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The Poetics of Unnamed Emotion: From The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows to Core Strokes®

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Editor's Note: In this "lyrical essay", Dirk Marivoet explores the kinship between John Koenig's Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows and the somatic language of Core Strokes®. Through the meeting of word and fascia, he reveals how both poetic naming and therapeutic touch give voice to unspoken emotion. A meditation on breath, empathy, and embodiment, it invites readers to feel language as a living tissue where sorrow transforms into resonance.

The Secret Names of Feeling

Every language begins as breath. Before alphabets, before the first word was carved into clay or inked onto paper, someone exhaled a sound trembling with meaning — a cry, a hum, a sigh— each born from a body touched by life. The ancients believed that to name a thing was to call its spirit into form, and that to speak a word was to shape the invisible so that another could feel it.

Yet countless experiences pass through us nameless. They brush the edge of consciousness like wind through tall grass — felt but not yet formed. A sudden ache when a stranger smiles. The vertigo of being seen. The small grief of beauty already too perfect to hold. These are the "obscure sorrows," the half-tones of being that John Koenig gathered into his improbable lexicon.

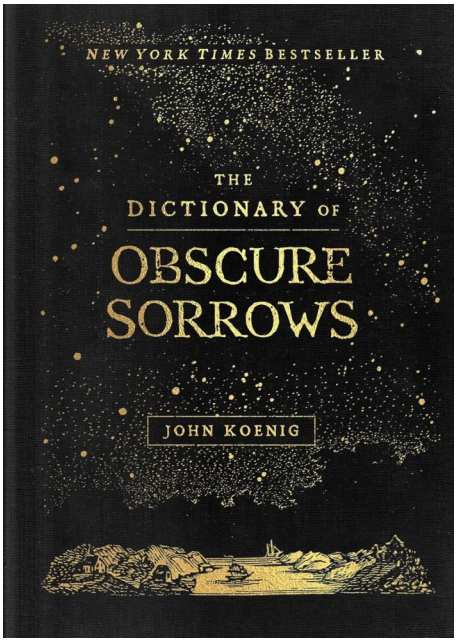
Koenig's *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* is less a book than a listening instrument.

He listens with a poet's body — attuned to meanings that vibrate before they become words. He leans toward the unsayable and hears it whisper its own name. *Sonder*. *Opia*. *Chrysalism*. Words that feel as if they had always existed, waiting for the right temperature of compassion to crystallize.

Each of these words opens a door between inner and outer, the personal and the cosmic. They are linguistic fascia — thin membranes of empathy that connect isolated organs of experience. When we speak them aloud, the breath itself becomes connective tissue.

The fascia also speaks in textures: *Warm Honey*, *Streaming Silk* — sometimes *Gritty*, sometimes *Mud* — each carrying its own story of resistance and release. Where Koenig found syllables, I found touch; where he invented language, I discovered tone. Both of us entered the same temple — the threshold where sensation turns into meaning and meaning dissolves back into sensation.

The Unspoken and the Unfelt — The Limits of Language



Language is an exquisite failure. It reveals by concealing. Each word is a skin of precision wrapped around the infinite, never able to hold it fully. When we speak of joy or grief, what escapes our lips is the fossil of an experience already past.

The body knows more. Long before a child can pronounce love, the nervous system has already tasted its absence — and its warmth. Breath learns the rhythm of approval; fascia remembers the shape of being held. These early imprints live beneath grammar. They are the body's syntax of contact.

Phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty wrote that perception is "a body's silent dialogue with the world." Gaston Bachelard heard the imagination itself breathing inside matter. Their philosophies hover near the realm that Koenig reopened—the porous zone between word and flesh, where emotions are not objects but atmospheres.

Koenig's neologisms do not pretend to define; they evoke. Each is a gentle act of permission. When someone reads sonder, they recognize a texture in their own chest: the subtle opening that happens when we realize we are surrounded by other centers of consciousness. It is a word that breathes empathy.

But what happens before the word? What is felt in the half-second of silence when experience rises but language has not yet come? In therapy, that moment is sacred. It is the edge where the body waits for articulation, where trembling can still choose its direction. To rush it would be to tear the new word before it is born.

Fascia lives in that same interval. Its language is resonance — vibration and relational tone — beyond the reach of words. The touch of a listening hand can name what language has forgotten. When tissue melts under presence, it is as if an unnamed sorrow has found its mother tongue.

Koenig's Cartography of Feeling

Koenig's Dictionary reveals an unseen geography of emotion, drawn in the faint ink of awareness. He writes of delicate inflections rather than grand passions— the microclimates of the Soul.

Sonder — the sudden awareness that each passerby has a life as intricate as your own. A widening in the chest, a descent of the shoulders, a sigh that says we are all infinite stories.



Opia — the tremor that moves through two gazes meeting. The diaphragm tightens, pupils dilate, the fascia between eyes and heart becomes a taut bridge.

Vemödalen — the despair of taking a beautiful photo that looks like thousands of others. A collapse of creative breath; the ribs contract, the skin feels dull.

Lachesism — the strange wish for disaster, simply to feel alive again. Energy surges toward risk; muscles harden as if to greet catastrophe with relief.

Chrysalism — the peace of being indoors during a thunderstorm. A steady pulse through viscera; the world's violence softened by protective walls.

Each word is a gesture — a movement of consciousness that becomes a concept. To read them is to feel the musculature of emotion: expansion, contraction, trembling, release. They form a choreography of subtle tides, like breath phases whispered into the psyche.

Koenig's project emerged in a digital age saturated with speed and superficiality. In that context, his Dictionary became a slow-breathing organism, reminding millions that the heart still contains unnamed continents. He offered linguistic shelter to feelings that social media compresses into emojis.

Yet his words are not labels; they are invitations. *Sonder* is not a disorder to be treated, but a threshold to be crossed. Each term becomes a small ritual of recognition — a gentle stroke of reverence toward the intricacy of being human.

In this sense, Koenig performs the same alchemy that body psychotherapy seeks: transforming vagueness into form, but without reduction. His etymologies are fictional, yet they work because they sound true. What stirs the psyche is resonance, not fact. When a word meets a forgotten feeling at its own frequency, language becomes medicine.

The Somatic Parallel — Naming Through the Body

The human body is its own lexicon. Every tissue vibrates with verbs: to reach, to fold, to resist, to yield. The fascia is a continuous poem written in tension and release. When I, in the Core Strokes® lineage, speak of *Warm Honey* or *Streaming Silk*, I am not indulging metaphor; I am practicing phenomenology. I am naming reality from within sensation.

Koenig's neologisms and my fascial textures arise from the same necessity: the need to give shape to the invisible. He names through sound; I name through touch. Both are acts of re-membering — bringing dismembered experience back into coherence.

Imagine *sonder* as a fascial event: the moment a thoracic diaphragm, long held in solitary vigilance, feels another's breath enter the same field. The connective tissue, like a curtain drawn aside, allows energy to flow between bodies. The word itself becomes palpable — a tissue that remembers it belongs to a larger organism.



Or take *monachopsis*, the chronic feeling of being out of place. In the body, it appears as slight levitation — feet that barely root, eyes scanning for a belonging that the ground withholds. In such bodies, the lower legs appear almost translucent — as if the fascia had grown diaphanous from disuse. The calves feel weightless, undercharged, as though the person was hovering just above the ground. The breath, too, hovers high, reluctant to descend into gravity.

Where Koenig creates linguistic intimacy, Core Strokes® restores somatic intimacy. Both practices counter the modern fragmentation that separates intellect from sensation. Each word or touch becomes an integration point, a node where meaning condenses.

Language as Breath, Breath as Language

Every word begins as an exhale. To pronounce *chrysalism* is to soften the palate and release air through a gentle hiss — the very sound of shelter. To speak *lachesism* requires a tightening of the chest, a small explosion at the "ch." The articulation itself mirrors the emotion.

In therapy, when a client finally utters something that had been trapped in muscle or memory, the breath often shifts first. The larynx, diaphragm, and pericardium adjust to make room for new resonance. The word rides on liberated fascia.

Thus, Koenig's Dictionary can be read not merely as poetry but as a manual of embodied linguistics — a study of how vowels and consonants trace the shape of human affect. His invented etymologies — half Greek, half dream — echo the composite nature of tissue itself: hybrid, adaptive, self-inventing.

In Clinical Practice — The Obscure Sorrows of Tissue

In clinical practice, each texture I touch seems to carry its own obscure sorrow:

Warm Honey — the slow radiance of tenderness finding its form.
Gritty — the friction of effort, the frustration of movement half-alive, half-stuck.
Mud — the heaviness of confusion, the pull of collapse within unfinished becoming.
Cold Wax — the self that sealed itself against further wounding.
Streaming Silk — the joy of coherence returning after fracture.

These are not metaphors *about* emotion; they *are* emotion — expressed in collagen and water, memory and tone. Fascia remembers the places where language broke. When touch restores relational tone, the body begins to compose new sentences.



Koenig gives the psyche permission to articulate forgotten feelings; Core Strokes® gives the body permission to articulate forgotten movements. Both gestures are linguistic in the oldest sense of *logos* — meaning made flesh.

In that ancient understanding, language and body share a single pulse. The word is not a symbol of reality; it is reality speaking itself through sound and gesture.

The Meeting Point — The Body of Language, the Language of the Body

Between Koenig's lexicon and the fascia's subtle idiom lies a hidden bridge: the breath. Breath is both syntax and current. It translates inner motion into outer form.
Every inhalation gathers the world; every exhalation utters it back.

In this middle realm, word and tissue mirror one another.

Sonder feels like the **Free Breath** — the chest expands as the gaze widens.

Opia echoes the **Exploring Breath** — attraction and hesitation vibrating between two eyes.

Vemödalen stiffens like **Interrupted Breath** — inspiration cut short by self-comparison.



Lachesism surges like the **Excited Breath** — the body craving the storm that would make it real.

Chrysalism settles into **Resting Breath** — the whole organism swaying in the calm after thunder.

These resonances are not allegories but energetic homologies. Each invented word describes a psychic climate with its own somatic weather pattern. To speak them is to remember that vocabulary itself is an organ of perception.

If one listens closely, a whisper passes between fascia and phoneme: We are the same substance. Both store the echoes of experience; both change their texture when met by warmth. When a word is truly felt, the tissue beneath the sternum softens. When a muscle unwinds, the mind suddenly finds the word it had been seeking.

Thus, the act of naming in Core Strokes® is not metaphorical but biological. The practitioner's hand, tracing *Streaming Silk* or *Gritty*, or *Mud*, is performing a kind of embodied etymology — discovering the root of a sensation and inviting it to conjugate through movement. The poet, inventing *sonder* or *chrysalism*, performs the same gesture in air that the therapist performs in fascia.

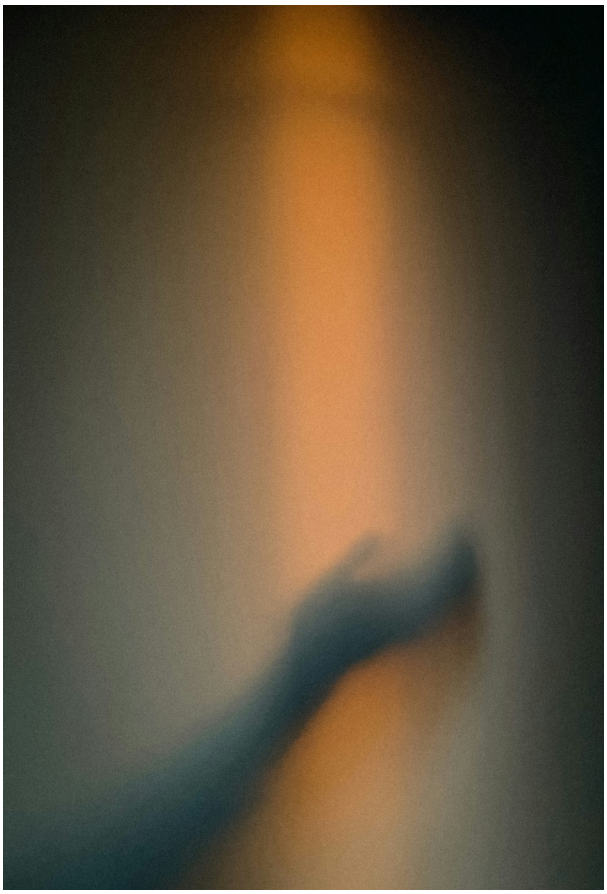
Both are guardians of nuance in a culture of bluntness. They rescue the small, trembling shades of experience from the noise of abstraction. They remind us that truth is not defined— it is felt.

The Ethics of Naming — Compassion and Precision

To name is to touch with the tongue. Every naming carries an ethical weight.

If one speaks a word without reverence, it hardens into a category and loses its life.
If one touches a body without presence, it becomes manipulation rather than communion.

True naming — whether verbal or tactile — requires compassionate precision. Compassion, because the phenomenon we touch is alive. Precision, because vagueness can wound; it leaves the unnamed fragment adrift.



Koenig's words succeed because they never imprison the feeling; they let it breathe. They sketch its contour, then bow and step aside.

Likewise, Core Strokes® approaches the body not as material to be fixed but as language to be heard.

A practitioner's hand does not impose; it spells softly across the skin, asking: What are you saying beneath this tension?

In both arts, the ethic is the same — to midwife emergence. The poet births new words; the therapist births new movements. Both work at the threshold where life longs to articulate itself.

There is also humility in this craft.

For every sorrow we succeed in naming, countless others remain unnamed. Each session, each poem, each breath opens a door and closes another. The ethics lie in continuing to listen after the word has been spoken.

Koenig himself said that his Dictionary is unfinished by design.

So is every body. Fascia keeps rewriting itself according to contact, gravity, and love. Language, too, is connective tissue in perpetual repair. To work with either is to accept impermanence as the true author.

From Sorrows to Textures of the Soul

Beyond the defensive armors and their distortions lies a subtler realm — what I call the Soul Textures: Sacred Ground, Oscillating Veil, Vibratory Clarity, Transparent Coherence. They are post-structural states where form and essence are reconciled. In Koenig's vocabulary, this movement appears as the evolution from sorrow into wonder.

Consider his late words:

Avenoir — the desire to see memories playing forward.

Onism — the ache of being limited to a single body.

Occhiolism — the humility of recognizing the smallness of one's perspective.

Each begins as melancholy and opens into revelation. They echo the organism's journey from contraction or instroke toward surrender — the same arc traced by the *Energetic Breath Cycle*®.

When a client's tissue shifts from *Cold Wax* to *Streaming Silk*—from rigidity into flow—a new lexicon of being begins to unfold. The body starts to speak in the syntax of unity. In the same way, Koenig's readers often weep in recognition rather than in sorrow — as if a long-silent region of self had finally found its word.

This is the moment when language and fascia meet in the field of soul resonance. The sorrow named becomes texture; the texture integrated becomes tone. From there, a higher music unfolds — one that does not distinguish between voice, touch, or light.

In therapy, this might appear as the breath that sighs without reason, the luminous stillness after deep release. In poetry, it is the line that lands like silence made visible. Both are signs that the organism has remembered its coherence.

To speak of textures of the Soul is to acknowledge that language itself has a soul. Every true word carries a vibration that reorganizes the listener's fascia, the same way a singing bowl rearranges the molecules of water. When I write Streaming Union or Crystalline Clarity, I am not describing — I am intoning. The text becomes a therapeutic field.

Koenig's neologisms, though born from melancholy, participate in this same re-enchantment. He teaches that the world is still inventing words for itself — that meaning is a living metabolism. In that sense, *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* is a secular scripture of transformation, and Core Strokes® is its embodied gospel.



Closing Meditation — When the World Breathes Through Us

Imagine language as an atmosphere surrounding the earth of the body. Each inhale draws I in; each exhale contributes a new current. The breath writes invisible poems that travel through other lungs, other hearts. We live within one another's sentences.

When Koenig names a feeling, he restores a corridor between strangers.

When a therapist places a listening hand, the same corridor opens without sound.

Both acts say: you exist, and I can feel you existing.

Perhaps this is the hidden aim of all our naming — to return the world to its continuity. To remember that sorrow and joy, muscle and word, skin and sky, are not separate threads but one vast weave of sensitivity. If language is the mind's fascia, then fascia is the body's language. Both require hydration, rhythm, and care. Both dry out in isolation and revive in contact.



The more subtly we learn to name, the more gently we learn to touch. The more attentively we touch, the more truthfully we can speak. In that reciprocity, emotion ceases to be obscure. It becomes a luminous ecology — an atmosphere of shared sentience.

At the end of a session, after tears or tremors have subsided, the room often falls into a silence that hums. No word is needed; yet every word seems possible. That hum is the same resonance that hovers after reading Koenig's Dictionary — the silence that follows recognition. It is the world inhaling again, preparing for its next articulation.

So let us keep inventing — allowing the real to reveal new textures of tenderness. Let us keep listening — with our fingertips, our breath, and the delicate acoustics of being. Each time we do, another sorrow loses its obscurity, and another body rediscovers the grammar of wholeness.

For in the end, the poet and the therapist are both translators of the same mystery: the unspoken wish of life to know itself.

When the fascia ripples and the breath finds its own rhythm, when the right word opens in the chest like a window — the world breathes through us once more, and we recognize ourselves as its voice.

Author's Note: *This essay emerged from a dialogue I envisioned between language and touch — between John Koenig's Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, which names the hidden nuances of human feeling, and my Core Strokes® approach, which listens to those same nuances through the fascia, breath, and relational field. Rather than comparing literature and therapy, this essay reveals their shared vocation: to reawaken sensitivity where words or tissues have gone numb. It is a meditation on how meaning moves — through syllables, through cells, through the invisible fabric of empathy that connects every living being.*

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