

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Memoir is a form of nonfiction life writing that presents selected personal experiences through narrative. Memoir focuses on particular lived experiences and offers personal reflections on those experiences (Viswanathan, 2025). As a subcategory of narrative nonfiction, memoir combines factual experiences with literary storytelling while presenting events from the writer's subjective perspective (Grant, 2013). Consequently, memoir should not be understood merely as a record of personal history but as a literary form through which lived experiences are narrated and interpreted.

Recent scholarship has increasingly approached memoir as a literary text rather than simply a factual account of an author's life. Fabry (2025) defines memoirs as textual self-narrative products that focus on the narrative representation of autobiographically remembered experiences and emphasizes that they are carefully constructed literary artefacts. This perspective suggests that memoir does not merely document past events but constructs meaning through the selective processes of remembering, narrating, and organizing personal experiences. Therefore, memoir invites literary analysis not only of what is narrated but also of how those experiences are represented through narrative.

This understanding of memoir is closely related to the concept of life writing. According to Smith and Watson (2010), autobiographical narratives are self-referential narratives in which a narrating "I" refers to a narrated "I." In other words, the self who tells the story and the self who is represented within the story occupy different narrative positions. Autobiographical remembering is therefore not a simple reproduction of lived experience but a process through which memories are selected, interpreted, and narratively configured. Consequently, memoir should be read as a form of self-representation rather than as direct access to biographical reality.

The growing body of life-writing studies has also contributed to discussions of women's autobiographical narratives. In the Indonesian context, Priyatna (2021) argues that women's auto/biographical narratives participate in constructing feminine subjectivity and demonstrate how female public figures present and negotiate their identities through autobiographical writing. This perspective highlights autobiography and memoir as literary spaces where women's identities are represented through narrative rather than merely documented as factual life stories. Such discussions provide an important context for examining memoirs written by Indonesian women as literary texts that negotiate identity, gender, and family.

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One contemporary example is *Broken Strings* (2025), a memoir written by Indonesian actress and singer Aurélie Moeremans. As a memoir, *Broken Strings* positions Aurélie simultaneously as the real author and as the narrating subject who reconstructs memories of her younger self. This narrative characteristic makes the

memoir particularly significant for literary analysis because the experiences presented in the text are mediated through retrospective narration rather than functioning as transparent representations of the author's life. Accordingly, the "Aurelie" examined in this study refers to the self represented within the memoir rather than to the real individual outside the text.

Following its publication, *Broken Strings* attracted considerable public attention, particularly because readers associated the memoir with discussions of grooming, emotional abuse, and toxic relationships (BBC News Indonesia, 2026). Much of the public discussion has therefore focused on the memoir's social relevance and the real-life experiences behind the narrative. However, this study does not examine the memoir as evidence of a real-life case or as part of public debates surrounding grooming. Instead, it approaches *Broken Strings* as a literary text and investigates how the memoir constructs the representation of family through narrative.

Within literary studies, representation is understood not as a simple reflection of reality but as a process through which meaning is constructed (Hall, 1997). Consequently, the family portrayed in *Broken Strings* should not be treated as the author's actual family but as a textual representation shaped through narration, dialogue, reflection, and remembered experiences. Examining how family relationships are represented is therefore essential because representation determines how readers understand the meanings attached to parents, siblings, and domestic relationships within the memoir.

Simone de Beauvoir (2011) argues that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” emphasizing that womanhood is not an innate condition but a process of becoming shaped through social experiences. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir explains that although a girl initially understands herself as an autonomous individual during childhood, her understanding of herself gradually develops through her relationships with others, including her family. Therefore, the family becomes one of the earliest social spaces where meanings of womanhood and gender expectations are introduced, reinforced, and negotiated. This perspective provides a useful framework for examining how literary texts represent women’s understanding of themselves through lived and remembered experiences. In the context of this study, Beauvoir’s perspective is applied to examine how the protagonist’s experiences with her parents and other family members in *Broken Strings* contribute to the representation of female identity.

Although memoir has received increasing scholarly attention within life-writing studies, limited research has examined how contemporary Indonesian memoirs construct family relationships as literary representations through which female self-understanding is narratively produced. Existing studies on *Broken Strings* have primarily focused on psychological, social, and cultural issues rather than its literary construction. For instance, previous research has examined the memoir through the perspectives of communication psychology and semiotic analysis (Zuriati & Zuhriah, 2026), moral and social values in relation to literature learning (Astri et al., 2026), psychosocial trauma of the protagonist (Althaf & Ahmadi, 2026), and child grooming within the framework of gender-based violence (Eliansah et al., 2026). While these studies contribute to understanding various

dimensions represented in *Broken Strings*, they have not extensively explored how family relationships are constructed within the memoir as literary representations and how these representations relate to the protagonist's understanding of herself as a woman. Therefore, this study employs Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Simone de Beauvoir's concept of becoming within the framework of life writing to examine how family relationships are represented in *Broken Strings* and how these representations contribute to the construction of female identity.

1.2 Research Question(s)

1. How are Aurelie's relationships with her parents and other family members represented in the memoir *Broken Strings*?
2. How do Aurelie's experiences within her family shape the way she understands herself as a woman?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To analyze the representation of family relationships in the memoir *Broken Strings* (2025) by Aurelie Moeremans as depicted through narration, dialogues, and personal reflections in the text.
2. To examine how the represented family relationships contribute to the formation and development of Aurelie's female identity in the memoir by applying Simone de Beauvoir's concept of becoming.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to the analysis of a single literary work, namely the memoir *Broken Strings* (2025) by Aurélie Moeremans. This research examines the representation of family relationships constructed within the memoir, particularly the relationships between the narrated self and her parents as well as other family members. The analysis focuses on how these relationships are represented through narrative elements, including narration, dialogue, reflection, and remembered experiences, and how such representations contribute to the construction of female identity within the text. Therefore, this study does not examine the real-life family relationships of Aurélie Moeremans as the author, but rather analyzes the family relationships constructed through the memoir's narrative framework.

Regarding the theoretical framework, this study employs Stuart Hall's constructionist theory of representation and Simone de Beauvoir's concept of becoming within the framework of life-writing studies. The data consist of selected textual elements, including narrative passages, dialogues, and reflective accounts presented by the narrating I that relate to family relationships and the development of the narrated self. Accordingly, this research does not investigate the memoir as a psychological case study, a sociological account, or a factual representation of the author's personal experiences. Instead, it examines how meanings of family and female identity are produced through narrative construction within the literary text.

Furthermore, this study does not aim to generalize its findings to other memoirs, women's life writings, or broader social experiences. The conclusions are limited to the textual interpretation of *Broken Strings* as a contemporary memoir and are intended to provide an in-depth literary analysis of how family

representation contributes to the narrated self's understanding of herself as a woman.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute theoretically and academically to the field of English literature, particularly in the study of memoir as a literary form, life writing, representation, and female identity construction.

Theoretically, this research contributes to literary studies by examining memoir as a form of life writing in which personal experiences are not merely documented but constructed through narrative representation. By analyzing the representation of family relationships in *Broken Strings* (2025), this study highlights how familial experiences represented within the memoir function as a narrative framework through which meanings of family and female identity are produced. The findings of this study are expected to enrich discussions on memoir studies, particularly regarding the relationship between narrative construction, family representation, and the formation of female subjectivity.

Academically, this research is expected to serve as a reference for students and researchers interested in memoir studies, life writing, representation theory, and feminist literary studies. As a contemporary Indonesian memoir, *Broken Strings* provides an opportunity to explore how personal experiences are constructed through literary narratives and how family relationships contribute to the representation of female identity. Furthermore, this research may encourage further studies on memoirs as literary texts that negotiate memory, identity, gender expectations, and social experiences through narrative representation.

1.6 State of the Art

Recent scholarship has increasingly examined memoir as a form of life writing that constructs meaning through autobiographical narration rather than merely documenting personal experiences. Fabry (2025) conceptualizes memoir as a textual self-narrative and argues that memoirs are carefully constructed literary artefacts through which remembered experiences are narratively represented and negotiated. Similarly, Viswanathan (2025) describes memoir as a distinctive form of autobiographical writing that focuses on selected life experiences while offering personal reflections, emotions, and insights. These perspectives move beyond understanding memoir as factual documentation and instead emphasize its literary and narrative dimensions. Likewise, Smith and Watson (2010) argue that autobiographical narratives are self-referential because a narrating "I" represents a narrated "I," suggesting that memoir constructs identity through acts of remembering rather than reproducing biographical reality. Collectively, these studies establish memoir as an important object of literary inquiry within life-writing studies.

Within feminist literary studies, scholars have also explored autobiographical writing as a space in which women's identities are represented and negotiated. Priyatna (2021), for example, demonstrates how Indonesian female celebrities use auto/biographical narratives to construct feminine subjectivity and present particular versions of themselves to readers. Other studies have examined women's memoirs through perspectives of trauma, resilience, identity, and sociocultural transformation. Viswanathan (2025) conceptualizes memoir as a

narrative of resilience and identity reconstruction, while Lin (2025) explores intergenerational trauma and female subjectivity in diasporic memoirs. Meanwhile, Bohanek et al. (2025) discuss the significance of family storytelling in identity construction. Together, these studies highlight the importance of autobiographical narratives in representing women's experiences; however, their primary concern remains trauma, resilience, and identity rather than the literary construction of family representation within memoir.

Research on representation and feminist criticism has likewise contributed to discussions of gender, family, and cultural meaning. Using Stuart Hall's theory of representation, Pratama and Pitaloka (2025) examine how gendered meanings are constructed in cinematic narratives, whereas Simpson (2025) and Boyd and Wei (2023) investigate family structures and alternative forms of kinship from broader cultural and sociological perspectives. These studies demonstrate the usefulness of representation theory and feminist criticism for understanding gendered meanings. Nevertheless, they predominantly analyze films, media, and broader cultural texts rather than memoirs as forms of autobiographical life writing.

Since its publication, *Broken Strings* has also begun to attract scholarly attention from various disciplinary perspectives. Zuriati and Zuhriah (2026) examine the memoir through Roland Barthes' semiotics and psychological communication. Astri et al. (2026) focus on its moral and social values in relation to literature learning at the secondary-school level. Althaf and Ahmadi (2026) analyze the protagonist's psychosocial trauma using trauma psychology, while Eliansah et al. (2026) discuss child grooming through the framework of gender-

based violence. These studies demonstrate the growing academic interest in *Broken Strings*; however, they primarily approach the memoir as a psychological, educational, or social text rather than as a work of life writing whose meanings are produced through autobiographical narration and literary representation.

Therefore, although memoir studies, feminist literary criticism, and recent studies on *Broken Strings* have generated valuable insights, a significant research gap remains. Existing scholarship has not sufficiently examined how family is represented within the memoir as a narrative construction nor how such representation contributes to the protagonist's understanding of herself as a woman. Furthermore, no previous study has integrated Stuart Hall's constructionist theory of representation, Simone de Beauvoir's concept of becoming, and life-writing studies to analyze *Broken Strings*. By approaching the memoir as a work of life writing rather than as a transparent record of lived experience, this study seeks to explain how family relationships are narratively represented and how those representations contribute to the construction of female self-understanding.

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