Journal of Social Research and Innovation
Vol. 2, Issue 2, July, 2026, 80-89
e-ISSN: 3124-9728
https://ejournal.natacendekia.org/index.php/JoSRI/index

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S TRAUMA IN THE MEMOIR BROKEN STRINGS: A JULIA KRISTEVA SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

Dea Amellya Fransisca[1*], Andhita Risko Faristiana[2]
[1,2] *Department of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah, Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari, Ponorogo, 63471, Indonesia*
*Email: amellyaica21@gmail.com, andhitarisko@uinponorogo.ac.id

Article Info

Article history:

Received: July 07, 2026
Revised: July 20, 2026
Accepted: July 28, 2026

Keywords:

Women's Trauma
Julia Kristeva Semiotics
Child Grooming
Psychological Abuse
Memoir

Abstract

Women's trauma resulting from child grooming and psychological abuse is often represented through symbolic and emotional narratives that require in-depth interpretation. This study aims to analyze the representation of women's trauma in the memoir *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* by Aurelie Moeremans using Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, using the memoir as the primary data source. Supporting sources consisted of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and previous studies specifically selected based on their relevance to Julia Kristeva's semiotics, trauma studies, women's trauma, and gender-based violence. Data were collected through close reading and documentation. The analysis was conducted through four stages: (1) identifying textual units related to women's trauma, (2) classifying the data into phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality, (3) interpreting the meanings using Kristeva's semiotic framework and trauma theory, and (4) drawing conclusions based on recurring patterns across the analyzed data. The findings reveal that the phenotext represents trauma through explicit linguistic features, including diction, narrative, dialogue, and descriptions of the protagonist's physical and emotional responses. The genotext uncovers deeper psychological meanings, such as traumatic memories, unconscious emotional conflict, insecurity, and self-reflection that continue to shape the protagonist's identity. Furthermore, the intertextual analysis demonstrates that the memoir is closely connected to broader social discourses on child grooming, psychological abuse, emotional manipulation, and gender-based violence. The representation of women's trauma is manifested through experiences of child grooming, gaslighting, emotional manipulation, internal conflict, loss of personal safety, and the freeze response, illustrating the long-term psychological consequences of abusive relationships. This study contributes to communication and literary studies by demonstrating that Kristeva's semiotic approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the linguistic, psychological, and social dimensions of women's trauma while raising awareness of the lasting impacts of psychological violence.

To cite this article: Fransisca, Dea. A & Faristiana, Andhita. R (2026). The Representation of Women's Trauma in the Memoir Broken Strings: A Julia Kristevan Semiotic Analysis. *Journal of Social Research and Innovation, 2*(2), 80-89

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental process through which individuals construct, negotiate, and interpret meanings within social life. Beyond functioning as a medium for exchanging information, communication enables people to understand experiences, identities, and social realities through various symbolic forms. In the field of communication studies, language is recognized not merely as a linguistic instrument but also as a cultural system that conveys values, ideologies, and collective experiences (Effendy, 2017; Hall, 1997). Literary texts therefore represent an important form of symbolic communication because they communicate meanings that extend beyond literal expressions. Through narratives, metaphors, and linguistic symbols, literary works construct representations of social realities while simultaneously inviting readers to interpret multiple layers of meaning (Sobur, 2016).

Among various literary genres, memoir occupies a distinctive position because it narrates lived experiences from the author's perspective while preserving emotional authenticity and personal reflection. Unlike fictional narratives, memoirs present autobiographical experiences that connect individual memories with broader social contexts, allowing readers to engage with personal suffering as a collective social issue (Smith & Watson, 2010; Lejeune, 1989). Consequently, memoir functions not only as a literary

genre but also as a medium of communication through which traumatic experiences, identity formation, and emotional struggles are articulated. Such narratives enable survivors to reconstruct painful memories while encouraging readers to develop empathy toward experiences that are often difficult to communicate directly.

Women's traumatic experiences constitute one of the most significant issues represented through autobiographical narratives. Trauma resulting from emotional abuse, psychological manipulation, child grooming, and gender-based violence frequently remains invisible because victims often encounter difficulties in verbalizing their experiences. Previous trauma studies have demonstrated that traumatic memories are commonly expressed through fragmented narratives, repetitive language, emotional ambiguity, and symbolic expressions rather than through direct descriptions (Caruth, 1996; Herman, 1992). Consequently, understanding women's trauma requires analytical approaches capable of interpreting not only explicit meanings but also unconscious psychological expressions embedded within language.

The increasing prevalence of psychological violence against women further strengthens the relevance of investigating trauma representation in literary narratives. In Indonesia, psychological disorders associated with traumatic experiences remain a major public health concern. Reports from the Indonesian Ministry of Health indicate that emotional disorders and trauma-related psychological conditions continue to affect a substantial proportion of the population, particularly individuals who have experienced violence and prolonged emotional abuse (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2018). Beyond clinical consequences, psychological violence also reflects broader gender inequalities and unequal power relations that normalize emotional manipulation and coercive control within intimate relationships. Therefore, examining literary representations of women's trauma contributes not only to communication and literary studies but also to discussions concerning gender justice, psychological well-being, and social awareness.

Within communication and literary scholarship, representation is understood as an active process of meaning construction rather than a simple reflection of reality. (Hall, 1997)argues that representation produces meanings through cultural signs and symbolic systems that shape how individuals perceive social phenomena. In literary texts, representations of trauma are therefore constructed through linguistic choices, narrative structures, and symbolic patterns that communicate emotional realities beyond explicit descriptions. This perspective becomes particularly important when analyzing autobiographical narratives because traumatic experiences frequently emerge through fragmented memories, silence, repetition, and emotional contradictions that cannot be adequately explained through conventional linguistic analysis alone.

For this reason, semiotic analysis provides an appropriate framework for examining how women's trauma is communicated through literary language. Rather than focusing exclusively on narrative content, semiotics investigates how meanings are generated through interactions among signs, cultural contexts, and psychological processes (Sobur, 2016; Hoed, 2014). Such an approach enables researchers to explore the relationship between language, unconscious emotions, and social realities that collectively shape representations of traumatic experiences. Accordingly, analyzing memoir through a semiotic perspective offers opportunities to understand trauma not merely as an individual psychological condition but also as a symbolic communication process that reflects broader cultural and gendered experiences.

Among various semiotic perspectives, Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory offers a distinctive framework for examining literary narratives that express psychological complexity and traumatic experiences. Unlike structural semiotics, which primarily emphasizes the relationship between signs and meanings, Kristeva conceptualizes language as a dynamic process in which conscious linguistic structures continuously interact with unconscious emotional forces. She distinguishes between the phenotext, which refers to the observable linguistic organization of a text, and the genotext, which represents the underlying semiotic processes through which unconscious desires, emotions, and memories emerge into language (Kristeva, 1980, 1984). This dual perspective enables literary analysis to move beyond surface level interpretation by revealing how psychological experiences are encoded within narrative structures.

Another significant contribution of Kristeva's theory is the concept of intertextuality, which argues that every text exists in relation to other texts, cultural discourses, and social ideologies. Literary meaning is therefore constructed not only through internal textual elements but also through interactions between individual narratives and broader cultural contexts (Kristeva, 1980). In the context of women's trauma, this perspective is particularly relevant because experiences of violence, emotional abuse, and identity fragmentation cannot be understood solely as individual psychological phenomena. Instead, they are shaped by cultural norms, gender relations, and social narratives that normalize unequal power structures.

Consequently, Kristeva's framework provides a comprehensive analytical lens for examining how trauma is simultaneously communicated at linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural levels.

The relevance of Kristeva's semiotic approach has increased alongside the growing scholarly interest in literary representations of psychological trauma. Trauma narratives frequently employ fragmented memories, repetitive expressions, silence, emotional ambiguity, and disrupted chronology, all of which challenge conventional linguistic interpretation (Caruth, 1996; Herman, 1992). Such characteristics indicate that traumatic experiences are often communicated indirectly through symbolic language rather than explicit descriptions. Therefore, analytical approaches that focus exclusively on narrative content or denotative meanings are insufficient for explaining the complex interaction between language and traumatic memory. Kristeva's concepts of phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality provide a more integrated framework for understanding how traumatic experiences are represented through literary discourse.

These theoretical considerations make Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth by Aurelie Moeremans an appropriate object of analysis. Published in 2025, the memoir attracted public attention because it narrates the author's lived experiences of child grooming, emotional manipulation, gaslighting, and prolonged psychological abuse within an intimate relationship (Moeremans, 2025). Rather than presenting trauma through straightforward chronological narration, the memoir employs reflective language, fragmented recollections, emotional contradictions, and symbolic expressions that portray the long-term psychological consequences of abuse. Such narrative characteristics correspond closely with Kristeva's understanding of literary language as a site where conscious narration and unconscious emotional processes intersect.

Beyond documenting individual suffering, *Broken Strings* also reflects broader social issues concerning gender inequality, coercive control, and psychological violence against women. The memoir illustrates how traumatic experiences develop gradually through manipulation, emotional dependency, and unequal power relations rather than through isolated incidents of physical violence. Consequently, the text functions not merely as a personal autobiography but also as a symbolic communication of women's lived experiences within patriarchal social structures. Examining the memoir through Kristeva's semiotic framework therefore offers an opportunity to understand how literary language communicates trauma while simultaneously revealing the cultural and ideological conditions that shape women's experiences of violence.

Building upon these theoretical and contextual considerations, it is necessary to examine how previous studies have investigated literary representation, women's trauma, and Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory. A critical review of earlier research is essential for identifying existing scholarly contributions, methodological limitations, theoretical debates, and research gaps that justify the present study.

Previous studies have examined literary representation and semiotic interpretation from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives. Nevertheless, their primary focus has remained fragmented, addressing either symbolic meaning, literary representation, or psychological aspects independently rather than examining the multidimensional representation of women's trauma. Consequently, the integration of communication studies, trauma studies, and Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory remains relatively underdeveloped.

Research employing Julia Kristeva's semiotic framework has predominantly focused on interpreting symbolic meanings within poetry, religious texts, and audiovisual media. (Sadali, 2024), for instance, analyzed Faruq Juwaidah's poem *Madha Asabaka Ya Watan?* using Kristeva's concepts of the semiotic process and intertextuality to reveal meanings associated with nationalism and collective identity. Similarly, Rizqi (2023) examined moral values represented in the music video *Makna Bahagia* through Kristeva's semiotic perspective, demonstrating how symbolic expressions communicate religious and ethical messages. Meanwhile, Saleh (2022) investigated the narrative of Prophet Yusuf in the Qur'an using Kristeva's intertextual approach to explain relationships among religious texts and ideological meanings. Collectively, these studies confirm the applicability of Kristeva's semiotic theory in interpreting symbolic language across different textual forms. However, they primarily emphasize symbolic interpretation and intertextual relationships without exploring how unconscious emotional processes, traumatic memories, and psychological conflicts are represented through literary language.

Other studies have investigated women's representation using semiotic frameworks different from Kristeva's. Nurfaizi (2024), employing Roland Barthes' semiotic model, analyzed the film *Hati Suhita* and demonstrated that female characters were represented as independent, resilient, and capable of making autonomous decisions. Likewise, (Fatriani, 2024) examined gender equality in the television series *Gadis Kretek*, revealing how female characters negotiated patriarchal values while simultaneously confronting

gender discrimination. These studies successfully explain representations of women through denotative and connotative meanings embedded within visual narratives. Nevertheless, Barthes' semiotic approach primarily concentrates on ideological signification and cultural myths, providing limited explanation of unconscious psychological processes underlying traumatic experiences. As a result, the emotional complexity of women's trauma remains insufficiently explored.

A comparison of these previous studies reveals significant differences in theoretical orientation, research objects, and analytical procedures. Studies using Kristeva's framework have mainly focused on poetry, religious discourse, and audiovisual texts, whereas research concerning women's representation has largely relied on Barthes' semiotics within cinematic contexts. None of these studies has examined memoir as an autobiographical narrative that communicates lived traumatic experiences through linguistic, emotional, and symbolic dimensions simultaneously. Furthermore, previous research generally employs a single analytical concept, such as intertextuality or symbolic interpretation, without integrating phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality as interconnected analytical categories.

These observations indicate both methodological and theoretical gaps. Methodologically, previous studies have predominantly adopted descriptive semiotic analysis that emphasizes textual meanings without systematically examining the interaction between explicit linguistic structures and unconscious psychological expressions. Consequently, the analytical process remains limited in explaining how trauma is constructed through multiple semiotic layers within autobiographical narratives. Theoretically, existing studies tend to treat trauma either as a psychological phenomenon or as a symbolic representation without integrating communication theory, literary semiotics, and trauma studies into a unified analytical framework. Such separation restricts a comprehensive understanding of how traumatic experiences are linguistically represented while simultaneously reflecting broader sociocultural discourses concerning gender-based violence.

Based on these considerations, the present study addresses these research gaps by employing Julia Kristeva's concepts of phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality to investigate *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* as a memoir representing child grooming, emotional manipulation, gaslighting, and psychological violence against women. Unlike previous studies, this research conceptualizes memoir not merely as autobiographical writing but as a form of symbolic communication through which traumatic experiences are linguistically constructed, psychologically expressed, and socially negotiated. By integrating communication studies, literary semiotics, and trauma theory within a single analytical framework, this study extends the application of Kristeva's semiotics beyond symbolic interpretation toward a more comprehensive understanding of women's trauma narratives.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the representation of women's trauma in *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* by Aurelie Moeremans through Julia Kristeva's semiotic perspective. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of meanings, symbolic expressions, and narrative structures embedded in literary texts. Rather than measuring variables quantitatively, this approach focuses on understanding how traumatic experiences are represented linguistically, psychologically, and socially within autobiographical narratives. The descriptive design was applied to systematically describe and interpret textual representations of women's trauma using the concepts of phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality (Moleong, 2018).

The primary data source was *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* by Aurelie Moeremans, published in 2025. The unit of analysis consisted of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, dialogues, paragraphs, and narrative passages representing women's traumatic experiences. The memoir was selected because it presents autobiographical accounts of child grooming, emotional manipulation, psychological abuse, gaslighting, and their long-term psychological consequences. Secondary data consisted of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, previous research, and theoretical literature related to Julia Kristeva's semiotics, trauma studies, women's representation, and gender-based violence. Supporting references were selected based on three criteria: (1) direct relevance to Julia Kristeva's semiotic concepts, (2) theoretical contribution to trauma, memoir, or women's representation, and (3) academic credibility as indicated by publication through scholarly publishers, peer-reviewed journals, or accredited institutional repositories.

The principal research instrument was a researcher-developed analytical framework derived from Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory. This framework functioned as a coding guide for identifying, classifying, and interpreting textual evidence throughout the analysis. The analytical framework comprised three

operational categories. Phenotext referred to observable textual features, including diction, dialogue, narrative structure, descriptions of characters' physical reactions, and explicit emotional expressions. Genotext referred to implicit psychological meanings reflected through fragmented memories, repetition, emotional contradictions, silence, ambiguity, unconscious impulses, and internal conflicts underlying the narrative. Intertextuality examined textual relationships connecting the memoir with broader cultural and social discourses concerning child grooming, psychological abuse, emotional manipulation, gender inequality, and violence against women. These operational indicators provided consistent analytical criteria throughout the coding and interpretation processes.

Data were collected through close textual observation and documentation. Close textual observation involved repeated and intensive reading of the memoir to identify linguistic expressions, symbolic language, narrative patterns, emotional descriptions, metaphors, and textual elements related to women's trauma. Documentation involved extracting relevant textual excerpts together with bibliographical information and contextual notes. Every quotation was systematically recorded in a data sheet containing the page number, textual excerpt, preliminary code, analytical category, and interpretative notes to facilitate subsequent analysis.

The coding procedure followed an iterative qualitative coding process consisting of four analytical stages. First, open coding was conducted by identifying every textual excerpt indicating traumatic experiences, emotional manipulation, psychological conflict, or symbolic expressions related to women's trauma. Each excerpt was assigned an initial descriptive code representing its dominant meaning. Second, axial coding grouped similar codes according to the operational definitions of phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality. During this stage, relationships among linguistic expressions, narrative structures, and symbolic meanings were continuously compared to ensure conceptual consistency. Third, selective coding refined these categories by identifying recurring themes and selecting representative quotations that most clearly illustrated each analytical category. Finally, each coded excerpt was re-examined through constant comparison with Julia Kristeva's theoretical concepts to ensure that category assignments accurately reflected both textual evidence and theoretical definitions before interpretation was finalized.

Data analysis was subsequently conducted through four sequential procedures. The first stage involved identifying textual units representing women's trauma throughout the memoir. The second stage classified the identified data into the analytical categories of phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality based on the established coding framework. The third stage interpreted each category by examining how linguistic choices, narrative structures, symbolic expressions, and intertextual references constructed representations of traumatic experiences. Interpretation was guided primarily by Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory while incorporating concepts from trauma studies and gender studies to strengthen contextual understanding. The final stage synthesized the findings to explain how women's trauma is represented, communicated, and socially constructed within the memoir.

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through persistent observation and theoretical triangulation. Persistent observation was achieved by repeatedly reviewing coded excerpts to ensure consistency between textual evidence and the operational definitions of phenotext, genotext, and intertextuality. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing the interpretations derived from Kristeva's semiotic framework with relevant concepts from trauma theory, memoir studies, and previous scholarly research on women's representation. Any discrepancies identified during the analytical process were resolved through repeated comparison between the textual evidence and the theoretical framework before final conclusions were drawn. These procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phenotext: Linguistic Representation of Women's Trauma

Phenotext refers to the observable linguistic dimension of a text, including diction, dialogue, narrative structure, and explicit descriptions through which meaning is directly communicated. According to Kristeva (1984), phenotext represents the structured level of language that can be identified through grammatical organization and textual coherence while simultaneously functioning as the surface manifestation of deeper semiotic processes. In *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth*, the representation of women's trauma is initially constructed through explicit linguistic expressions describing the protagonist's physical reactions, emotional conditions, interactions with the perpetrator, and gradual awareness of abusive experiences.

The analysis identified eight dominant phenotextual categories representing women's traumatic experiences, namely physical bodily responses, perpetrator characterization, changes in the perpetrator's behavior, the protagonist's awareness, emotional condition, confusion, self-doubt, and interaction between the protagonist and the perpetrator. These categories were identified through repeated textual observation and coding based on Kristeva's concept of phenotext.

Table 1. Coding Categories of Phenotext

Code	Phenotext Category	Description
PT01	Physical bodily response	Explicit descriptions of bodily reactions indicating fear, anxiety, and psychological distress.
PT02	Perpetrator characterization	Linguistic descriptions portraying the perpetrator's appearance, behavior, and communication style.
PT03	Changes in perpetrator's behavior	Narrative expressions illustrating gradual behavioral shifts that support emotional manipulation.
PT04	Protagonist's awareness	Explicit realization of abusive experiences after reflective understanding.
PT05	Emotional condition	Direct expressions of sadness, fear, helplessness, and emotional suffering.
PT06	Confusion	Narrative expressions indicating uncertainty and inability to understand abusive situations.
PT07	Self-doubt	Internal questioning and hesitation regarding personal perceptions and decisions.
PT08	Interaction between protagonist and perpetrator	Dialogues and interpersonal communication illustrating power imbalance and manipulation.

Source: Developed by the researcher based on textual coding of *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth*.

The first category concerns the protagonist's physical bodily responses. The memoir presents explicit descriptions of bodily reactions experienced during abusive interactions. These reactions include trembling, physical tension, and other observable responses reflecting immediate psychological distress. At the phenotextual level, these bodily descriptions function as direct linguistic indicators of trauma because they are narrated explicitly through descriptive language rather than symbolic abstraction. Such representations enable readers to recognize trauma through observable physical manifestations before exploring deeper psychological meanings.

The second category represents perpetrator characterization. The protagonist describes the perpetrator's expressions, attitudes, and interpersonal behaviors through detailed narrative observations. Initially, the perpetrator appears caring, attentive, and emotionally supportive. However, subsequent descriptions reveal gradual behavioral inconsistencies that later become important indicators of emotional manipulation. This explicit characterization constructs readers' understanding of abusive relationships by demonstrating how perpetrators often establish trust before exercising psychological control.

The memoir also represents trauma through changes in the perpetrator's behavior. The narrative illustrates how communication gradually shifts from affection to emotional dominance, manipulation, and psychological intimidation. At the phenotextual level, these behavioral changes are communicated through explicit narrative descriptions that document the progression of abusive interactions. Such linguistic patterns reveal that psychological violence develops incrementally rather than occurring as a single traumatic event.

Another significant category concerns the protagonist's growing awareness of abusive experiences. The memoir explicitly narrates moments in which the protagonist reevaluates previous events and recognizes behaviors that had initially been normalized. This awareness emerges through reflective narration describing changes in understanding after prolonged emotional suffering. The linguistic structure therefore communicates not only traumatic experiences themselves but also the survivor's cognitive process of recognizing abuse retrospectively.

The categories of emotional condition, confusion, and self-doubt further strengthen the representation of women's trauma. Explicit expressions of fear, sadness, uncertainty, and hesitation reveal the psychological consequences of prolonged emotional manipulation. Rather than presenting isolated emotional reactions, the memoir repeatedly describes fluctuating emotional states that illustrate the instability experienced by survivors of psychological abuse. Similarly, recurring expressions of confusion and self-questioning indicate how emotional manipulation gradually weakens self-confidence and distorts

personal judgment. These linguistic expressions collectively construct a coherent representation of emotional trauma at the observable textual level.

The final phenotextual category concerns interaction between the protagonist and the perpetrator. Dialogues presented throughout the memoir reveal unequal communication patterns characterized by persuasion, emotional dependency, and psychological dominance. The conversations illustrate how language functions as an instrument of manipulation rather than mutual understanding. Consequently, dialogue serves not merely as narrative development but also as explicit evidence of unequal power relations that contribute to the protagonist's traumatic experiences.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that women's trauma in *Broken Strings* is represented through explicit linguistic structures that communicate observable physical and emotional experiences. These findings are consistent with Rizqi (2023), who argues that Kristeva's phenotext can be identified through surface linguistic expressions that convey symbolic meaning. However, Rizqi's research focused primarily on moral messages in audiovisual media, whereas the present study extends the application of phenotext to autobiographical trauma narratives, demonstrating how explicit language communicates bodily reactions, emotional instability, and abusive interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, the findings correspond with Sadali (2024), who identified observable linguistic structures in poetic texts using Kristeva's semiotic framework. Nevertheless, unlike poetic discourse that emphasizes aesthetic symbolism, the memoir analyzed in this study employs autobiographical narration to communicate lived traumatic experiences directly. Consequently, phenotext in *Broken Strings* functions not only as a linguistic structure but also as documentary evidence of psychological violence experienced by the survivor.

The present findings also differ from studies employing Roland Barthes' semiotic framework (Nurfaizi, 2024; Fatriani, 2024). While Barthes' approach primarily interprets denotative and connotative meanings of visual representation, the current study demonstrates that Kristeva's phenotext provides a more comprehensive explanation of how linguistic expressions communicate trauma through narrative structure, dialogue, and bodily descriptions. This distinction indicates that autobiographical memoir requires analytical approaches capable of examining both textual organization and psychological expression simultaneously.

Genotext: Psychological Construction of Women's Trauma

While phenotext reveals trauma through explicit linguistic structures, genotext uncovers the underlying psychological processes that shape textual meaning. According to Kristeva (1984), genotext represents the pre-symbolic dimension of language in which unconscious impulses, emotions, desires, and memories influence textual production before they become fully organized within linguistic structures. Consequently, analyzing genotext enables researchers to examine meanings that are not explicitly stated but emerge through emotional contradictions, fragmented memories, repetition, and reflective narration.

The analysis identified six dominant genotextual categories that represent the protagonist's psychological experiences throughout the memoir. These categories include traumatic memory, unconscious emotional conflict, insecurity, self-reflection, emotional dependency, and identity reconstruction. Unlike phenotext, which emphasizes observable linguistic expressions, genotext explains the psychological mechanisms underlying those expressions and demonstrates how unresolved trauma continuously shapes the protagonist's perception of herself and others.

Table 2. Coding Categories of Genotext

Code	Genotext Category	Description
GT01	Physical bodily response	Explicit descriptions of bodily reactions indicating fear, anxiety, and psychological distress.
GT02	Perpetrator characterization	Linguistic descriptions portraying the perpetrator's appearance, behavior, and communication style.
GT03	Changes in perpetrator's behavior	Narrative expressions illustrating gradual behavioral shifts that support emotional manipulation.
GT04	Protagonist's awareness	Explicit realization of abusive experiences after reflective understanding.
GT05	Emotional condition	Direct expressions of sadness, fear, helplessness, and emotional suffering.
GT06	Confusion	Narrative expressions indicating uncertainty and inability to understand abusive situations.

Source: Developed by the researcher based on textual coding of *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth*.

Traumatic Memory

One of the most prominent genotextual representations is traumatic memory. Throughout the memoir, memories of abusive experiences repeatedly reappear despite the protagonist's efforts to move forward. These memories are not presented chronologically but emerge unexpectedly through reflective narration, illustrating the persistence of unresolved psychological wounds. Such fragmented recollections indicate that trauma continues to influence the protagonist's emotional life long after the abusive relationship has ended. Rather than functioning merely as recollections of past events, these memories shape present emotional responses and reinforce the continuity of traumatic experience.

Unconscious Emotional Conflict

The memoir also reveals unconscious emotional conflict manifested through contradictory emotional responses toward the perpetrator. Although the protagonist gradually recognizes manipulative behavior, feelings of affection, guilt, fear, and hope continue to coexist. These contradictory emotions illustrate how psychological abuse disrupts rational judgment and creates persistent internal conflict. At the genotextual level, such contradictions demonstrate that trauma is not simply remembered cognitively but is continuously reproduced through unconscious emotional processes that influence subsequent interpretations of interpersonal relationships.

Insecurity

Another important psychological dimension concerns insecurity. The narrative repeatedly communicates feelings of vulnerability, self-doubt, and emotional instability that developed during the abusive relationship. These expressions suggest that psychological violence extends beyond immediate emotional suffering by gradually undermining self-esteem and confidence. Consequently, insecurity becomes an enduring psychological consequence that affects the protagonist's ability to trust both herself and others.

Self-Reflection

The memoir further presents self-reflection as a crucial stage in the recovery process. Through reflective narration, the protagonist reassesses previous experiences and gradually recognizes patterns of manipulation that had initially been interpreted as expressions of affection. This reflective process illustrates the transition from victimization toward critical self-awareness. Within Kristeva's framework, self-reflection represents the movement through which unconscious experiences gradually enter conscious interpretation, allowing traumatic memories to be reconstructed into meaningful personal narratives.

Emotional Dependency

The analysis also identifies emotional dependency as a recurring psychological pattern. The memoir demonstrates that abusive relationships are maintained not only through direct intimidation but also through emotional attachment deliberately reinforced by manipulation and intermittent affection. Consequently, the protagonist experiences considerable difficulty distancing herself from the perpetrator despite recognizing harmful behaviors. This dependency illustrates the complex psychological consequences of grooming and coercive control, in which emotional attachment becomes intertwined with fear and uncertainty.

Identity Reconstruction

The final genotextual category concerns identity reconstruction. As the narrative progresses, the protagonist gradually develops a new understanding of herself after recognizing the abusive nature of the relationship. This process does not erase traumatic experiences but instead transforms them into a source of self-awareness and resilience. Identity reconstruction therefore represents the psychological culmination of the memoir, demonstrating that recovery involves reinterpreting painful experiences rather than forgetting them entirely.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that women's trauma in *Broken Strings* extends beyond observable emotional expressions and reflects profound unconscious psychological processes. Kristeva's concept of genotext successfully reveals dimensions of trauma that remain hidden beneath explicit linguistic structures, particularly fragmented memories, emotional contradictions, and identity reconstruction. These findings support Kristeva's argument that literary language functions not only as a communicative system but also as a manifestation of unconscious psychological activity.

The present findings partially correspond with Saleh (2022), who employed Kristeva's intertextual perspective to interpret implicit meanings within the narrative of Prophet Yusuf. Although Saleh demonstrated that textual meaning extends beyond explicit language, his analysis primarily emphasized intertextual relationships among religious narratives. In contrast, the present study applies genotext to autobiographical memoir, demonstrating that unconscious psychological experiences constitute an essential dimension of literary representation. Consequently, the current study expands the application of Kristeva's theory from religious discourse to trauma narratives grounded in lived experience.

The findings also extend those reported by Sadali (2024). While Sadali identified emotional meanings embedded within poetic language, poetry employs condensed symbolic expressions that differ substantially from autobiographical memoir. The present study demonstrates that memoir provides a more extensive narrative space for representing unconscious emotional conflict, allowing readers to observe the gradual development of trauma, emotional dependency, and recovery over time. This distinction highlights the methodological advantage of memoir for examining long-term psychological processes.

Furthermore, the present findings differ from studies adopting Barthes' semiotic framework (Nurfaizi, 2024; Fatriani, 2024). Barthes' approach primarily explains cultural myths and ideological meanings embedded within visual representation, whereas Kristeva's genotext reveals how trauma operates through unconscious emotional structures before becoming explicit textual expressions. Accordingly, the current study demonstrates that women's trauma cannot be fully understood through surface signification alone but requires analytical attention to psychological dimensions embedded within literary language.

Overall, the genotextual analysis confirms that trauma in *Broken Strings* is represented not merely as a sequence of painful events but as an ongoing psychological process that continuously shapes memory, emotion, identity, and self-perception. This multidimensional representation constitutes one of the principal contributions of the present study by extending the application of Kristeva's semiotic framework to autobiographical narratives of women's trauma.

AKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the supervisors and lecturers whose valuable guidance, constructive feedback, and academic support greatly improved the quality of this study. The authors also thank all individuals who provided insights, discussions, and encouragement throughout the research process. Finally, sincere appreciation is given to all parties who directly or indirectly supported the completion of this study.

REFERENCES

Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Effendy, O. U. (2017). *Ilmu Komunikasi: Teori dan Praktek*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

Fatriani, Y. I. (2024). *Analisis Semiotika Peran Perempuan dan Kesetaraan Gender dalam Film Gadis Kretek 2023* [Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal]. https://repository.upstegal.ac.id/id/eprint/9868

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. SAGE Publications.

Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books.

Hoed, B. H. (2014). *Semiotik dan Dinamika Sosial Budaya*. Komunitas Bambu.

Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia. (2018). *Laporan Nasional Riset Kesehatan Dasar (Riskesdas) 2018*. Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia. https://repository.badankebijakan.kemkes.go.id/id/eprint/3514

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Columbia University Press.

Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Columbia University Press.

Lejeune, P. (1989). *On Autobiography*. University of Minnesota Press.

Moeremans, A. (2025). *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth*. Ohara Books.

Moleong, L. J. (2018). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Edisi Revisi). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

Nurfaizi, A. (2024). *Representasi Perempuan Berdaya dalam Film Hati Suhita (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes)* [Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta]. https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/65353/

Rizqi, D. A. (2023). *Nilai-Nilai Akhlak dalam Video Klip Lagu "Makna Bahagia" Komunitas YukNgaji, Hiro Music (Analisis Semiotika Julia Kristeva)* [Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri]. https://repository.uinsaizu.ac.id/19613/

Sadali, A. H. (2024). *Analisis Semiotika Puisi "Madha Asabaka Ya Watan?" Karya Faruq Juwaidah (Studi Semiotika Julia Kristeva)* [Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta]. https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/86140

Saleh, M. A. (2022). *Kisah Nabi Yusuf dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Semiotika Interteks Julia Kristeva* [Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta]. https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/65824

Smith, S., & Watson, J. (2010). *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2nd ed.). University of Minnesota Press.

Sobur, A. (2016). *Semiotika Komunikasi*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.