

## Field Guide

### ECLIPSES

from *A Field Guide to North American Haiku*<sup>1</sup>

by Charles Trumbull

With such clamor over the 2024 solar eclipse in North America, we have decided to join the fun and dedicate this edition of the Field Guide to that rare phenomenon. This article was delivered to *Frogpond* Editor Jacob Salzer on April 7, the day before the eclipse, so it does not include any of our readers' reactions to this specific event. I'm sure, however, that by the time you are reading these words there will have been a torrent of haiku written on or immediately after April 8. I hope all you poets will enjoy seeing the many ways the topic has been treated in the past.

Eclipses can be predicted long in advance, which generates excitement and anticipation among the public:

僭上に月の欠るを目利哉  
*senjō ni tsuki no kakeru wo mekiki kana*

boldly he forecasts  
the moon's  
full eclipse

Issa / David G. Lanoue<sup>2</sup>

The translator explains: “this haiku refers to the harvest moon eclipse of 1819. Issa’s ‘boldly’ (*senjō ni*) is ironic. Everyone is expecting the eclipse, but one self-important ‘expert’ feels the need to predict it loudly.”

月食待つ川へ十指を開きいて  
*gesshoku matsu kawa e jyusshi o hirakiite*

I wait for a lunar eclipse  
 with all my ten fingers spread out  
 to the river

Sudo Tōru / Fay Aoyagi<sup>3</sup>

Aoyagi writes: “In the above haiku, moonlight still shines between the poet’s fingers and may shimmer on the river surface. But soon the earth will move between the sun and the moon. Most of the time, we are under the influence of the sun or the moon. Can we be the absolute master of our life for the duration of the lunar eclipse?”

total eclipse  
 a week away —  
 ripening blackberries

Alexa Selph<sup>4</sup>

Everyone is excited about the prospect of an eclipse and they gather together for a collective viewing experience:

during the eclipse  
 no visitors expected and yet  
 turning on the porch light

Jane Reichhold<sup>5</sup>

I hoist my son  
 onto my shoulders  
 solar eclipse

John McManus<sup>6</sup>

4 a.m.  
 a neighbour I have never seen —  
 watching the eclipse

Seán O’Connor<sup>7</sup>

solar eclipse —  
without introduction  
strangers speak

Ross Figgins<sup>8</sup>

In the media, much is being made of the rarity of a total solar eclipse in North America and the likelihood that many of us will never have the chance to experience another. Earlier, haiku poets have expressed similar thoughts:

back turned  
to the last solar eclipse this century  
the grinning billboard girl

LeRoy Gorman<sup>9</sup>

brief summer night  
a jet follows the last eclipse  
of the millennium

Sue Stanford<sup>10</sup>

Many poets are awed by the positioning of the celestial bodies and are themselves moved to write physical descriptions:

Darkness blocks the sun  
Only a fringe of warm light  
Around the eclipse.

Edythe Polster<sup>11</sup>

eclipse  
white cat's  
black face

Elaine Sherlund<sup>12</sup>

summer eclipse  
my shadow's  
slow dissolve

Valorie Broadhurst Woerdehoff<sup>13</sup>

solar eclipse —  
the lamppost's shadow  
more and more distinct

Bruce Ross<sup>14</sup>

Poets remark on the quietness of the experience, a sort of synesthesia:

silence  
shadowing our world  
solar eclipse

Seánan Forbes<sup>15</sup>

final eclipse  
my eyes become accustomed  
to the silence

Mark Gilbert<sup>16</sup>

Instead of offering straightforward descriptions of an eclipse, however, more often haiku poets employ comparative juxtaposition of images and metaphor (or Paul O. Williams's unresolved metaphor):

eclipsenso

Debbie Strange<sup>17</sup>

the hole  
in the sky  
total eclipse

Jeff Hoagland<sup>18</sup>

partial eclipse —  
she takes another  
bite of biscuit

Sue Mill<sup>19</sup>

mountain shrine  
Buddha of Boundless Light  
in solar eclipse

Sonam Chhoki<sup>20</sup>

Eclipse  
one smoke ring  
inside the other

Garry Gay<sup>21</sup>

eclipse  
our wedding rings  
one inside the other

Urszula Wielanowska<sup>22</sup>

日食の暗さひろがる冷蔵庫  
*nishoku no kurasa hirogaru reizōko*

darkness of a solar eclipse  
expands ...  
a refrigerator

Ohishi Yūki / Fay Aoyagi<sup>23</sup>

solar eclipse  
the halo 'round the head  
of an African saint

Leonardo Alishan<sup>24</sup>

eclipse of the sun  
grazing her  
underarm stubble

Philip Rowland<sup>25</sup>

solar eclipse  
a pair of goldfish  
in the concubine's room

Fay Aoyagi<sup>26</sup>

eclipse of the sun  
a snail slides over  
the neighbour's fence

David Cobb<sup>27</sup>

mom's fine china  
the gold rim  
of an eclipse

Barrie Levine<sup>28</sup>

partial eclipse  
the strobe  
on her mobile phone

Cynthia Rowe<sup>29</sup>

emerging  
from the eclipse  
false positive

Edward Cody Huddleston<sup>30</sup>

eclipse  
solar  
a  
glitch  
fetal  
her  
fix  
to  
back  
go  
we

Mark F. Harris<sup>31</sup>

Some poets not known primarily for their *haikai* have also penned particularly elaborate metaphors:

sun's elliptic smile is in eclipse

James Kirkup<sup>32</sup>

a dark hinge of time  
eclipse of the burning shield  
and shadows crawling

N. Scott Momaday<sup>33</sup>

Sometimes an eclipse can suggest human characteristics or relationships:

The locomotive and the woman  
have gone —  
lunar eclipse beginning.

Saitō Sanki / Saito Masaya<sup>34</sup>

solar eclipse  
the untold stories  
in grandma's eyes

Jacob Salzer<sup>35</sup>

solar eclipse  
trying to remember  
your last I love you

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt<sup>36</sup>

when there's nothing left to say eclipse

Shloka Shankar<sup>37</sup>

total eclipse  
the life  
you kept hidden

Rachel Sutcliffe<sup>38</sup>

People are likely to act in strange, even furtive ways during an eclipse:

fighting the urge to look up partial eclipse

Bill Waters<sup>39</sup>

solar eclipse  
as a youngster  
I snuck a peek

Deb Koen<sup>40</sup>

moment  
of total eclipse  
cramp in my neck

Gene Doty<sup>41</sup>

eclipse  
a mother  
bares her breast

Polona Oblak<sup>42</sup>

left breast against the sky  
watching sun eclipse  
through her mammogram

Katherine Samuelowicz<sup>43</sup>

eclipse of the sun —  
behind a trolley bus rush  
people and leaves

затмение солнца  
за троллейбусом мчатся  
листья и люди

Shiroki Mirukami<sup>44</sup>

eclipse viewing  
hands dip into  
the popcorn bowl

Carolyn Hall<sup>45</sup>

total solar eclipse  
hindu priests hurry to exit  
the dimmed temple

John Tiong Chung<sup>46</sup>



Solar eclipse —  
her dark mood  
before love making

Garry Gay<sup>47</sup>

eclipseexploitation

Nicholas A. Virgilio<sup>48</sup>

solar eclipse  
a kiss  
at totality

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams<sup>49</sup>

solar eclipse  
and at the darkest point  
you call my name

Claire Bugler-Hewitt<sup>50</sup>

solar eclipse  
the bit you forgot  
to mention

Louise Hopewell<sup>51</sup>

The behavior of other living things, especially animals, changes suggestively during an eclipse:

noon eclipse  
the snail slowly exits  
a dark shell

Nina A. Wicker<sup>52</sup>

solar eclipse ...  
folding, unfolding  
moth wings

Veronika Zora Novak<sup>53</sup>

冬野帳のぼる真昼の日蝕へ  
*fuyu no chō noboru mahiru no nisshoku e*

butterfly in winter  
ascends to the midday sun  
in eclipse

Arima Akito / Emiko Miyashita  
and Lee Gurga<sup>54</sup>

Eclipse of the sun —  
a waterflea strolls  
Across the algaed pond

Erika Schwalm<sup>55</sup>

border lake  
gulls cross over  
the eclipse

Deb Koen<sup>56</sup>

annular eclipse  
crows call  
from the shadows

Robert Witmer<sup>57</sup>

crows land  
on a slow train  
solar eclipse

Robert Witmer<sup>58</sup>

dark soil carried  
from an ant hole  
day of the eclipse

paul m.<sup>59</sup>

solar eclipse black ants crawl into a yellow rose

Ed Markowski<sup>60</sup>

full eclipse —  
the birds hush  
each other

Randy M. Brooks<sup>61</sup>

eclipse  
a rooster crows  
at the second dawn

Barbara Tate<sup>62</sup>

solar eclipse  
the cat aroused  
by settling birds

Cynthia Rowe<sup>63</sup>

eclipse  
the cat eats dog food  
without noticing

Jane Reichhold<sup>64</sup>

hour of the eclipse  
our hound buries  
his bone

Carol Montgomery<sup>65</sup>

eclipse —  
sunflowers  
disoriented

Dan Iulian<sup>66</sup>

Sometimes the best laid plans of eclipse-watchers are thwarted and the poet is not able to enjoy the celestial spectacle. This can be because of circumstances ...

just before the total eclipse  
the phone rings

Virginia Brady Young<sup>67</sup>

Christmas eclipse  
we forgot  
to look

John Stevenson<sup>68</sup>

... or, more often, because of untoward weather conditions:

cloudy skies  
hearing of the eclipse  
on the radio

Jane Reichhold<sup>69</sup>

and this eclipse  
circled on my calendar  
rain dots the window

Ebba Story<sup>70</sup>

lunar eclipse  
the part that I hide  
even from myself

ਚੰਦ ਗ੍ਰਹਣਿ  
ਆਪਣੇ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਲੁਕਾਇਆ  
ਆਪਣਾ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਹੱਸਿ

Arvinder Kaur<sup>71</sup>

A lunar eclipse ——  
I regret the haiku  
having eluded me

Toshio Kimura<sup>72</sup>

And afterwards, a time for reflection:

after the eclipse  
drops of dew are  
full again

Jane Reichhold<sup>73</sup>

doubtfully heaven  
hears the child without shadow  
during the eclipse

Emile Molhuysen<sup>74</sup>

eclipse ...  
the quiet ways  
we overlap

Keith Polette<sup>75</sup>

eclipse ...  
i am  
alone

ai li<sup>76</sup>

*Los eclipses son la juerga de los astrónomos.*  
Eclipses are the feast of the astronomers.

Ramón Gómez de la Serna  
/ C. Trumbull<sup>77</sup>

And, we might add, of the haiku poets.

**Notes:**

1. A Field Guide to North American Haiku is a long-term project along the lines of a haiku encyclopedia-cum-*saijiki*, a selection of the best haiku in English arranged by topic and illustrating what it is about a given topic that attracts poets to write. When complete, the Field Guide project will comprise multiple thick volumes keyed to the several topics in traditional Japanese *saijiki* (haiku almanacs) and Western counterparts, notably William J. Higginson's *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac* (1996). These topics are: Season, Sky & Elements, Landscape, Plants, Animals, Human Affairs, and Observances. The haiku in this essay are taken from my Haiku Database, currently containing more than 554,000 entries and selected from more than 600 haiku about eclipses, both solar and lunar. Critique and suggestions of this article or the Field Guide project are warmly invited; please comment by email to [cptrumbull@comcast.net](mailto:cptrumbull@comcast.net).
2. David G. Lanoue, *Haiku of Kobayashi Issa* website.
3. English from Fay Aoyagi, "Dissection of the Haiku Tradition: Flowers and Plants," *Frogpond* 28:1 (2005); Japanese from Kaneko Tōta, Kuroda Momoko, and Natsuishi Ban'ya, eds. *Gendai saijiki* (Modern Saijiki) (Tokyo: Seisei Shuppan, 1997).
4. Alexa Selph, in *Modern Haiku* 49:1 (Winter–Spring 2018).
5. Jane Reichhold, *A Dictionary of Haiku* (2nd ed., 2013).
6. John McManus, in *The Heron's Nest* 17:3 (September 2015).
7. Seán O'Connor, in *Haiku Spirit* 19 (March 2000).
8. Ross Figgins, in *Dragonfly* 3:3 (1975).
9. LeRoy Gorman, from his sequence "The Billboard Girl," *Modern Haiku* 10:3 (Autumn 1979).
10. Sue Stanford, in *Shreve Memorial Library Electronic Poetry Network*, June 3, 2003.
11. Edythe Polster, in *Frogpond* 17:3 (Autumn 1994), 23.
12. Elaine Sherlund, in *Woodnotes* 7 (Autumn 1990).
13. Valorie Broadhurst Woerdehoff, in *Frogpond* 36:2 (Spring/Summer 2013).
14. Bruce Ross, in *Frogpond* 17:4 (Winter 1994).
15. Seánan Forbes, in *A Hundred Gourds* 3:3 (June 2014).
16. Mark Gilbert, in *Autumn Moon Haiku Journal* 1:2 (Spring/Summer 2018).
17. Debbie Strange, in *Haiku Canada Review* 11:2 (October 2017).
18. Jeff Hoagland, in *Bottle Rockets* 38 (19:2; January 2018).
19. Sue Mill, in Susumu Takiguchi, ed., *Wild Flowers, New Leaves: A Collection of World Haiku* (2002).

20. Sonam Chhoki, in “Year of Light,” *EarthRise Rolling Haiku Collaboration*, 2015, The Haiku Foundation website.
21. Garry Gay, in Tanya McDonald, ed., *A Moment’s Longing* (Haiku Society of America Members’ Anthology 2019).
22. Urszula Wielanowska, in *The Heron’s Nest* 17:2 (July 2015).
23. *Blue Willow Haiku World*, July 19, 2018; Japanese from *Haidan*, September 2017.
24. Leonardo Alishan, in *Modern Haiku* 31:3 (Fall 2000), 11.
25. Philip Rowland, in *Modern Haiku* 41:2 (Summer 2010).
26. Fay Aoyagi, in *Upstate Dim Sum* 2010/II.
27. David Cobb, in *Kō* (2000).
28. Barrie Levine, in *Cold Moon Journal*, December 15, 2021.
29. Cynthia Rowe, in *Failed Haiku* 1:5 (May 2016).
30. Edward Cody Huddleston, in *The Heron’s Nest* 22:4 (December 2020).
31. Mark F. Harris, in *Modern Haiku* 41:3 (Summer 2010).
32. James Kirkup, *Dengonban Messages* (1981).
33. N. Scott Momaday, *The Death of Sitting Bear: New and Selected Poems* (2020).
34. Saitō Sanki, *Kobe Hotel* (1993).
35. Jacob Salzer, in *Failed Haiku* 1:1 (January 2016).
36. Baisali Chatterjee Dutt, in *Stardust Haiku* 62 (February 2022).
37. Shloka Shankar, in *DailyHaiku*, December 7, 2014.
38. Rachel Sutcliffe, in *#FemkuMag* 2 (July 2018).
39. Bill Waters, from a haiga in *The Zen Space Summer 2018 Showcase*.
40. Deb Koen, in *Bottle Rockets* 46 (February 2022).
41. Gene Doty, in *Dogwood Blossoms* 1:6 (February 1994).
42. Polona Oblak, in *A Hundred Gourds* 1:3 (June 2012).
43. Katherine Samuelowicz, in *Paper Wasp*, 2000.
44. Russian and English by Shiroki Mirukami [Natalia Sedenkova], in Ban’ya Natsuishi, ed., *World Haiku 2007, No. 3* (2007).
45. Carolyn Hall, in *Blithe Spirit* 10:2 (2000).
46. John Tiong Chung-hoo, 5th Japan–Russia Haiku Contest, 2016, Honorable Mention.
47. Garry Gay, in *Mariposa* 4 (Spring/Summer 2001), 8.
48. Nicholas A. Virgilio, in *Wind Chimes* 18 (1986).
49. Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, in *#FemkuMag* 14 (July 2019).
50. Claire Bugler-Hewitt, in *Blithe Spirit* 9:4 (December 1999).
51. Louise Hopewell, in *Incense Dreams* 1:3 (December 2017).
52. Nina A. Wicker, *Wild Again* (2005).
53. Veronika Zora Novak, The Betty Drevniok Award 2014, Honorable Mention.

54. Arima Akito, *Einstein's Century: Akito Arima's Haiku* (2001).
55. Erika Schwalm, in Ban'ya Natsuishi, ed., *Haiku Troubadours 2000* (2000).
56. Deb Koen, in *Haiku Canada Review* 15:2 (October 2021).
57. Robert Witmer, in *The Heron's Nest* 14:3 (September 2012).
58. Robert Witmer, in *The Heron's Nest* 18:3 (September 2016).
59. paul m., *Witness Tree* (2020).
60. Ed Markowski, in *A Hundred Gourds* 1:3 (June 2012).
61. Randy M. Brooks, in *Modern Haiku* 25:3 (Fall 1994).
62. Barbara Tate, in *Frogpond* 41:1 (2018).
63. Cynthia Rowe, in *The Heron's Nest* 12:3 (September 2010).
64. Jane Reichhold, *A Dictionary of Haiku* (2nd ed., 2013).
65. Carol Montgomery, in *Modern Haiku* 26:2 (Summer 1995).
66. Dan Iulian, *Mainichi Haiku in English*, August 13, 2013.
67. Link from "An Ant Walking," a kasen renku by Virginia Brady Young, Lenard D. Moore, and Elizabeth Searle Lamb, unpublished.
68. John Stevenson, in *Modern Haiku* 32:2 (Summer 2001).
69. Jane Reichhold, *A Dictionary of Haiku* (2nd ed., 2013).
70. Ebba Story, in Ebba Story and Michael Dylan Welch, eds., *The Shortest Distance* (Haiku North America 1993 conference anthology).
71. Arvinder Kaur, English and Punjabi, in "Haiku Dialogue: Ekphrasti-ku... Nunavut, Our Land," The Haiku Foundation website, February 9, 2022.
72. Toshio Kimura, *Phantasm of Flowers* (2002).
73. Jane Reichhold, *A Dictionary of Haiku* (2nd ed., 2013).
74. Emile Molhuysen, in *Shiki Internet Kukai*, February 6, 2000.
75. Keith Polette, in *Under the Bashō*, 2019.
76. ai li, in *Still* 3:4 (Winter 1999).
77. Ramón Gómez de la Serna website: [www.geocities.com/greguerias/gregueriasoo.htm](http://www.geocities.com/greguerias/gregueriasoo.htm).