

Narrative Transmission and Gender Trauma in Broken Strings by Aurelie Moeremans

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ABSTRACT

Sexual violence against adolescent girls is an ongoing human rights issue. Survivors' memoirs, published digitally, are shaping public discourse on grooming and gender-based violence in Indonesia. However, Aurelie Moeremans's work, *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* (2025), has not yet received in-depth, sustained literary analysis. This article examines how gender-based violence is constructed and conveyed through narrative strategies in the memoir. The article focuses on the protagonist's subordination within heteronormative power relations and the text's function as an affective medium that facilitates affiliative reader engagement. Combining Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, this study uses a descriptive-interpretive qualitative approach. It also employs a close reading of the memoir and secondary reception materials from Indonesian feminist media. The analysis reveals three interconnected dimensions: the normalization of gender-based compliance and romanticization as mechanisms of coercive control, a transition from silenced to reflective subjectivity, and narrative fragmentation, retrospection, and direct address that transform personal trauma into shared meaning. Conclusion: This memoir serves a dual function: it is both a testimony and a discursive space in which gender-based violence is critically articulated in digital form. Additionally, it fills a gap in academic research on digital memoirs by survivors in Indonesia by combining the Butler-Hirsch framework.

Introduction



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Sexual violence targeting adolescent girls is widely recognized as a persistent human rights issue globally and in Indonesian society. Data from the World Health Organization indicate that approximately one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, with heightened vulnerability during adolescence and early adulthood (WHO, 2021). A 2020 UNICEF report further highlights that adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by sexual exploitation emerging from manipulative interpersonal relationships, commonly conceptualized in the literature as grooming (UNICEF, 2020).

Grooming, as defined by Craven, Brown, and Gilchrist (2006), refers to a patterned manipulative process in which adult perpetrators establish trust and emotional dependence with adolescents as a precursor to sexual exploitation. This process operates through structural asymmetries in age, authority, and experiential knowledge, which may obscure victims' recognition of abuse. Such dynamics align with feminist conceptualizations of gender trauma, understood as trauma produced and sustained within patriarchal structures that normalize coercion and limit victim articulation while legitimizing perpetrator behavior (Jewkes et al., 2022; Herman, 1992).

The intersection of grooming and gender trauma received renewed public attention in late 2025 following the publication of *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* by Indonesian artist Aurelie Moeremans. Released independently in digital format on October 10, 2025, the memoir recounts Moeremans' experiences of adolescent grooming and sustained emotional, physical, and sexual abuse by an adult male identified as Bobby (Moeremans, 2025). The text circulated widely through social media and contributed to public discussions on coercive control, emotionally abusive relationships, and the long-term psychological impacts of adolescent sexual violence (Magdalene, 2026; VOI, 2026; Konde.co, 2026).

Despite its visibility, *Broken Strings* has received limited sustained attention within literary and theoretical scholarship. Existing studies on adolescent sexual violence and coercive relationships tend to prioritize psychological and criminological perspectives, focusing on perpetrator behavior, victim typologies, and trauma outcomes, while paying less attention to narrative and representational strategies through which such experiences are articulated in textual form (Hildebrand, 2021; Mellen et al., 2024). This limitation is particularly evident in the analysis of digital memoirs, which circulate publicly and contribute to the construction of collective meaning around sexual violence beyond clinical frameworks.

This article addresses this gap by analyzing *Broken Strings* through two complementary theoretical frameworks: Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990), which helps explain how normative femininity scripts may



facilitate the normalization and misrecognition of grooming as romantic attachment; and Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory (2008, 2012), which accounts for the affective and mediated transmission of trauma to readers as secondary or affiliative witnesses. Using a qualitative-interpretive approach and close reading as the primary method, this study addresses two research questions: (1) how gender trauma is represented through characterization, power relations, and embodied experience; and (2) how memoir functions as a narrative medium that structures the transmission and reception of traumatic memory.

This article contributes to existing scholarship in three ways. First, it offers a sustained literary reading of *Broken Strings* as a trauma narrative, situating Indonesian digital memoir within broader debates in literary trauma studies. Second, it demonstrates the analytical value of combining Butlerian and postmemory frameworks in examining digital life writing, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where such intersections remain underexplored. Third, it highlights the role of narrative mediation in shaping cultural understanding of gender-based violence within digital public spheres.

A broader context for this research is the increasing scholarly attention to the relationship between digital media, life writing, and feminist activism in contemporary Indonesia. Since the emergence of the #MeToo movement in Indonesian social media around 2017, there has been a noticeable increase in survivors' willingness to publicly articulate experiences of gender-based violence in digital formats (Santosa, 2024; Yuniawanti, 2023). However, as Hildebrand (2021) observes, academic engagement with Indonesian digital life writing remains limited, particularly regarding self-published survivor memoirs circulated through social media platforms. Within this context, *Broken Strings* emerges as a significant case for examining how digital narratives of trauma circulate and gain meaning in contemporary feminist discourse in Indonesia.

This article is structured as follows. The Methods section outlines the qualitative-interpretive approach, including the rationale for close reading as the primary analytical method and the operationalization of the three analytical categories derived from the theoretical framework. The Findings and Discussion section presents the analysis across four dimensions: gender trauma in character construction and power relations; gender performativity in processes of compliance, romanticization, and resistance; narrative and postmemory transmission; and the broader implications of digital memoirs for feminist pedagogy and cultural discourse. The Conclusion synthesizes the findings and discusses their implications for literary trauma studies, gender studies, and the study of Indonesian digital literature.



Method

This study uses a descriptive-interpretive qualitative approach, understood as a mode of inquiry committed to an in-depth understanding of how meaning is constructed and communicated in textual objects, without the use of quantitative hypothesis testing (Smith & Watson, 2010; Balaev, 2008). The primary aim of this study is to describe and interpret the representational and narrative strategies through which gender trauma is constructed and transmitted in *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth*, rather than to formulate generalizable empirical propositions. This design is appropriate for research questions that concern processes of meaning-making and narrative architecture rather than statistically measurable outcomes.

The analytical procedure is based on close reading, defined as a sustained and attentive examination of the linguistic, structural, and rhetorical features of the text in relation to broader theoretical and socio-cultural frameworks (Caruth, 1996; Felman & Laub, 1992). Close reading enables the identification of specific textual mechanisms through which gender norms are produced, reinforced, contested, and transmitted mechanisms that are often obscured in distant reading approaches. In this study, close reading is conducted iteratively, moving between localized textual passages and the overall narrative structure to ensure systematic interpretation across analytical categories.

The main source of data is the full text of *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* (Moeremans, 2025), a self-published digital memoir distributed in e-book format through the author's official social media channels in Indonesian and English. The entire narrative is read repeatedly in successive cycles of close reading to ensure comprehensive coverage. Secondary data sources include media articles, reviews, and reflective essays published on Indonesian feminist platforms such as Magdalene, Konde.co, and VOI, which are used to situate the memoir within its socio-cultural reception context and discourse environment. Theoretical literature constitutes a third category, including works on gender performativity (Butler, 1988, 1990, 1993), postmemory (Hirsch, 2008, 2012), gender trauma (Herman, 1992; Jewkes et al., 2022), and literary trauma theory (Caruth, 1996; LaCapra, 2001).

Data collection is conducted through iterative close reading, during which narrative segments relevant to the analytical framework are systematically identified, coded, and categorized. The analytical categories gender trauma (GT), gender performativity (GP), and narrative/postmemory transmission (NT) are operationalized through indicators derived from the theoretical framework prior to analysis. Extracted data include: dialogic interactions between the protagonist and Bobby; retrospective reflections of the adult narrator; embodied and psychological responses (e.g., dissociation, guilt, shame, hypervigilance); social responses to disclosure; and formal



narrative features such as fragmentation, temporal displacement, shifts in focalization, and direct address to the reader. Coding is performed manually and refined across multiple reading cycles to ensure consistency and analytical coherence.

The analysis is conducted in five stages: (1) segmentation of the narrative structure and mapping of its temporal progression, from relationship formation through coercive escalation to post-traumatic reflection and memoir production; (2) identification of gender trauma through textual representations of psychological distress, embodied experience, and social response patterns; (3) analysis of gender performativity, focusing on how normative femininity is enacted, internalized, resisted, or problematized within specific narrative contexts; (4) examination of narrative and postmemory transmission, emphasizing the structural and rhetorical mechanisms through which trauma is communicated across temporal and experiential boundaries; and (5) synthesis of findings across the three analytical dimensions to generate an integrated interpretation. Data validity is supported through theoretical triangulation, maintenance of an audit trail, and clear analytical delimitation that restricts claims to textual representation rather than biographical verification.

Some methodological decisions require brief clarification. First, treating *Broken Strings* as a literary text rather than an autobiographical document reflects a theoretical stance rather than a claim about factual accuracy: the study focuses on narrative construction and rhetorical mediation rather than verification of lived experience. This approach aligns with established practices in literary trauma studies (Caruth, 1996; LaCapra, 2001) and does not imply skepticism toward the author's account. Second, secondary materials from Indonesian feminist media platforms (Magdalene, Konde.co, VOI) are used strictly to contextualize discourse reception and public interpretation, without substituting for textual analysis. Third, the parallel reading of Indonesian and English versions is conducted to identify linguistically and rhetorically significant variations; differences are recorded only when they contribute to interpretive relevance within the analytical framework. This methodological transparency is consistent with the principle of an audit trail in qualitative-interpretive research (Smith & Watson, 2010; Balaev, 2008).

Results and Discussion

The opening section of *Broken Strings* establishes the relational context in which gender trauma develops: the significant age gap between teenage Aurelie and adult Bobby, narrated through the retrospective perspective of a survivor who now possesses the analytical vocabulary to name what she could not recognize at the time. The narrator consistently foregrounds this retrospective distance, positioning the adult



voice as a witness to her younger self's vulnerability rather than presenting the younger self as a fully coherent agent in real time.

The imbalance is introduced early in the text through the narrator's description of Bobby's self-presentation. Rather than depicting him as naturally mature, the narrator emphasizes the performative nature of his masculinity:

"By age, he should have been called a man. He was twenty-three already. But there was something rehearsed about the way he carried himself, always talking with his eyebrows bouncing up and down and his voice deliberately lowered as if depth could be performed" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 12).

The phrase "as if depth could be performed" suggests that Bobby's authority is not an inherent quality but a carefully constructed performance. His maturity appears rehearsed rather than authentic, indicating that the power he exercises over others relies on repeated displays of confidence, seriousness, and experience.

The narrator's perception of Bobby as an older and more experienced figure becomes even more evident when she reflects on the beginning of their relationship:

"The fear from the movie blended with the unease in my chest until I couldn't tell which one made my heart beat faster" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 18).

This statement demonstrates that Bobby's presence already generates anxiety before the relationship is formally established. The narrator's discomfort is closely connected to the age gap between them and her uncertainty about the expectations attached to his adult status. Consequently, Bobby occupies a position of authority while the narrator is placed in a more vulnerable and uncertain role.

The unequal dynamic is further reinforced when Bobby initiates the relationship:

"Then, gently but firmly, he reached over and turned my face toward him. Before I could react, he kissed me. And then, with his eyes on mine, he asked softly, 'Will you be my girlfriend?'" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 18).

Although the interaction appears gentle, the phrase "before I could react" indicates that Bobby controls the pace and direction of the encounter. The narrator is positioned as someone who responds rather than initiates, reinforcing a hierarchy in which Bobby assumes the active role while she occupies a passive one.

This imbalance becomes particularly visible in the narrator's response:

"I said yes, quietly, unsure if I meant it" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 19).



The narrator's uncertainty contrasts sharply with Bobby's confidence and decisiveness. While Bobby acts with certainty, the narrator expresses hesitation and self-doubt, illustrating an unequal distribution of agency within the relationship.

Bobby's grooming strategy is evident in the way he combines reassurance with subtle pressure when the narrator establishes a boundary regarding intimacy.

"If you want more than kissing, I can't. I want to wait until I'm married. Like my mom did. She only ever had my dad."

He laughed, his eyes narrowing as he said,

"We'll see."

My heart jolted with unease. We'll see? What does that mean? We'll see what? Is it a promise, or a threat? (Moeremans, 2025, p. 19).

The phrase "we'll see" undermines the narrator's boundary by implying that her decision is not final. Although presented casually, the statement creates uncertainty and suggests that Bobby expects her position to change in the future.

He must have seen the confusion on my face, because then he quickly softened, his voice lighter.

"I'm kidding. Of course. If you're not ready, you're not ready. I want you for you. Don't think about that."

His words sounded gentle, but there was something in them that felt rehearsed, like comfort meant to disarm me. (Moeremans, 2025, p. 19).

Here, Bobby immediately follows discomfort with reassurance. The narrator's observation that his words felt "rehearsed" indicates that his empathy is performative, functioning to reduce suspicion and increase trust.

"Come on, I'm only asking for this one thing, why do you have to make it such a big deal" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 32).



This statement reframes the narrator's refusal as unreasonable. Rather than respecting her boundary, Bobby uses guilt to make her feel responsible for his disappointment.

These interactions demonstrate a grooming pattern in which affection and validation are strategically combined with pressure and manipulation. As described by Craven et al. (2006), trust is gradually established before exploitation occurs.

A key feature of Bobby's grooming strategy is the production of affective validation, in which he positions himself as the only person capable of truly understanding the narrator.

"You're not like the other girls your age. You have this depth, this maturity. They don't understand you, but I do. I see who you really are" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 14).

Through this statement, Bobby constructs the narrator as fundamentally different from her peers. The compliment appears affirming, yet it simultaneously creates distance between the narrator and other girls her age by suggesting that they are incapable of understanding her.

"The more he was around, the smaller the outside world became. I stopped messaging friends, stopped going out unless it was for work. He filled my days and my thoughts" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 18).

The narrator's reflection demonstrates the effect of Bobby's validation. As he increasingly positions himself as her primary source of understanding and emotional support, her connection with friends gradually diminishes.

"It didn't feel like control. It felt like love, though I didn't know what love was supposed to feel like" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 18).

This statement highlights how Bobby's behaviour is normalized through the language of affection. Rather than recognizing the isolation as a form of control, the narrator interprets it as evidence of love and care.



These examples illustrate how affective validation functions as a grooming strategy. By presenting himself as the only person who truly understands the narrator, Bobby gradually weakens her connection to peers and positions himself as the primary authority in her emotional life.

Importantly, the memoir does not reduce this experience to naïveté; instead, it acknowledges that the attention is initially perceived as meaningful and pleasurable. As Dumitriu (2023) notes, this affective dimension is often overlooked in clinical discussions of grooming, despite its central role in obscuring abuse recognition. By representing this ambiguity, the memoir challenges simplified cultural assumptions that abuse is always immediately recognizable as negative.

Power Imbalance and Control Normalization

As the relationship progresses, Bobby increasingly restricts the narrator's autonomy by monitoring her communication and limiting her ability to interact freely with others.

“Hide it in your underwear. If anyone tries to take it, say you’ll report them. That’s your private spot, nobody can touch it but me” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 53).

Although Bobby presents this instruction as protection, the statement reveals an attempt to establish exclusive access and control. By claiming that “nobody can touch it but me,” he positions himself as the only legitimate figure with authority over the narrator's personal space and possessions.

“The phone stayed with me all the time. I had to answer immediately. If I replied too slowly, there would be questions. If I missed a call, there would be accusations” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 53).

This passage demonstrates how surveillance becomes embedded in the narrator's daily routine. Constant monitoring is normalized as part of the relationship, reducing her freedom while increasing Bobby's control over her activities and interactions.

“I told myself it was because he cared. That he worried about me. That jealousy was proof of love” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 54).

The narrator initially interprets Bobby's controlling behavior as affection rather than coercion. This illustrates the gradual perceptual restructuring characteristic of grooming, in which abusive behavior is reframed as evidence of care and devotion.



The unequal power dynamic becomes even more apparent when Bobby transforms emotional commitment into a test of obedience.

“I do, I do,” I said, panicking. “Of course I do.”

“Oh yeah?” he asked.

“Prove it.”

“How?”

He smiled.

“Shave your head” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 54).

This interaction demonstrates how loyalty is converted into a bodily performance. Rather than accepting the narrator’s verbal affirmation, Bobby demands a physical act that requires personal sacrifice. The request functions as a test of compliance, measuring commitment through obedience rather than mutual trust.

“For a moment I actually considered it. Not because I wanted to, but because I was afraid of what would happen if I refused” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 54).

The narrator’s reaction reveals the extent of Bobby’s influence. Her willingness to contemplate such a drastic act reflects the gradual erosion of personal boundaries that occurs throughout the grooming process.

From a Butlerian perspective, these interactions reproduce gendered performance roles in which Bobby repeatedly enacts dominance through surveillance, jealousy, and behavioral control, while the narrator is positioned into compliance and emotional validation. Through repeated disciplinary acts, authority becomes normalized within the relationship, reinforcing a heteronormative structure in which obedience is interpreted as proof of love and devotion.

Empirical findings by Santana et al. (2018) similarly indicate that adherence to dominant masculine norms is associated with increased coercive behavior in intimate relationships, including emotional manipulation and social isolation. However, *Broken Strings* contributes something distinct: it does not merely document coercive behaviors but reconstructs how these behaviors are experienced and reinterpreted over time by the survivor. The memoir traces a layered interpretive process in which the same actions are first perceived as affection, then as discomfort, and eventually as recognized violence. This temporal re-reading forms a phenomenological record of coercive normalization.



Verelst et al. (2020) argue that stigma intensifies the harm experienced by survivors by inhibiting disclosure and recognition. In response, *Broken Strings* disrupts this silence by narrating the process through which recognition becomes possible, thereby offering readers a structured model for understanding how coercion is gradually identified rather than immediately perceived.

Embodied Trauma and Somatic Records

A particularly striking dimension of the memoir's representation of gender trauma is its sustained attention to the body. Rather than presenting trauma solely as an emotional experience, Moeremans depicts it through bodily sensations that reveal fear, paralysis, and loss of agency.

"My body locked, my breath shallow. I wanted to call for my mom. The words reached my throat but something pressed them down. Fear, shame, shock. I couldn't tell which one it was. All I knew was that nothing came out. I was trapped inside my own silence" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 29).

The narrator's description of her body "locking" and her voice being unable to emerge illustrates a trauma-induced freeze response. Although she recognizes danger, she is unable to act, demonstrating how trauma can manifest physically before it is consciously understood.

"That night I cried beneath my blanket, silent and shaking. I whispered prayers into the dark, begging God to forgive me, to undo it, to help me understand how love could look so much like harm" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 37).

The bodily imagery of "silent and shaking" reflects the persistence of trauma after the coercive encounter. The narrator's physical reaction conveys distress that exceeds ordinary sadness, suggesting that the body continues to register the event even when she struggles to make sense of it emotionally.

"My body aching, I finally let exhaustion pull me into sleep. The scent lingered in the room, as if mocking every prayer I whispered" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 37).

Here, trauma is represented through physical pain and sensory memory. The lingering scent functions as a reminder of the experience, demonstrating how traumatic events remain embedded in bodily perception rather than existing only as cognitive memories.



These examples demonstrate that trauma in *Broken Strings* is experienced through the body as much as through the mind. Through descriptions of paralysis, trembling, pain, and sensory intrusion, Moeremans portrays trauma as an embodied experience. This representation aligns with trauma scholarship that identifies somatic responses such as freezing, dissociation, and hypervigilance as common reactions to coercive and traumatic events (Maniglio, 2009; National Center for PTSD, 2024). The memoir therefore positions the body as a site where trauma is first registered and later narrated.

Gender Performative: Compliance, Romanticization, and Rearticulation Featuring “Good Girlfriend”

Throughout the depiction of the relationship’s peak, *Broken Strings* shows Aurelie performing what the heteronormative matrix constructs as ideal femininity: attentiveness, emotional availability, compliance, and sexual submissiveness. The memoir avoids framing these performances as weakness or complicity; instead, the narrator contextualizes them as adaptive responses to relational asymmetry in which agency carries significant emotional and social cost. This framing aligns with Butler’s (1990) argument that gender performativity is not freely chosen expression but a compelled repetition shaped by regulatory norms that may not be fully visible to the subject.

The memoir exposes how care functions as a mechanism of control within gender performativity. Rather than demanding obedience directly, Bobby gradually links Aurelie’s value as a partner to her willingness to comply with his expectations.

“Sometimes he would sigh and mutter, ‘Come on, I’m only asking for this one thing, why do you have to make it such a big deal,’ making my no sound unreasonable, like I was being dramatic over nothing” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 32).

The phrases “only asking” and “such a big deal” minimize Aurelie’s concerns and reframe her refusal as irrational. Through this strategy, Bobby positions compliance as reasonable while portraying resistance as selfish or excessive.

“Since I was no longer a virgin, he said I had no reason to refuse him anymore. If I said no, it meant I didn’t love him, and if I didn’t love him, then he might as well leave” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 40).



This statement transforms sexual consent into a measure of devotion. Rather than recognizing Aurelie’s autonomy, Bobby equates compliance with love and refusal with rejection, creating emotional pressure that makes resistance increasingly difficult.

“Every time I tried to refuse, he threatened to walk away, and the fear of losing him paralyzed me” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 40).

The narrator explicitly identifies fear of abandonment as the factor influencing her decisions. This demonstrates how emotional dependency is used to secure obedience without the need for direct physical force.

“So I gave in. But it wasn’t love. It wasn’t intimacy. It was a lesson. A class where he taught me what he wanted” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 40).

The narrator’s retrospective reflection reveals that what was initially presented as intimacy functioned as a process of conditioning. The relationship becomes a space where Aurelie learns to prioritize Bobby’s desires over her own needs and boundaries.

These examples illustrate how the memoir constructs the role of the “good girlfriend” through self-suppression, emotional accommodation, and sexual compliance. Consistent with Butler’s (1990) concept of gender performativity, femininity is repeatedly produced through acts of obedience that become normalized within the relationship. Aurelie’s desire to maintain the relationship does not simply reflect individual choice but is shaped by social expectations that associate feminine worth with sacrifice, loyalty, and compliance. Through its retrospective narration, *Broken Strings* exposes how these expectations become internalized and later recognized as mechanisms of control.

Romanticization as an Ideological Mechanism

The memoir identifies romanticization the reframing of abuse as love as a key ideological mechanism sustaining coercive gender performativity. Throughout the relationship, Bobby’s controlling behavior is repeatedly presented as evidence of affection and commitment.

“I told myself it was because he cared. That he worried about me. That jealousy was proof of love” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 54).



This passage demonstrates how Aurelie initially interprets Bobby's possessiveness through a romantic lens. Rather than recognizing jealousy as a form of control, she understands it as a sign of emotional investment and devotion.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to leave you. Other guys, once they've had their way, they'd move on. But you're lucky you found me first. You don't have to go through all that, being used and thrown away. I love you, no matter what, no matter how you are" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 37).

Bobby frames himself as a protector and presents his continued presence as evidence of exceptional love. However, the statement simultaneously positions Aurelie as someone who should feel grateful for his acceptance, reinforcing emotional dependence rather than providing genuine reassurance.

"The words sank into me like another kind of trap, soft and poisonous. Instead of feeling loved, I felt smaller, like I was the one who had to be grateful, the one who had to hold on tighter" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 37).

Through retrospective narration, Aurelie recognizes that Bobby's declarations of love functioned as a mechanism of control. The metaphor "soft and poisonous" highlights how affection and manipulation operate simultaneously, making the abuse difficult to identify at the time it occurs.

"It didn't feel like control. It felt like love, though I didn't know what love was supposed to feel like" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 18).

This reflection reveals how romantic ideals shape Aurelie's understanding of the relationship. Because controlling behaviors are culturally associated with passion, protection, and commitment, they become normalized rather than questioned.

These examples illustrate how romanticization functions as an ideological tool that obscures coercion and legitimizes unequal power relations. Bobby's jealousy is interpreted as care, his surveillance as protection, and his manipulation as proof of emotional intensity. Consistent with Dumitriu's (2023) argument, the memoir demonstrates how grooming draws upon culturally available narratives of romantic love, allowing exploitation to appear desirable and socially acceptable. Through



retrospective analysis, *Broken Strings* exposes the ways in which romantic ideology naturalizes male dominance and female submission within heterosexual relationships.

Rearticulation: From Silence to Critical Agency

The narrative arc of *Broken Strings* moves from grooming and coercive control toward reflection, recognition, and recovery. As the memoir progresses, Aurelie gradually reinterprets experiences that she once accepted as normal aspects of love and commitment.

“Getting married was not my dream, not my plan. I wanted adulthood so I could finally breathe, not to step straight into another cage” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 76).

This statement marks a significant shift in Aurelie’s understanding of adulthood and relationships. Earlier in the memoir, marriage is associated with romantic fulfillment and commitment, but here it is redefined as a potential continuation of restriction and control. The metaphor of the “cage” reflects a critical reassessment of expectations that were previously accepted without question.

“Why did I think I had to stay just because the first person was him? People don’t always end up with the first person they’re with” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 41).

The narrator begins to challenge beliefs that once kept her attached to the relationship. By questioning the assumption that first love must lead to permanence, she disrupts a narrative that had previously justified her continued compliance.

“I wanted to wait. I wanted to stand at the altar one day because I truly wanted to, because I loved the person waiting for me, not because my choice had been stolen and I was left believing I had no other option” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 41).

This reflection demonstrates the narrator’s growing ability to distinguish between genuine choice and decisions shaped by coercion. What was once interpreted as obligation is now recognized as the consequence of manipulation and lost autonomy.

The process of recovery is closely connected to the act of naming and reinterpreting past experiences.

“One day you’ll understand that love is not supposed to hurt, that silence is not peace, and that obedience is not love. The voice he tried to silence will rise again, and this time, it will speak for others, too” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189).

The contrasts between “silence” and “peace” and between “obedience” and “love” reveal the narrator’s rejection of meanings that previously sustained the abusive



relationship. Through retrospective narration, concepts that once appeared natural are redefined and challenged.

These examples illustrate a process of rearticulation in which past experiences are assigned new meanings. In Butler's (1990) terms, the memoir resignifies gendered performances that were once understood as love, loyalty, and commitment. Through reflection and narration, Aurelie reinterprets obedience as coercion, silence as suppression, and romantic devotion as a mechanism of control. The act of naming these experiences therefore functions not only as personal recovery but also as a broader challenge to cultural narratives that normalize adolescent grooming and abusive relationships.

Language, Voice, and Bilingual Testimony in Broken Strings The Politics of Language Choice

One of the distinctive formal features of *Broken Strings* is its bilingual composition. The memoir is published in both Indonesian and English, allowing the narrative to circulate across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

"One day you'll understand that love is not supposed to hurt, that silence is not peace, and that obedience is not love" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189).

Dalam edisi bahasa Indonesia, bagian yang sama diterjemahkan menjadi:

"Suatu hari nanti kamu akan mengerti bahwa cinta tidak seharusnya menyakitkan, bahwa diam bukanlah kedamaian, dan bahwa kepatuhan bukanlah cinta" (Moeremans, 2025, p. xx).

The coexistence of these versions demonstrates how the memoir addresses multiple readerships simultaneously. While the Indonesian version speaks directly to readers within the socio-cultural context in which the events occurred, the English version positions the narrative within broader transnational discussions of gender-based violence and survivor testimony.

Another example can be observed in the memoir's repeated use of concepts such as "love," "silence," and "obedience," which remain central across both linguistic versions.

"The voice he tried to silence will rise again, and this time, it will speak for others, too" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189).

The preservation of this statement across languages highlights the memoir's broader activist function. The narrative is not only a personal testimony but also an



intervention aimed at readers from different cultural backgrounds. Through bilingual publication, Moeremans expands the reach of survivor discourse beyond a single national audience.

The bilingual structure therefore functions as more than a translation strategy. It allows *Broken Strings* to participate simultaneously in Indonesian discussions of adolescent sexual violence and in wider global feminist conversations concerning grooming, coercive control, and trauma narration.

Voices, Narrative Personas, and Survivor Writers

Closely related to language is the question of narrative voice: who speaks in *Broken Strings*, and from what position of authority? Throughout the memoir, Aurelie alternates between the experiencing self who narrates events as they unfold and the narrating self who reflects on those experiences with hindsight and critical awareness.

“At the time, I thought this was what love looked like. I thought love meant sacrifice, patience, and proving yourself over and over again until someone chose you” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 54).

This statement reflects the perspective of the younger Aurelie, who interprets Bobby’s demands through romantic ideals. The narration remains close to the emotional understanding available to her at that moment, revealing the limited framework through which she makes sense of the relationship.

“Now I understand that what I called love was often fear. Fear of losing him. Fear of disappointing him. Fear of being alone” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 77).

Here, the adult narrator reinterprets the same experiences using a more critical vocabulary. The contrast between past belief and present understanding demonstrates the memoir’s doubled narrative structure, in which earlier perceptions are revisited and reassessed.

The distinction between the experiencing self and the narrating self becomes particularly visible in the memoir’s closing section.

“I wish I could hold you and tell you that none of this will define you. You won’t always feel small. You won’t always carry this shame. And when you look back, you’ll see that the girl who cried in secret was the same girl who saved you” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189).

The shift from “I” to “you” creates a dialogic relationship between the adult survivor and her younger self. Rather than erasing the vulnerability of the adolescent



narrator, the memoir acknowledges it while simultaneously providing a new interpretive framework through which those experiences can be understood.

“You survived. Not because you were never broken, but because you kept going even when you believed there was nothing left of you” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189).

This direct address further reinforces the authority of the narrating self. The adult voice does not merely recount events but actively reinterprets them, transforming experiences of victimization into a narrative of survival and recovery.

The memoir therefore employs a doubled narrative voice that preserves both immediacy and reflection. The younger Aurelie speaks from within the experience of grooming and abuse, while the adult Aurelie speaks from a position of hindsight, knowledge, and recovery. Consistent with Smith and Watson’s (2010) concept of split narration, the interaction between these voices allows the memoir to maintain the emotional authenticity of lived experience while simultaneously offering a critical reinterpretation of that experience. This dual perspective also strengthens the memoir’s broader intervention, enabling personal testimony to function as a form of public survivor advocacy.

Affiliative Narrative and Postmemory Transmission Structural Features of Transmission

The narrative structure of *Broken Strings* functions as a mechanism of affective transmission that enables readers to engage with traumatic memory. Through temporal fragmentation, retrospective focalization, and direct address, the memoir recreates the emotional and psychological effects of trauma rather than merely describing them.

“My body locked, my breath shallow. I wanted to call for my mom. The words reached my throat but something pressed them down. Fear, shame, shock. I couldn’t tell which one it was. All I knew was that nothing came out. I was trapped inside my own silence” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 29).

This passage illustrates how traumatic experience is narrated through bodily sensation rather than chronological explanation. The phrase “trapped inside my own silence” conveys both physical paralysis and emotional suppression, reflecting the disorientation commonly associated with traumatic memory. Rather than presenting events in a detached manner, the narrative immerses readers in the immediacy of the experience.



“That night I cried beneath my blanket, silent and shaking. I whispered prayers into the dark, begging God to forgive me, to undo it, to help me understand how love could look so much like harm” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 37).

The narrator does not simply recount what happened but reconstructs the emotional confusion surrounding the event. The juxtaposition of “love” and “harm” demonstrates the fragmented understanding characteristic of grooming and abuse, where experiences cannot yet be fully interpreted or categorized.

Retrospective focalization becomes evident when the adult narrator revisits experiences that the younger self could not fully comprehend.

“At the time, I thought this was what love looked like. I thought love meant sacrifice, patience, and proving yourself over and over again until someone chose you” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 54).

This statement reflects the perspective of the younger narrator, whose understanding of love is shaped by manipulation and unequal power relations. The narration remains close to the beliefs held during the relationship, preserving the immediacy of lived experience.

“Now I understand that what I called love was often fear. Fear of losing him. Fear of disappointing him. Fear of being alone” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 77).

The adult narrator subsequently reinterprets these experiences through reflection and hindsight. The contrast between past and present understanding creates a dual perspective that allows readers to witness both the original experience and its later reassessment.

The memoir’s affective impact is further strengthened through direct address in the closing section.

“I wish I could hold you and tell you that none of this will define you. You won’t always feel small. You won’t always carry this shame. And when you look back, you’ll see that the girl who cried in secret was the same girl who saved you” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189).

The shift from “I” to “you” creates an intimate dialogue between the adult survivor and her younger self. This narrative strategy positions readers as witnesses to a process of self-reconciliation while simultaneously emphasizing the distance between past suffering and present understanding.



These examples demonstrate how *Broken Strings* employs fragmented temporality, retrospective focalization, and direct address to communicate trauma affectively. Consistent with Caruth's (1996) argument that trauma resists linear narration, the memoir reconstructs traumatic memory through moments of disruption, emotional fragmentation, and later reinterpretation. At the same time, the reflective voice identified by Smith and Watson (2010) enables lived experience to be transformed into critical insight, allowing personal testimony to function as both narrative and analysis.

Direct Address and Testimony Production

A particularly significant mechanism of transmission in *Broken Strings* is the use of direct address, through which the narrator moves beyond autobiographical recollection and establishes an explicit dialogue with readers. Rather than functioning solely as a record of personal experience, the memoir actively invites audience participation, transforming readers from passive observers into ethical witnesses of trauma. This narrative strategy reduces the distance between survivor and audience while facilitating the transmission of traumatic knowledge beyond the narrator's individual experience.

"If you carry your own pain, may these words remind you that you're seen, and that you're not alone" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

The repeated use of the second-person pronoun "you" broadens the memoir's scope beyond the narrator's personal story. Instead of addressing a specific individual, the statement reaches an imagined community of readers who may carry experiences of pain, vulnerability, or abuse. Through this gesture, personal testimony becomes a site of collective recognition, enabling readers to establish emotional connections with experiences that may resemble their own.

"Maybe your story is different from mine. Maybe it happened in a different place, with a different face, and under different circumstances. But if someone made you believe that love required your silence, then I hope you know now that they were wrong" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

This passage simultaneously acknowledges difference and creates solidarity. While the narrator recognizes that survivors do not share identical histories, she identifies recurring patterns of manipulation that transcend individual circumstances. As a result, the memoir encourages identification without erasing the diversity of



survivor experiences, allowing readers to locate aspects of their own lives within the broader framework of abuse described in the text.

“I’m telling you this because I wish someone had told me. I wish someone had explained that control is not protection, that fear is not love, and that being needed is not the same as being valued” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

In this statement, the narrator assumes an explicitly pedagogical role. The memoir no longer functions merely as retrospective testimony but also as a form of public education. By translating personal suffering into practical insight, the narrative equips readers with conceptual tools for recognizing coercive control and other harmful relationship dynamics that are often normalized or misunderstood.

“If sharing this story helps even one person leave sooner, speak sooner, or ask for help sooner, then every difficult page was worth writing” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

Here, storytelling is explicitly framed as a form of social intervention. The act of narrating trauma is presented not only as a process of personal recovery but also as an effort to generate awareness and encourage action. The memoir therefore extends its function beyond individual remembrance, positioning testimony as a means of prevention, advocacy, and collective responsibility.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate how direct address functions as a mechanism of affective transmission within *Broken Strings*. By repeatedly engaging readers through the second person, the memoir creates emotional proximity while preserving the specificity of the narrator’s lived experience. In accordance with Hirsch’s concept of affiliative postmemory, readers are invited to become secondary witnesses who engage ethically with trauma they did not directly experience. Through this process, the memoir transforms private memory into a shared cultural resource that promotes greater awareness of grooming, coercive control, and adolescent relationship abuse.

From Personal Wounds to Collective Cultural Memory

A significant aspect of affiliative postmemory in *Broken Strings* emerges through the memoir’s ability to make experiences of coercive control recognizable to readers. By documenting forms of abuse that are often normalized within intimate relationships, the memoir creates opportunities for readers to engage with traumatic experiences beyond their own lives.



“He said if I really loved him I had no reason to speak to other boys, and eventually he forced me to delete every single male contact from my BBM” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 27).

This passage illustrates a form of social isolation that is characteristic of coercive control. By framing ordinary social interactions as threats to the relationship, Bobby gradually restricts Aurélie’s autonomy and reinforces emotional dependency. The memoir therefore provides readers with a concrete example of abusive behavior that may otherwise be interpreted as jealousy or protectiveness.

“There were times we fought just because I made a typo while saying I love you. It happened because I was always rushing, terrified that if I took too long he would accuse me of cheating” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 27).

This example demonstrates how surveillance and emotional monitoring operate within abusive relationships. The narrator’s anxiety over simple text messages reveals how coercive control extends into everyday interactions, transforming routine communication into a source of fear and psychological pressure.

“At that moment, I didn’t realize it was rape. I used to think rape only happened in dark alleys, that it was violent, sudden, and committed by strangers” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 35).

The narrator’s reflection highlights the misconceptions that often prevent victims from recognizing sexual violence within intimate relationships. By challenging dominant assumptions about rape, the memoir encourages readers to reconsider their own understandings of consent, coercion, and abuse.

The affiliative postmemory generated by *Broken Strings* extends beyond individual reading practices. Its circulation through Indonesian social media platforms, as reported by Magdalene, Konde.co, and VOI (2026), has contributed to its emergence as what MeMire (2022) describes as a “digital archive of traumatic memory.” In this process, readers who share, discuss, or relate to the narrative participate in what Hirsch (2012) conceptualizes as postmemory, becoming secondary carriers of traumatic knowledge.

This circulation produces a political dimension of memory-making. By articulating coercive control in accessible language, the memoir expands what Vives-Cases et al. (2020) and Yuniawanti (2023) describe as the culturally available vocabulary for gender-based violence. It thus contributes to the conditions under



which grooming becomes recognizable, discussable, and politically actionable within the Indonesian public sphere.

Digital Memoirs, Feminist Pedagogy, and Institutional Implications Broken Strings as a Pedagogical Resource

Beyond literary analysis, *Broken Strings* carries implications for feminist pedagogy and institutional practice in Indonesia. Its direct addresses to readers function as informal educational interventions, encouraging recognition of early signs of grooming and coercion. “One day, you will understand that love is not supposed to hurt, silence is not peace, and obedience is not love” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 189). The structured oppositions in this statement operate as pedagogical reframing tools that challenge normalized associations between love and harm.

Gowsalya and Jothi (2025) argue that survivor life writing functions as an underutilized pedagogical archive because it translates abstract feminist theory into accessible narrative experience. *Broken Strings* exemplifies this function by rendering clinical and legal concepts of abuse into emotionally intelligible storytelling.

In the Indonesian context, where formal education on sexual violence remains limited and often legally oriented, such narratives provide an alternative medium for awareness-building. As Yuniawanti (2023) notes, the gap between legal frameworks and lived understanding of gender-based violence is partly shaped by a lack of accessible vocabulary. Digital survivor memoirs help address this gap by offering language that is both affectively resonant and socially legible. *Broken Strings* therefore operates simultaneously as memoir, testimony, and pedagogical intervention within public discourse.

Institutional Silence and Limitations of Legal Discourse

Public reception of *Broken Strings* also highlights a significant institutional limitation: the absence of a formal mechanism in Indonesia to recognize grooming as a distinct category of juvenile sexual abuse. The memoir addresses this gap by documenting forms of coercion that are often difficult to identify within conventional legal frameworks.

“He said if I really loved him I had no reason to speak to other boys, and eventually he forced me to delete every single male contact from my BBM” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 27).

This passage illustrates a pattern of coercive control that gradually restricts the victim’s social autonomy. Rather than relying on physical violence, Bobby establishes dominance through emotional manipulation and isolation. Such behaviors often



remain difficult to categorize within legal definitions of abuse despite their significant psychological impact on victims.

“There were times we fought just because I made a typo while saying I love you. It happened because I was always rushing, terrified that if I took too long he would accuse me of cheating” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 27).

The narrator’s fear of making even minor mistakes demonstrates how compliance is produced through continuous emotional pressure. The relationship appears consensual on the surface, yet the memoir reveals how fear and surveillance shape the victim’s behavior. This example complicates simplistic legal distinctions between consent and coercion by exposing the psychological mechanisms through which control is exercised.

“At that moment, I didn’t realize it was rape. I used to think rape only happened in dark alleys, that it was violent, sudden, and committed by strangers” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 35).

This reflection highlights the limitations of dominant understandings of sexual violence. Because the abuse occurred within an intimate relationship and was preceded by grooming and emotional manipulation, the narrator struggled to identify the experience as rape. The memoir therefore reveals forms of victimization that frequently remain obscured within both legal and social discourse.

These examples reflect what Wake and Reed (2019) identify as a persistent limitation within legal systems, namely the tendency to underestimate power asymmetries in adult–adolescent relationships. Victim silence, compliance, or apparent consent is often interpreted as evidence of voluntary participation rather than as the outcome of coercive processes designed to secure obedience. By reconstructing the sequential dynamics of trust-building, isolation, normalization, and exploitation, *Broken Strings* provides an evidentiary account of coercive control that legal frameworks frequently fail to articulate.

Kamdem Kamga (2023) conceptualizes survivor testimony as a form of “counter-jurisprudential discourse,” through which survivors expose the limitations of legal frameworks and generate alternative understandings of accountability grounded in lived experience. *Broken Strings* participates in this discourse not through direct legal argumentation but by making visible the emotional and relational dimensions of



coercion that often remain outside juridical language. The memoir demonstrates that harm cannot always be adequately understood through legal categories alone.

The reception and circulation of the memoir on Indonesian social media further suggest that this counter-judicial function resonates with readers who have experienced or normalized similar dynamics. In this sense, *Broken Strings* contributes to what Vives-Cases et al. (2020) describe as a cultural precondition for stronger institutional responses to gender-based violence: a shared capacity to recognize, name, and articulate forms of harm that have long remained socially obscured.

Comparative Perspectives and Study Limitations

Placing Broken Strings in a Comparative Frame

A comparative perspective situates *Broken Strings* within a broader tradition of survivor memoirs that transform personal experiences of abuse into public testimony. Similar to other survivor narratives, Moeremans' memoir documents the long-term effects of coercion while simultaneously seeking to educate readers about the dynamics of abuse.

"I'm telling you this because I wish someone had told me. I wish someone had explained that control is not protection, that fear is not love, and that being needed is not the same as being valued" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

This passage demonstrates the memoir's commitment to transforming personal experience into public knowledge. The narrator explicitly frames her testimony as a lesson intended to help others recognize abusive relationship dynamics. In this respect, *Broken Strings* shares important similarities with survivor memoirs that use personal narrative as a vehicle for social awareness and advocacy.

"If sharing this story helps even one person leave sooner, speak sooner, or ask for help sooner, then every difficult page was worth writing" (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

Here, storytelling is presented as a form of intervention rather than mere recollection. The narrator positions the memoir as a resource for readers who may be experiencing similar situations, emphasizing the social and educational functions of survivor testimony. This orientation toward public engagement is also evident in international survivor memoirs that seek to transform individual trauma into collective awareness.

"Maybe your story is different from mine. Maybe it happened in a different place, with a different face, and under different circumstances. But if someone made you



believe that love required your silence, then I hope you know now that they were wrong” (Moeremans, 2025, p. 198).

This statement illustrates the memoir’s effort to build an interpretive community among readers. Rather than presenting trauma as a uniquely individual experience, the narrator invites readers to recognize broader patterns of manipulation and abuse across different social contexts. The memoir therefore encourages collective interpretation and identification while acknowledging differences between individual experiences.

These characteristics position *Broken Strings* within a broader global tradition of survivor life writing. International memoirs such as *Know My Name* by Chanel Miller and *Hunger* by Roxane Gay similarly transform experiences of sexual violence into publicly discussed narratives. However, these works emerged within North American literary cultures characterized by more established institutional pathways for publication, circulation, and legal recognition of survivor testimony.

By contrast, *Broken Strings* occupies a distinct position within Indonesian and Southeast Asian literary culture. As Hildebrand (2021) notes, infrastructural support for survivor narratives remains comparatively limited, while cultural taboos surrounding disclosure continue to shape public responses to sexual violence. Within this context, Moeremans’ decision to self-publish digitally carries particular significance because it bypasses traditional publishing gatekeepers and enables direct circulation among social media audiences most likely to engage with its content.

The comparison also highlights differences in narrative orientation. While many North American survivor memoirs integrate legal proceedings, institutional accountability, or judicial outcomes into their narrative trajectories, *Broken Strings* places greater emphasis on the reconstruction of subjective agency and the formation of an interpretive community of readers. This emphasis reflects what Felman and Laub (1992) identify as the testimonial function of narrative, whereby meaning is produced through witnessing, interpretation, and shared engagement rather than through legal resolution alone.

These differences illustrate how survivor testimony is shaped by specific cultural and institutional conditions. As Makin et al. (2025) argue, experiences and representations of sexual abuse vary across national contexts and therefore require interpretive frameworks that remain sensitive to local histories, cultural norms, and institutional realities. *Broken Strings* consequently contributes a distinct Indonesian



perspective to the global tradition of survivor memoirs, demonstrating how digital testimony can function as both personal recovery and public intervention in contexts where formal mechanisms of recognition remain limited.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study has several limitations, these constraints also suggest directions for future research. First, because the analysis relies solely on close reading of a single primary text, it does not include empirical reader-response data. As a result, it cannot determine how diverse audiences interpret or internalize the memoir's affiliative postmemory function. Future research using reader-response methodologies such as online surveys, social media discourse analysis, or focus group studies with adolescent readers could provide empirical grounding for the affective and pedagogical claims advanced here (Balaev, 2008; Smith & Watson, 2010). Such studies could also examine whether responses vary across demographic factors such as age, gender, prior trauma exposure, and geographic context.

Second, the focus on a single text limits the ability to determine whether the identified patterns are characteristic of Indonesian digital survivor memoirs more broadly or specific to Broken Strings. Expanding the corpus to include other Indonesian digital narratives of gender-based violence, including those circulating on platforms such as Wattpad, Instagram, and TikTok, would allow for comparative analysis of recurring formal strategies such as temporal fragmentation, retrospective narration, and direct address. Such work would contribute to broader discussions on the formalization of trauma narratives in digital literary culture (McMire, 2022; Barnes et al., 2021).

Third, this study does not fully address the ethical complexities surrounding the publication and circulation of survivor testimonies in digital spaces. Although the viral dissemination of Broken Strings is interpreted here as evidence of affiliative postmemory, scholars such as Dworkin et al. (2017) highlight potential risks, including re-traumatization and the commodification of trauma within digital attention economies. Future research could explore how Indonesian digital memoirists navigate the tension between therapeutic expression, political advocacy, and exposure to public scrutiny. Such inquiry would situate Broken Strings within broader debates on feminist ethics of witnessing that consider both the political value and personal cost of public trauma narration.



Conclusion

This article has examined *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* as a site where gender trauma is produced, represented, and transmitted through narrative form. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, the analysis develops three interconnected arguments.

First, the memoir maps gender trauma by illustrating how heteronormative scripts, including "good girlfriend" performances, the romanticization of control, and the normalization of obedience, function to obscure and sustain patterns of exploitation. Through its depiction of power relations and embodied experience, the text reveals how adolescent gender-based violence becomes socially legible as intimacy rather than abuse.

Second, the memoir traces a gradual reconfiguration of the protagonist's gender subjectivity, moving from enacted submissive femininity, to retrospective recognition of abuse, and finally to public articulation through survivor testimony. This process extends beyond individual recovery and operates as a discursive challenge to the heteronormative frameworks that enable gender-based violence.

Third, *Broken Strings* functions as an affiliative postmemory medium by transforming personal trauma into a narrative form that invites readers to engage as secondary witnesses. Through fragmentation, retrospective narration, and direct address, the memoir structures trauma as a communicable cultural memory, enabling affective engagement with survivor experience.

These findings have implications for literary trauma studies, gender studies, and the sociology of literature. In literary trauma studies, the analysis demonstrates the relevance of postmemory theory for contemporary Indonesian digital memoirs. In gender studies, it shows how Butler's concept of heteronormativity can be applied to the analysis of grooming and coercive relational dynamics. In the sociology of literature, it highlights how digital memoirs contribute to processes of collective memory formation and feminist discourse.

More broadly, the analysis suggests that survivor memoirs circulating in digital spaces function not only as literary texts but also as forms of cultural intervention. By rendering experiences of adolescent abuse publicly legible, such narratives contribute to shifts in awareness, interpretation, and discourse surrounding gender-based violence. In this sense, *Broken Strings* operates simultaneously as testimony, critique, and cultural mediation.

The analytical categories identified in this study the narrative construction of grooming as romance, the normalization of coercion through gender performance, the embodied inscription of trauma, and the mechanisms of narrative transmission extend beyond a single text and reflect broader patterns in contemporary digital trauma



narration. The combination of Butlerian and postmemory frameworks thus provides a productive analytical lens for examining the intersection of gender, trauma, and digital life writing in Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts.

From an institutional perspective, the implications of this analysis extend to education, policy, and advocacy. Survivor memoirs in digital environments should be understood not only as literary artifacts but also as contributors to public discourse on gender-based violence. For educators, policymakers, and civil society actors, such texts provide affective and experiential dimensions that complement legal and clinical frameworks. The circulation and reception of *Broken Strings* demonstrate how digital narratives can participate in awareness-building, stigma reduction, and the expansion of public understanding of adolescent sexual grooming and exploitation. Recognizing this function is therefore relevant not only for literary scholarship but also for broader social and cultural engagement.

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