

# CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

## TALKING SENSE LECTURE SERIES



Section from Matsuo Basho's "Nozarashi Kiko", Fukuda Art Museum

### The Breath of Poetry: From Europe to Japan

Alberto Parisi

27 November 2025  
3:00—4:30 PM EST  
H-1120 Hall Building  
Concordia University  
Zoom: <https://bit.ly/49yX1sV>

Building on recent scholarship that—emerging out of the turn to sensoriality, respiration, and atmospheres—has begun to recover the long-overlooked material dimensions of breath in European poetics (Ford; Heine), this talk argues that these reflections open new ways of thinking about poetry beyond the traditional conception of it as something “spiritual,” namely as one of the highest expressions of the human “spirit.”

Rather than pursuing these implications further within the European canon, the talk turns to a Japanese case study to develop a different formal and intercultural perspective. By focusing on the *kireji* (cutting character or word)—an exclamation that produces a break between the poetic lines—as it developed at the origins of the haiku tradition in the *hokku*, and by approaching it through the philosophical perspective of Keiji Nishitani, the talk suggests that it is through *kireji* that the Japanese haiku returns the world to its breathing and atmospheric materiality. In this way, Japanese poetry may open new intercultural pathways for understanding the relationship between poetry and breath.

**Alberto Parisi** is Specially Appointed Assistant Professor at the Kobe Institute for Atmospheric Studies (KOIAS) of Kobe University, Japan. He received his PhD in Comparative Literature from Harvard University (2023) and a BA in Philosophy and Literature from the University of Warwick (2017). His research lies at the intersection of Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and Environmental Humanities, with a focus on breath, voice, air, and atmosphere as concepts that bridge materiality and meaning across traditions. His forthcoming book *The Intention of the Spirit: From Intention to Atmosphere* (Routledge, 2026) offers the first genealogy of intention as a material and respiratory concept, tracing its transformation from ancient and late-antique pneumatologies (Stoics and Augustine) to modern European poetics and contemporary philosophy.