
Let's put all that behind us.
I can't face the future.
Time is flying by.
The time has passed when...

Special case 2: TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE

There's going to be trouble down the road.
He stayed there for ten years.
He stayed there a long time.
His stay in Russia extended over many years.
He passed the time happily.
He arrived on time.
We're coming up on Christmas.
We're getting close to Christmas.
He'll have his degree within two years.
I'll be there in a minute.

The details of the two special cases are rather different; indeed, they are inconsistent with one another. In special case 1, the observer is fixed; times are entities moving with respect to the observer while in special case 2, the observer is fixed; times are entities moving with respect to the observer (Lakoff, 1993). For example, in "Christmas is coming" (special case 1) and "We're coming up on Christmas" (special case 2), both instances of "come" are temporal, but one takes a moving time as first argument and the other takes a moving observer as first argument. The same is true of "pass" in "The time has passed" (special case 1) and in "He passed the time" (special case 2). Lakoff thought that it was the biological knowledge of people that played a decisive role in understanding time metaphorically in terms of motion, entities, and locations, because in people's visual systems, they had detectors for motion and detectors for objects/locations, but they did not have detectors for time (whatever that could mean). Thus, it made good biological sense that time should be understood in terms of things and motion.

In terms of the models of time conceptual metaphor, researches done by Ahrens and Huang (2002), Gentner and Imai (1992), and Eubanks (1999) all yielded the same results based on the corpus of English, Chinese and Japanese. In these cultures, time was considered as valuable and limited thing, which was able to move. Therefore, the cognitive system of them was somehow similar.

Among those researches based on Chinese corpus,

the researchers (Yu, 1998; Ahrens and Huang, 2000) found that the two sub-cases of the TIME PASSING IS MOTION metaphor in Chinese were similar in several respects to that of the English TIME PASSING IS MOTION metaphor. The following examples are from Ahrens and Huang (2000):

Special case 1: TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT

前年我到美國去了。

I went to America two years ago (the year before last).

我打算後年結婚。

I plan to marry two years from now (the year after next).

前不見古人，後不見來者。

Before me, I can't see any predecessors; behind me I can't see any followers.

往古來今謂之宙。

Time is what comes to the present and goes to the past.

為樂當及時，何能待來世。

One should enjoy the present; there is no cause to wait for the time yet to come.

耶誕節快到了。

Christmas is almost here.

Special case 2: TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE

我們已經進入了 21 世紀。

We have already entered the twenty-first century.

我們快到期末考了。

We're fast approaching finals.

共和國走過了四十五不平凡的歷程。

The Republic has walked over an extraordinary journey of forty-five years.

人類即將跨入新世紀。

Mankind will soon stride into the new century.

她迷迷糊糊地過日子。

She passed her days in a dazed manner.

Based on the previous study, Gong (2005) compared the two sub-cases used in English and Chinese. She found that there were more TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT metaphors than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in Chinese, which meant that there were more moving-time perspective than moving-ego perspective metaphorical expressions in Chinese. Lai's (2002) psycholinguistic experiments about the different time concept in English and Chinese provided empirical evidences in supporting

this statement. One result of the experiments showed that whether Chinese users were in static state or in dynamic state, they tended to use the moving-time concept while English users were in the reverse case. The other result showed that when Chinese users listening to a text containing moving-time concept, there was no statistical difference between the reacting time of transition to moving-ego concept and moving-time concept, but the researched spent more time to understand the sentence of moving-ego concept than the sentence of moving-time concept when listening to the text containing moving-ego concept. The two results validated that TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT was the main conceptual metaphor of time in Chinese from different perspectives. However, Gong (2005) didn't use enough text evidences to reconfirm Lai's conclusion.

This paper tries to take into account universality of the conceptual metaphors of time by examining the metaphorical models in the essay *Transient Days*. For universality, it is expected that the linguistic metaphors found in *Transient Days* will fit in the models established by the previous researches, such as TIME IS A THING/ENTITY, TIME PASSING IS MOTION (THROUGHN SPACE) and TIME IS MONEY (A VALUABLE COMMODITY/LIMITED RESOURCE). At the same time, this paper will also test Gong's (2005) conclusion that there are more TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT metaphors than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in Chinese on the basis of analyzing concrete text *Transient Days*.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper will mainly address the following two research questions:

1st. Is there any linguistic evidence in *Transient Days*, a famous time-themed essay to support the universality of the conceptual metaphor models of time in Chinese established by the previous studies?

2nd. Concerning the TIME PASSING IS MOTION model, are there more TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT metaphors than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in *Transient Days*?

As stated previously, this paper examines the metaphors of time in the essay *Transient Days* and the data is collected from the whole text. This essay is chosen for its fame and special theme. *Transient Days* is one of the most beautiful essays written by Zhu Ziqing in 1922. It has been regarded as a classic in the Chinese modern literature history and has been spoken highly by all of the literary critics. The theme is about time. The author complained how time flies and thought that time is the most valuable thing for a

person. Almost every sentence in this essay is about time and almost every sentence is a metaphorical expression that can be conceptualized. Therefore, it is natural to argue that *Transient Days* is an as good if not better alternative text concerning the purposes of the present study.

The whole essay is divided into five paragraphs and there are two subjects, time and me, in it. Each paragraph will be coded and analyzed respectively for the sake of convenience and clearness. The Chinese sentences involving time conceptual metaphor will be presented in Chinese characters, provided with English translation. The English translation of this essay used in this paper is the version translated by Zhang Peiji, which is considered to be the most elegant one. Both the Chinese and English versions are from literary or academic journal to insure their accuracy. After that, the whole text is carefully examined to identify all the metaphorical expressions related to time.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Examination of the essay *Transient Days* results in roughly 26 metaphorical expressions of time. The 26 examples can be grouped into three conceptual metaphors established by the previous studies, namely TIME IS A THING/ENTITY, TIME PASSING IS MOTION (THROUGHN SPACE) and TIME IS MONEY (A VALUABLE COMMODITY/LIMITED RESOURCE). However, there are three special cases that cannot be classified into the three groups. The following part includes the detailed analysis of these conceptual metaphors.

The most prominent conceptual metaphor is TIME PASSING IS MOTION (THROUGHN SPACE), with 18 out of 26 linguistic illustrations supporting it. The following examples are collected from the *Transient Days*:

燕子去了，有再來的時候。

If swallows go away, they will come back again.

我們的日子為什麼一去不復返呢？

Why should our days go by never to return?

洗手的時候，日子從水盆里過去。

Thus the day flows away through the sink when I wash my hands.

我赤裸裸來到這世界，轉眼間也將赤裸裸的回去罷？

I have come to this world stark naked, and in the twinkling of an eye, I am to go back as stark naked as ever.

These Chinese examples confirm the established conceptual model that TIME PASSING IS MOTION (THROUGHN SPACE) as stated by Ahrens and Huang (2002). Besides, they are meaningful in another two senses. First, the claim of Yu (1998) and Ahrens and Huang (2000) that there are also two sub-cases of the TIME PASSING IS MOTION metaphor in Chinese that are similar in several respects to the English is reconfirmed by the examples from the *Transient Days*. They are TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT and TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE. Second, there are significantly more TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT metaphors than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in *Transient Days*, which reconfirms Gong's (2005) statement and Lai's (2002) psycholinguistic experimental results. That is, compared with English, there are more moving-time perspective than moving-ego perspective metaphorical expressions in Chinese. Among all the 18 TIME PASSING IS MOTION metaphorical expressions in the *Transient Days*, there are 13 TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT metaphors while only 5 TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors.

TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT metaphors in the *Transient Days*:

我們的日子為什麼一去不復返呢？

Why should our days go by never to return?

是他們自己逃走了罷 現在又到了哪里呢？

Perhaps they have just run away by themselves. But where could they be at the present moment?

八千多日子已經從我手中溜去。

I find that more than 8,000 days have already slipped away through my fingers.

去的儘管去了，來的儘管來著。

What is gone is gone, what is to come keep coming.

洗手的時候，日子從水盆裏過去。

Thus the day flows away through the sink when I wash my hands.

吃飯的時候，日子從飯碗裏過去。

(The day) vanishes in the rice bowl when I have my meal.

默默時，便從凝然的雙眼前過去。

(The day) passes away quietly before the fixed gaze of my eyes when I am lost in reverie.

我覺察他去的匆匆了，伸出手遮挽時，他又從遮挽著的手邊過去。

Aware of its fleeting presence, I reach out for it only to find it brushing past my outstretched hands.

天黑時，我躺在床上，他便伶伶俐俐地從我身上跨過，從我腳邊飛去了。

In the evening, when I lie on my bed, it nimbly strides over my body and flits past my feet.

等我睜開眼和太陽再見，這算又溜走了一日。

By the time when I open my eyes to meet the sun again, another day is already gone.

但是新來的日子的影兒又開始在歎息裏閃過了。

But, in the midst of my sighs, a new day is flashing past.

在逃去如飛的日子裏 在千門萬戶的世界裏的我能做些什麼呢？

Living in this world with its fleeting days and teeming millions, what can I do but waver and wander and live a transient life?

你聰明的，告訴我，我們的日子為什麼一去不復返呢？

O you the wise, would you tell me please: why should our days go by never to return?

TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in the *Transient Days*:

燕子去了，有再來的時候。

If swallows go away, they will come back again.

楊柳枯了，有再青的時候。

If willows wither, they will turn green again.

桃花謝了，有再開的時候。

If peach blossoms fade, they will flower again.

我赤裸裸來到這世界，轉眼間也將赤裸裸的回去罷？

I have come to this world stark naked, and in the twinkling of an eye, I am to go back as stark naked as ever.

但不能平的，為什麼偏要白白走這一遭啊？

However, I am taking it very much to heart: why should I be made to pass through this world for nothing at all?

Compared with English, there are more TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphorical expressions in Chinese. The main reason is that Chinese usually adopt an objective perspective while American or European tend to adopt a subjective perspective when describe the same entity or affair. This kind of different cognitive viewpoint roots in the different philosophical background of the two cultures. Chinese philosophy, especially the Confucian philosophy, takes the individual as the mean and the society as the end. In contrast, American philosophy has been reflecting obvious individualistic tendency since Puritanism, which emphasizes the existence of

the individual and take the individual as the end while the society as the mean. Therefore, American and European people are self-centered, positive and initiative while Chinese people are self-denial, negative and passive (Gong, 2005). The different culture background can be an explanation why there are more moving-time perspective than moving-ego perspective metaphorical expressions in Chinese.

There are also 3 TIME IS A THING/ENTITY and 2 TIME IS MONEY (A VALUABLE COMMODITY/LIMITED RESOURCE) metaphorical expressions in the *Transient Days*, which could act as the linguistic evidences to support the conceptual metaphor model established by the previous study (Lakoff, 1993; Ahrens and Huang, 2002; Gentner and Imai, 1992; Huang 1977; Huang; 1981; Shinohara, 1999).

TIME IS A THING/ENTITY metaphors in the *Transient Days*:

我的日子滴在時間的流裏，沒有聲音，也沒有影子。

My days are quietly dripping into the stream of time without leaving a trace.

我覺察他去的匆匆了，伸出手遮挽時，他又從遮挽著的手邊過去。

Aware of its fleeting presence, I reach out for it only to find it brushing past my outstretched hands.

但是新來的日子的影兒又開始在歎息裏閃過了。

But, in the midst of my sighs, a new day is flashing past.

The latter two examples involve two conceptual metaphor models (TIME IS A THING/ENTITY and TIME PASSING IS MOTION). Time in these expressions are conceptualized as a thing or entity because it has 'shadow' and can be 'find' by people.

TIME IS MONEY(A VALUABLE COMMODITY/LIMITED RESOURCE) metaphors in the *Transient Days*:

是有人偷了他们罢：那是谁？又藏在何处呢？

Perhaps they have been stolen by someone.

But who could it be and where could he hide them?

我不知道他們給了我多少日子；但我的手確乎是漸漸空虛了。

I don't know how many days I am entitled to altogether, but my quota of them is undoubtedly wearing away.

Furthermore, there are 3 special cases in the *Transient Days* as well:

(時間)像針尖上一滴水滴在大海裏。

(Time is)Like a drop of water falling off a needle point into the ocean.

過去的日子如輕煙，被微風吹散了，如薄霧，被初陽蒸融了。

The bygone days, like wisps of smoke, have been dispersed by gentle winds, and, like thin mists, have been evaporated by the rising sun.

In the above two sentences, time is conceptualized as water, smoke and mist, which cannot be grouped into the established three conceptual models of time. However, these three conceptual metaphors of time are very common in Chinese language due to the Chinese culture, which need further research and study.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the previous studies on the time conceptual metaphors in English, Chinese and Japanese (Lakoff, 1993; Ahrens and Huang, 2002; Gentner and Imai, 1992; Huang 1977; Huang; 1981; Shinohara, 1999), the present research examines the metaphorical expressions of time in the essay *Transient Days* written by Zhu Ziqing. In answering the two research questions put forward at the beginning, the research yields the following findings. First, there are linguistic evidences in *Transient Days* supporting the universality of the conceptual metaphor models of time in Chinese established by the previous studies. Second, concerning the TIME PASSING IS MOTION model, there are more TIME PASSING IS A MOVING OBJECT metaphors than TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE metaphors in *Transient Days*. The reason can be attributed to the Chinese culture and philosophy.

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APPENDIX 1: Original text of *Transient Days*

匆 匆

燕子去了，有再來的時候；楊柳枯了，有再青的時候；桃花謝了，有再開的時候。但是，聰明的，你告訴我，我們的日子為什麼一去不復返呢？——是有人偷了他們罷：那是誰？又藏在何處呢？是他們自己逃走了罷：現在又到了哪里呢？

我不知道他們給了我多少日子；但我的手確乎是漸漸空虛了。在默默裏算著，八千多日子已經從我手中溜去；像針尖上一滴水滴在大海裏，我的日子滴在時間的流裏，沒有聲音，也沒有影子。我不禁頭涔涔而淚潛潛了。

去的儘管去了，來的儘管來著；去來的中間，又怎樣地匆匆呢？早上我起來的時候，小屋裏射進兩三方斜斜的太陽。太陽他有腳啊，輕輕悄悄地挪移了；我也茫茫然跟著旋轉。於是——洗手的時候，日子從水盆裏過去；吃飯的時候，日子從飯碗裏過去；默默時，便從凝然的雙眼前過去。我覺察他去的匆匆了，伸出手遮挽時，他又從遮挽著的手邊過去，天黑時，我躺在床上，他便伶伶俐俐地從我身上跨過，從我腳邊飛去了。等我睜開眼和太陽再見，這算又溜走了一日。我掩著面歎息。但是新來的日子的影兒又開始在歎息裏閃過了。

在逃去如飛的日子裏，在千門萬戶的世界裏的我能做些什麼呢？只有徘徊罷了，只有匆匆罷了；在八千多日的匆匆裏，除徘徊外，又剩些什麼呢？過去的日子如輕煙，被微風吹散了，如薄霧，被初陽蒸融了；我留著些什麼痕跡呢？我何曾留著像遊絲樣的痕跡呢？我赤裸裸來到這世界，轉眼間也將赤裸裸的回去罷？但不能平的，為什麼偏要白白走這一遭啊？

你聰明的，告訴我，我們的日子為什麼一去不復返呢？

1922年3月28日

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APPENDIX 2: English version of *Transient Days*

TRANSIENT DAYS

If swallows go away, they will come back again. If willows wither, they will turn green again. If peach blossoms fade, they will flower again. But, tell me, you the wise, why should our days go by never to return? Perhaps they have been stolen by someone. But who could it be and where could he hide them? Perhaps they have just run away by themselves. But where could they be at the present moment?

I don't know how many days I am entitled to altogether, but my quota of them is undoubtedly wearing away. Counting up silently, I find that more than 8,000 days have already slipped away through my fingers. Like a drop of water falling off a needle point into the ocean, my days are quietly dripping into the stream of time without leaving a trace. At the thought of this, sweat oozes from my forehead and tears trickle down my cheeks.

What is gone is gone, what is to come keep coming. How swift is the transition in between! When I got up in the morning, the slanting sun casts two or three squarish patches of light into my small room. The sun has feet too, edging away softly and stealthily. And, without knowing it, I am already caught in its revolution. Thus the day flows away through the sink when I wash my hands; vanishes in the rice bowl when I have my meal; passes away quietly before the fixed gaze of my eyes when I am lost in reverie. Aware of its fleeting presence, I reach out for it only to find it brushing past my outstretched hands. In the evening, when I lie on my bed, it nimbly strides over my body and flits past my feet. By the time when I open my eyes to meet the sun again, another day is already gone. I heave a sigh, my head buried in my hands. But, in the midst of my sighs, a new day is flashing past.

Living in this world with its fleeting days and teeming millions, what can I do but waver and wander and live a transient life? What have I been doing during the 8,000 fleeting days except wavering and wandering? The bygone days, like wisps of smoke, have been dispersed by gentle winds, and, like thin mists, have been evaporated by the rising sun. What traces have I left behind? No, nothing, not even gossamer like traces. I have come to this world stark naked, and in the twinkling of an eye, I am to go back as stark naked as ever. However, I am taking it very much to heart: why should I be made to pass through this world for nothing at all?

O you the wise, would you tell me please: why should our days go by never to return? (Tan, 2003)

THE AUTHOR

Zhu Shanshan(朱珊珊), female, MA candidate of Grade 2006, majoring in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in the School of English and International Studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University. Beijing, 100089, P.R. China.

Email: iamzss@163.com