Fractured Viewpoints: A Semiotics of Perspective in Aurélie Moeremans's Broken Strings

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Abstract

This article applies a semiotics of perspective to a literary reading of Aurélie Moeremans's Broken Strings, examining how meaning is generated through fragmented narration, shifting viewpoints, and disrupted coherence. Rather than treating perspective as a stable narrative position, the study conceptualises it as a semiotic process through which voice, focalization, and readerly orientation are continuously reconfigured. Drawing on contemporary semiotic theory and linguistic-anthropological accounts of indexicality, the analysis demonstrates how Broken Strings employs rupture, formal, syntactic, and thematic, as a structuring principle of signification. These breaks function not merely as stylistic devices but as semiotic operators that reposition the reader within the text's interpretive field. By foregrounding discontinuity and perspectival instability, the work challenges conventional narrative alignment and produces meaning through absence, tension, and deferred coherence. The fractured perspective becomes central to the signification of meaning within the semiotics process.

Keywords: *semiotics, perspective, narrative, fragmentation, indexicality*

INTRODUCTION

Narrative perspective has been a central concern of literary studies across diverse theoretical traditions, often foregrounded through categories such as focalization, narrative voice, and point of view. Classical narratology, epitomised in structural taxonomy, locates perspective in discrete narrative functions that position readers within a coherent interpretive frame (Mäkelä & Polvinen, 2018). However, recent developments in semiotics and narrative theory call for a more dynamic understanding of perspective, one that emphasises how interpretive positions are produced through signs and sign relations rather than simply encoded in narrative hierarchies. This study adopts such a stance, proposing a semiotics of perspective that reconceptualises viewpoint as a relational and processual condition of meaning-making in literary texts, a framework especially pertinent to Broken Strings by Aurélie Moeremans.

A semiotics of perspective moves beyond the assumption that perspective is reducible to fixed narrative categories (Natalia & Sonja, 2016). Instead, it treats perspective as constituted through enunciative signals, indexical markers, and interpretive orientations that emerge across the reading process. In recent semiotic scholarship, perspective and interpretation are foregrounded as inherently contextual and contingent: sign relations do not operate independently of the positions from which they are perceived; instead, they participate in an ongoing negotiation between text and interpreter (Keane, 2003; Leone, Keane, & Nakassis, 2025). This move aligns with broader semiotic efforts to integrate continental and linguistic-anthropological perspectives on enunciation, contextualization, and semiosis—as articulated in recent dialogues across semiotic traditions (Duranti, 2014) (Duranti & Mattina, 2022) (Leone et al., 2025).

Central to this orientation is an engagement with indexicality, a concept tracing back to Peirce's triadic model of signs and elaborated within linguistic anthropology as a condition that roots meaning in contingent, context-sensitive relations. Contemporary work by Constantine V. Nakassis emphasises the ambivalent nature of indexical relations,

oscillating between immediacy and mediation, thereby challenging simple representational models of meaning (Nakassis, 2023; Nakassis, 2025). Such ambivalence makes indexicality a productive analytic for understanding how perspective operates not as a stable vantage point but as a semiotic condition that mediates between presence and absence, coherence and rupture. In a literary context, attention to indexical and enunciative cues allows analysts to trace how perspective emerges through patterns of signification rather than through static narrative designations (Hogeweg et al., 2014).

Broken Strings embodies a narrative form that resists seamless coherence and challenges readers to navigate fragmentation, shifts in voice, and unresolved referential ties. These features invite a semiotic inquiry attentive to the conditions under which perspective emerges and transforms. The text's repeated disruptions: ellipses, abrupt vantage shifts, and narrative breaks, generate a field of interpretation in which meaning is not a final product but an ongoing negotiation (Gentens, 2019). Through a semiotics of perspective, such disruptions are not merely stylistic curiosities; they are semiotic operators that reconfigure the interpretive field and reposition readers with respect to the text's semantic dynamics.

This study argues that Broken Strings exemplifies a mode of literary signification in which fragmentation and perspectival instability are constitutive of meaning. These phenomena call for analytic tools that can account for how interpretive positions are foregrounded through the mutual interplay of textual cues and readerly engagement (Brooker, 2021). By treating perspective as a semiotic outcome rather than a narrative category, this article contributes to literary studies by offering a methodology that integrates semiotic theory with close reading practice. In doing so, it draws on recent developments in semiotics that emphasise not only the plurality of interpretive repertoires but also the relational infrastructures that sustain them. The article proceeds by outlining the theoretical foundations of a semiotics of perspective, situating this approach within contemporary semiotic debates on enunciation and indexicality. It then analyses Broken Strings, focusing on how perspectival disruption functions across narrative and enunciative junctures. The concluding section reflects on the broader implications of this approach for literary studies, suggesting that attention to perspective as a semiotic process enriches our understanding of texts characterised by fragmentation, ambiguity, and narrative heterogeneity.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in semiotic analysis and literary close reading. In line with humanities-based research traditions, methodology is understood not as a replicable procedure but as an analytic orientation toward meaning-making in texts (Chandler, 2025; Barthes, 1977). The approach examines how perspective operates as a semiotic process in Aurélie Moeremans's Broken Strings, with particular attention to narrative fragmentation, shifts in voice, and formal rupture as constitutive elements of signification.

Central to this methodology is a semiotics of perspective, which conceptualises perspective as a relational and processual condition that emerges through enunciation, indexical cues, and readerly orientation. Rather than treating perspective as a fixed narratological category, such as point of view or focalization (Genette, 1980; Bal, 1997), the study understands it as dynamically produced through sign relations that unfold during the act of reading. This orientation draws on contemporary semiotic theory that emphasises the contextual grounding of meaning and the role of indexicality in anchoring interpretation (Nakassis, 2025; Eco, 1979), while remaining attentive to literary concerns such as voice, narrative authority, and textual coherence (Mäkelä & Polvinen, 2018).

The primary analytic technique is close reading informed by semiotic principles. Textual passages are selected for their formal instability, including ellipses, narrative interruptions, abrupt shifts in perspective, and unresolved references. These moments are treated as semiotically significant sites where perspective becomes visible through its disruption. Rather than reconstructing a unified narrative logic, the analysis focuses on how such disruptions function as signs that reorganise interpretive conditions (Pelkey & Cobley, 2022; Culler, 2002).

The analysis proceeds in three interrelated stages. First, it identifies textual markers of perspective, including pronoun shifts, changes in narrative voice, temporal disjunctions, and deixis cues that signal the positions of the speaker and addressee. These markers are analysed relationally, emphasising how perspective is established, destabilised, or reconfigured across the text rather than localised in discrete narrative positions. Particular attention is paid to indexical elements, understood as signs that point to contextual relations rather than fixed meanings (Nakassis, 2025; Silverstein, 2003).

Second, the methodology examines fragmentation and discontinuity as semiotic operators. Following social and cultural semiotic approaches, breaks are treated not as absences of meaning but as productive sites where meaning is deferred, suspended, or redistributed (van Leeuwen, 2025; Lotman, 1990). Ellipses, silences, and narrative gaps are analysed as semiotic gaps that compel readers to renegotiate their interpretive stance. These gaps foreground the contingency of perspective and challenge expectations of narrative closure (Gentens, 2019).

Third, the methodology incorporates a reader-oriented dimension. Interpretation is understood as an active, situated practice shaped by textual cues rather than a passive decoding of meaning. The study does not posit an ideal reader but examines how Broken Strings inscribes interpretive demands through its formal strategies, inviting, frustrating, or redirecting readerly alignment. This approach aligns with contemporary semiotic perspectives that view meaning as emerging through interaction between text and interpreter (Chandler, 2025; Iser, 1978).

Throughout the analysis, theoretical concepts function as analytic tools rather than prescriptive frameworks. Semiotic terms such as sign, indexicality, enunciation, and perspective are mobilised to illuminate textual dynamics while remaining responsive to the specificity of the literary work. This non-reductive methodology does not aim to stabilise meaning but to trace how meaning emerges through instability. By foregrounding perspective as a semiotic process, the study positions fragmentation not as a formal deficiency but as a central condition of literary signification in Broken Strings (Brooker, 2021).

Conceptualising the Semiotics of Perspective

The semiotics of perspective examines how viewpoints, positions of enunciation, and interpretive frames shape meaning-making in social, cultural, and communicative contexts. Unlike classical semiotic inquiries, which often foreground static sign relations or universal structures, a semiotics of perspective drives attention to how orientation and standpoint influence the production and reception of signs, symbols, and interpretive schemas. At its core, this approach bridges longstanding semiotic traditions; both structuralist and post-structuralist, with contemporary concerns in linguistic anthropology, phenomenology, and media studies. Perspective, understood here as the relational position from which signs are interpreted, enacted, or inhabited, remains inseparable from semiotic activity itself. Semiotic processes, in this framing, are not neutral or objective: they are embedded in interpreters' embodied experiences and in the conventions that shape enunciative practices. Instead of viewing signs as fixed carriers of meaning, the semiotics of perspective proposes that meaning emerges through dynamic interactions between sign systems and

the orienting positions of participants within communicative fields. This resonates with recent dialogues in semiotics that stress enunciation, entextualisation, and embodiment as central elements in the meaning-making process (Nakassis & Padoan, 2025).

One productive avenue for operationalising a semiotics of perspective lies at the intersection of continental semiotics and linguistic anthropology. In a recent dialogue moderated by Constantine V. Nakassis, scholars explore how these traditions negotiate issues such as epistemology, interpretive status, and analytic methodology across divergent theoretical lineages; thus, implicitly acknowledging that perspective matters at every level of semiotic labour, from conceptual framing to ethnographic narration (Leone, Keane & Nakassis, 2025). Nakassis's own work on indexicality further contributes to this orientation. In his 2025 article, he reframes indexicality not simply as a lexical or linguistic feature but as a semiotic anchoring of presence, inference, and meaning that cannot be separated from the interpretive positions of participants in discourse. Such analysis underscores the inseparability of meaning and perspective, not as a subjective bias but as an intersubjective structural condition of semiotic systems (Nakassis, 2025).

Meanwhile, contemporary book publications in semiotics demonstrate the field's ongoing engagement with perspective, multimodality, and interdisciplinary reach. Chandler (2025) offers foundational concepts, including sign types, interpretive codes, and perspectival lenses, making it useful for situating perspective within broader semiotic inquiry. Multimodality and Time: A Social Semiotic Approach (van Leeuwen, 2025) extends this to examine how temporal and modal frames influence sign interpretation. On the Past, Present, and Future of Semioethics (Petrilli & Levesque, 2025) foregrounds ethical relations between sign producers and interpreters, a dimension that is also perspectival. Economics and Semiotics (Myrogiannis & Repapis, 2025) illustrates perspectival interplay between value systems and meaning structures, while Bloomsbury Semiotics Volume 4: Semiotic Movements (2022) contextualises semiotic practice across disciplinary movements that each entail distinct interpretive standpoints. These works suggest a vibrant, evolving field in which perspective is not peripheral but constitutive of semiotic systems. By integrating insights from structuralism, phenomenology, linguistic anthropology, and applied semiotics, a semiotics of perspective deepens our understanding of how meaning is produced, contested, and reconfigured across contexts where both signs and perspectives are in play.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings through four interrelated analytical focuses: relational symbols and fragmented perspectives; fragmentation as a structuring principle of perspective; silence, ellipsis, and the semiotics of absence; and perspective as a semiotic process.

Relational Symbols and Fragmented Perspective in *Broken Strings*

Symbols in *Broken Strings* do not function as stable or universally legible signs; instead, they operate as perspectival nodes whose meanings shift according to narrative position, enunciative context, and readerly orientation. From a semiotic standpoint, these symbols gain significance not through referential transparency but through their relational placement within the text's fractured structure. The name Angel, the monkey, the church, the legal marriage paper, and the Bible form a symbolic constellation that mediates between transcendence and materiality, authority and vulnerability, coherence and rupture.

The name Angel symbolises protection, transcendence, and moral guidance. However, within the perspectival economy of *Broken Strings*, the Angel is stripped of stable salvific authority. Rather than functioning only as a guarantor of meaning or comfort, the Angel operates as an ambivalent index of longing, pointing toward the possibility of transcendence

while simultaneously foregrounding its absence. Semiotically, the Angel becomes a sign of deferred assurance, visible only through the subject's fractured viewpoint. Its meaning is thus contingent on perspective: what might conventionally signify divine presence instead marks distance, loss, or an unreachable ideal.

"I named her Angel. It felt right." (p. 132)

Reflected in the set of Aurelie taking a company, the fraction showed the exercise of authority in labelling and using the word name Angel. From her perspective, she needs aid and divine protection in consideration of her painful days living in Bobby's family house. It is harsh criticism that living in a Christian family is compared with the circumstances of having no peace and a demand for protection from the divine. Despite the given name, from Bobby's perspective, the Angel is merely a meaningless name, as the monkey was more dominant in the interplay of meaning creation for him, and the family did not show interest either. The fractures indicate that the word Angel carries a deeper meaning for Aurelie, while losing significance for Bobby and his family.

In contrast, the monkey functions as a symbol of corporeality, mimicry, and unruly embodiment. Often culturally associated with imitation or mischief, the monkey in *Broken Strings* indexes a resistant material presence that destabilises solemn or transcendent frames. From a semiotics-of-perspective perspective, the monkey introduces a counterperspective to elevated symbols such as the angel or the church. It reorients meaning downward, toward the body, repetition, and imperfect gesture. The monkey's symbolic force lies in its capacity to expose the fragility of symbolic authority by imperfectly mirroring it, thereby unsettling the hierarchy between the sacred and the profane.

"Angel was never just a pet." "She was my best friend, the quiet mirror of my own soul, my only witness. [...] The bond between us was utterly extraordinary." (p.135)

Seeing the significance is vivid when positioning Aurelie as a self who grew up in a Catholic family, carrying the ideology of sacredness and divinity into her marriage. She was detached from the reality of the opposite imagination that being loved must be calming and produce joy. She experienced the contradiction, and the monkey serves as a connector to help her maintain the belief that God/Angel, the monkey, and the church represented by the pastor are in an interplay, shaping her life.

The church emerges as a symbol of institutionalised belief, collective memory, and moral order; nevertheless, rather than providing narrative or ethical grounding, the church in *Broken Strings* appears as an emptied or fractured structure, one that no longer guarantees coherence. Semiotic analysis reveals that the church operates less as a site of faith than as an index of inherited frameworks that no longer hold. Perspective here is crucial: the church's meaning shifts depending on whether it is approached as shelter, constraint, or residue. It becomes a perspectival sign of institutional authority whose symbolic promise has eroded. Similarly, a legal paper published on behalf symbolises rational order, legitimacy, and formal authority. As a material sign, legal documentation traditionally secures meaning through codification and permanence.

The letter had been issued, and once the church declared it valid, wasn't it final? Whether right or wrong, once it was sealed, there was no divorce. That was what I believed. (p. 150)

In *Broken Strings*, however, legal paper is positioned within a narrative of fragility and insufficiency. Semiotically, it indexes the tension between lived experience and institutional representation. From the reader's perspective, legal paper signifies an attempt to stabilise meaning through external validation, yet its presence also highlights the inadequacy of such

stabilisation. The symbol thus operates as a sign of enforced coherence that fails to account for subjective rupture. Events related to the meaning creation of the church, the pastor, and the people are fractured across different times: before the wedding of Aurelie and Bobby, during the ceremony, after the legal documents, clarification from Aurelie's mother, and the correction of the annulment letter release.

The Bible occupies a complex symbolic position at the intersection of sacred text, moral authority, and narrative tradition. Within the fractured semiotic field of *Broken Strings*, the Bible does not function as an unquestioned source of truth. Instead, it appears as a layered sign, simultaneously a book, a symbol, and a burden of interpretation. Perspective determines its meaning: whether it is read as guidance, constraint, or silent witness depends on the reader's alignment with the text's enunciative fractures. The Bible thus exemplifies how authoritative symbols lose fixity when subjected to perspectival instability.

> *That moment did more than humiliate me. It erased me. My blood surged. [...] he hit my head with the Bible. [...] 'If I hit you with the Bible, then the pain you feel is up to God.' He made it sacred. He made it holy. (p. 157)*

Taken together, these symbols do not form a closed symbolic system. Instead, they operate relationally, acquiring meaning through contrast, disruption, and readerly negotiation. A semiotics of perspective reveals that symbols in Broken Strings are not repositories of meaning but sites of interpretive struggle. Their significance emerges through fractured viewpoints that resist closure, compelling the reader to confront meaning as contingent, situated, and perpetually in process.

> *I was not sure he had read it. It seemed more like a costume, a prop to be seen with, a way to look spiritual in public. (p. 156)*

Fragmentation as a Structuring Principle of Perspective

A primary finding of this analysis is that *Broken Strings* organises perspective through fragmentation at the level of sentence, paragraph, and narrative progression. Fragmentation does not merely disrupt storytelling; it actively structures how perspective is produced and apprehended. The narrator's reflection that "Some sentences end before they know where they are going, and I let them" establishes a poetics of intentional incompletion. Here, the refusal of syntactic closure signals a perspectival stance grounded in contingency rather than mastery.

From a semiotic standpoint, fragmentation functions as a signifying constraint that shapes interpretive orientation. Meaning does not accumulate linearly but emerges across breaks that compel the reader to navigate discontinuity. Perspective, in this sense, is not given but enacted through the reader's negotiation of textual rupture. As Nakassis (2025) argues, indexical relations often derive their force from ambivalence rather than fixity; similarly, the broken sentence indexes a viewpoint that remains relational and unfinished. The text thus positions fragmentation as a condition of seeing and understanding, rather than as a mere stylistic effect.

Closely related to formal fragmentation is the instability of narrative voice. *Broken Strings* repeatedly unsettles the alignment between speaker, utterance, and subjectivity. When the narrator states, "I speak, but sometimes it sounds like someone else borrowing my mouth", the text foregrounds enunciative slippage as a core narrative dynamic. Voice becomes a site of mediation rather than expression, undermining assumptions of narrative transparency. This slippage reconfigures perspective from centred to distributed. Instead of anchoring meaning in a coherent narrating subject, the text disperses enunciative authority across shifting positions. Semiotic theory provides a productive lens here:

enunciation is not the act of a unified subject but a relational process involving textual cues, contextual inference, and readerly uptake (Leone et al., 2025). The instability of voice thus functions semiotically to suspend fixed perspective and to foreground interpretation as provisional and negotiated.

Silence, Ellipsis, and the Semiotics of Absence

Another significant finding concerns the role of silence and ellipsis as active semiotic elements. *Broken Strings* repeatedly deploys visual spacing, truncated passages, and narrative pauses that refuse articulation. The statement "What matters most refuses the sentence" crystallises this logic: meaning is located precisely where language falters. Rather than indicating the absence of meaning, these silences operate as semiotic gaps that intensify interpretive engagement. Following van Leeuwen's (2025) account of semiotic resources, absence itself becomes a mode of signification, structuring how readers orient themselves toward what cannot be fully represented. Silence thus functions perspectively, redirecting attention from what is said to the conditions under which saying becomes impossible. The reader is positioned not as an information decoder but as a participant inhabiting uncertainty. Across fragmentation, enunciative instability, and silence, *Broken Strings* consistently transfers interpretive responsibility to the reader. This repositioning is explicitly articulated when the narrator addresses the reader directly: "You will have to hold the pieces. I cannot do it alone". This appeal transforms perspective into a shared semiotic task rather than a narrative property. From a literary-semiotic perspective, this gesture foregrounds meaning as emergent through interaction. The reader is not guided toward resolution but invited into a field of partial signs and unresolved relations. Chandler (2025) emphasises that signs acquire meaning through interpretive frameworks; Broken Strings destabilises these frameworks, thereby exposing the labour of interpretation itself. Perspective becomes an experiential process—one that unfolds through engagement with fracture rather than coherence.

Perspective as Semiotic Process

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that *Broken Strings* enacts a semiotics of perspective in which meaning arises through instability, interruption, and relational positioning. Fragmentation organises how perspective is encountered; enunciative slippage disperses narrative authority; silence foregrounds the limits of articulation; and readerly engagement completes the semiotic circuit. This analysis extends literary studies by reframing perspective as a semiotic process rather than a narratological category. Rather than asking whose perspective is presented, the semiotics of perspective asks how perspective emerges through sign relations over time. In *Broken Strings*, brokenness is not only thematic but operational: it structures how meaning is produced, deferred, and shared. By situating perspective at the intersection of textual form and interpretive practice, this study demonstrates the value of semiotic approaches for contemporary literary analysis. Texts that resist narrative closure and stable viewpoint do not evade meaning; instead, they demand analytic frameworks attuned to relationality, contingency, and process. A semiotics of perspective offers such a framework, allowing literary criticism to account for meaning that unfolds not despite fracture, but because of it.

CONCLUSION

Broken Strings can be productively understood through a semiotics of perspective, in which meaning emerges not from narrative coherence or symbolic stability but from relational fracture, enunciative instability, and readerly engagement. Through close analysis of fragmentation, shifting voice, silence, and symbolic figures, the study demonstrates that perspective operates as a semiotic process rather than a fixed narrative position. Symbols

such as the *angel, monkey, church, legal paper,* and *Bible* do not function as closed signifiers but as perspectival nodes whose meanings are continually reconfigured through context and interpretation. By foregrounding how signs operate across rupture and uncertainty, this approach reframes fragmentation as a generative condition of literary meaning. The article thus contributes to contemporary literary studies by offering a framework that bridges semiotic theory and close reading, showing how texts like *Broken Strings* invite readers to inhabit perspective as an ongoing, interpretive event rather than a resolved point of view.

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