Introduction

I was first intrigued by the study of celebrity auto/biographies as I came across the very luxurious auto/biography of Krisdayanti (Endah, 2004), sold only in hardcover. This publication immediately set the trend of celebrity auto/biographies in Indonesia. What is interesting within the specific Indonesian celebrity culture is that the publication of auto/biographies is not merely attributed to their celebrity status and glamor but to the intellect as well. Manneke Budiman, as discussed by Wendyartaka (2005, p. 44), suggests that these celebrity practices started to develop in 1998 because writing [and still is] considered to be a prestigious undertaking.

The term “auto/biography” in this article refers to the narratives of self that trespass the normative format of autobiography—where the author is the autobiographical subject or the work written in the first-person narrator where the autobiographical subject refers to the author of the book (Eakin, 1989; Lejeunne, 1989; Marcus, 1994). The term “celebrities” used in this article refers to glamor celebrities, namely those who work in the entertainment industry or show business: singers, models, actors, and presenters (Marshall, 2001). The term “glamor” incorporates the myriad characteristics endowed to celebrities. As Jerslev (1996) contends, glamor refers to wealth and property, “but glamor is also more than just appearances; it is a sign of inner grace and qualifications such as self-confidence, self-respect and sophistication. . . Glamour, thus forms and expresses feminine strength” (p. 10). The study of celebrity is inevitable as celebrities have become quite ever present in practically all elements of our life (Mayer & Novak, 2019). This is a critical point that I am going to dwell further in this article.

The previous studies on Indonesian auto/biographies by Watson (1991, 1993, 2000) and Marching (2007) are essential in framing the context of Indonesian auto/biography studies. Watson (2000) examines auto/biographical works mostly on male subjects. Only two women make the list of Watson’s discussion. The first one is Kartini and the second one is Nh. Dini. Kartini is regarded to be the Indonesian pioneer in women emancipation. Kartini’s birthday is on April 21, and it is celebrated as “Hari Kartini” which is supposed to celebrate women’s emancipation. Debates about the celebration of her birthday as Indonesian women’s “emancipation day” are still ongoing. There is still arguably competing arguments as to why Kartini was elected to be the symbol of women’s emancipation in Indonesia. The fact is, even before Kartini started writing her letters talking about women’s emancipation, other women such as R.A. Lasmingrat (1843–1948, a Sundanese priyayi), Dewi Sartika (1884–1947, a Sundanese priyayi),
and Maria Walanda Maramis (1872–1924, a Manadonese woman) had started their own schools for girls. Similarly, other women such as Martina Martha Tiahahu (1800–1818, an Ambonese woman) and Tjoet Nyak Dien (1848–1908, an Acehnese woman) had already fought in the war against the Dutch along with their male counterparts long before her. See, for example, the argument by Pramodhawardhani (2004, p. 34). Nh. Dini, the other woman writer who made Watson’s list, was a prominent female writer whose novels are generally regarded as autobiographical and with a feminist stance.

In her book, Marching (2007) reviews different works on Indonesian autobiographies, biographies, and diaries. Most of the works examined focus on male auto/biographers. Interrogating the construction of femininities and sexuality in the New Order, Marching argues that the female auto/biographical subjects depicted are negotiating “between the self and social factors” (Marching, 2007, p. 231), and despite their overt spirit for liberation, they are aware and responsive to the conventional construct of femininities endorsed by the ruling regime of the New Order.

The New Order was established as a result of the failed coup by army officers led by Lt. Colonel Untung. Shortly after the coup was overcome, Soeharto took over the government and replaced the first President Soekarno whose “populist Guided Democracy, characterized by charismatic leadership of the President and intense ideological debates.” Soeharto’s administration was referred as New Order, and during its ruling, Indonesia “enjoyed remarkable economic growth” (Sen & Hill, 2000, p. 4). However, the cost of generating the economic growth was the repressed democracy as stability was regarded to be the key to achieving it. This stability was also imposed on private domains, including those of sexuality and gender roles, particularly women’s, as reflected in Panca Dharma Wanita, which will be addressed in the following chapter. The New Order came to an end in 1998, as the worst economic crisis hit Asia, and President Soeharto lost popular support (Sen & Hill, 2000).

Although Marching’s analysis of femininities, particularly women’s sexuality, is interesting, some elements of femininity are not a key focus, for example, the notions of beauty and motherhood, in which I am keenly interested in this study. Her choice of “political celebrities” shapes the critical political framework she works within, as distinct from a focus that draws on and understands feminist approaches to popular and celebrity culture to be vitally important to understanding contemporary femininities. Also, Marching’s work does not directly address the effects of globalizing in the construction of Indonesian femininities in the women’s auto/biographies selected. I argue that this is partially due to the New Order regime period that she takes as her context. However, this leaves a gap for further study on Indonesian femininities post the New Order regime, where celebrity culture and globalization processes, effects, and impacts are objects of study. After all, as Smith and Watson (2005) emphasize, “self-representations and acts of self-narrating are always located, historical, subjective, political, and embodied” (p. 357). Examination on auto/biographies, life-writing, or any life narratives must, therefore, consider the specific frames through which the self is [re] presented.

An abundant scholarship has been dedicated to the writing/reading of women’s auto/biography (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988; Cosslett et al., 2000; Folkenflik, 1993; Freedman et al., 1993; Gilmore, 1994; Jelinek, 1988; Lejeune, 1989; Smith & Watson, 1998; Stanley, 1992). However, works dealing primarily with celebrities’ auto/biography only developed later, although the combination of scholarly investigation of life-writing and celebrity studies has steadily become a vibrant and interesting cross-disciplinary scholarship in humanities (Mayer & Novak, 2019). In this case, Dugdale’s (1999, 2000) works have served as a significant ground. Examining different types of auto/biography, including diaries, “unauthorized autobiographies,” autobiographical works, and fans’ activities and views, Dugdale argues that celebrity auto/biographies are used to create both distance and proximity between celebrities and their fans. I have done varied studies on celebrity auto/biographies and/or auto/biographical practices within the Indonesian context. Focusing on the construction of celebrity femininity (Priyatna, 2016b, 2017), and more particularly on motherhood (Priyatna, 2016a, 2018; Priyatna et al., 2019a, 2019b), I argue that through different auto/biographical practices, Indonesian female celebrities are shown to display their negotiation among the different values, roles, and identities, often by traversing between their public and private spaces. As Mayer and Novak (2019) observe, “the notions of authenticity and intimacy; public and private selves; myth-making and revelation; cultural memory and identity politics” are the themes commonly found in the intersection of celebrities and life-writing (p. 150).

In this case, auto/biographies need to be considered as a performative act, even as a performance (Hinz, 1992), and within the specific context of celebrity auto/biography, the notion of a truthful private self may disappear, and authenticity is subsequently assigned to the public self (Gamson, 1994). It is through the act of presenting an aspect of one’s life that the story presented becomes authentic as far as the act of performance allows. Authenticity and inauthenticity become intermingled in the production of life and self. After all, celebrity culture relies on cultural values as well as the culture of “make-believe, artificiality and image control” (Franssen, 2019, p. 315) through different and often fluid ways of self-representation and auto/biographical practices such as “news” and gossip, as well as magazine features. As Schmitt (2018) contends, autobiography does not constitute only one form as it also embraces the “multifarious autobiographical practices within the wide-ranging genre or modality” (p. 2). Auto/biographies in book-length, however, provide a more stable representation, but they remain a site of struggle for the establishment of celebrity status.
Lyons (2014) discusses works by Brett Easton Ellis and James Ellroy, both male American authors. Lyons calls their works pseudo-autobiographies because they subvert what people generally expect in conventional autobiographies. The authors, Lyons argues, mix fact and fiction as a means to create a hyperreal autobiographical narrative in which they construct their own hyperreal identity to counter their public image. In his article, Lyons comments on pseudo-autobiography as an underexplored genre.

Celebrity auto/biography can also be thought of in terms of its intersectionality and the different discourses it crosses as Lee (2014) argues, following Bourdieu, that celebrity autobiography works in the ways that “it derives meaning and significance from the discourses of celebrity in circulation outside it and from the discourses and systems of celebrity it embodies and reproduces” (p. 87). By analyzing memoirs by and about modernist authors and artists published in the 1930s, Rosenquist (2016) elaborates the intricate nexus between the works of “high art” the authors produced and the celebrity gossips and anecdotes surrounding them. The corpus examined includes memoirs written by Gertrude Stein, Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis, Robert McAlmon, and Malcolm Cowley. In his article, Rosenquist also touches on how life-writing has journeyed from “table talk” to autobiography and to celebrity gossip that feeds public curiosity about the more personal representations and the rarely seen “behind-the-scene” realities of celebrities. These attributes contribute greatly to what can be categorized as celebrity auto/biographical narratives. Rosenquist argues that memoirs written in the 1930s by and about modernist authors and artists juxtapose “the high” and “the low” and the aesthetic and the popular, also manifested in celebrity culture.

In her book on media representations of footballers’ wives (popularly called wags), Jennifer Bullen (2014) devotes a chapter to discuss how wags present themselves in published auto/biographies. Citing Hammersley and Atkinson, who assert that “the commercial market for autobiographies has proliferated to include criminals, sport stars and entertainers” (p. 139), Bullen maintains that today even mere connection to a celebrity is enough for an auto/biography to be written. Bullen observes that wags have been represented by the media (newspapers, magazines, and television) as pathological figures that invoke disgust; some of these women have been motivated to write their own lives to repudiate the negative image created by the media. As part of her vast observation, Bullen highlights how “gossips” are recontextualized according to the authors’ priorities by raising the experiences they have gone through as the impacts of such gossips. In their auto/biographies, Bullen argues that the wags not only talk about the ups and downs of being living partners of footballers, but they also use their books to emphasize the work they do on their own and their identity.

As related to female celebrities, also at stake is their gendered performance. If gender is performative as Butler (1990, 1999, 2004) argues and the gendered self is fragmented rather than unified, plural rather than singular, and in process rather than complete, then as both Ussher (1997) and Butler maintain, gender is not a category that can be easily pinned down. In performing their gendered self, celebrities thus perform what could be argued as a double display of femininity. Furthermore, their auto/biographies problematize the notion of public/private, the authentic self, and the performed self. Smith and Watson (2005, p. 357) contend,

Autobiographical telling is performative; it enacts the “self” that it claims has given rise to the “I.” Furthermore, an “I” is neither unified nor stable; rather, it is split, fragmented, provisional, a sign with multiple referents. And those various identities presented by a narrator are directed to disparate addressees or audiences. They make diverse calls to identity that do not align neatly. Instead, the tensions and contradictions in representing an “I” to various audiences, for various occasions, by various means, produce gaps, fissures, and boundary trouble within the narrative.

Rather than presenting the self that is one and united, integrated and complete, auto/biography always presents the “I” that is fragmented and is always in process. Looking into various auto/biographical features of female celebrities in Indonesian women magazines, I have argued elsewhere that the fragmented representations also imply coherence to some extent to authorize the referential self-being [re]presented (Priyatna, 2017).

Auto/biography of celebrities or what Dyer (1986) terms as “star [auto]biographies” is referred to in this study as “celebrity auto/biographies.” Celebrity auto/biographies constitute not only a narrative of celebrities’ celebrated lives but, more importantly, the representation of their public persona in the light of their lives in the private realm. This particular space has been a significant part of Hollywood culture. As Bennett and Redmond (2014) assert, discussing celebrities concerns “a question of visibility, of recognition, and of placing the issue of growth within the complex power games that are played out in every facet of everyday life, including academia” (p. 3).

For celebrity scholars, raising celebrities’ issues is a matter of bringing into the surface what is often pushed aside as unimportant and trivial. Other scholars, such as Yulianto (2008), argue that talking about celebrities’ lives or watching gossip shows is a sign of women as cultural dupes. However, the increasing presence of celebrities in popular culture proves that there is a pressing issue in discussing celebrities’ lives, explicitly as they get documented and presented as auto/biographies. Their lives become a substantial part of our lives. Yet, as DeAngelis and Desjardins (2017) contend, celebrity auto/biographies have not garnered that much attention within the scholarship of celebrity studies, “even as it serves as the main vehicle of scholarly and popular knowledge of celebrities” (p. 489).
The publication of celebrity auto/biography has been tremendous, as we can observe through what is available at the most popular online bookshop www.amazon.com. The search for “star autobiography” came back with more than 20,000 results, whereas the search for “star biography” came back with more than 50,000 results (as per June 27, 2021). The numbers show that the interest in these celebrities’ life is immense. These numbers include the different auto/biographies written on the same celebrities.

The choice of the auto/biographies is intended to diversely represent female celebrities in terms of their age, their marital status, their gender and sexuality, and generally their different personal, professional struggles and how these aspects of their lives get translated into the representation of “their authentic self.” As McCooey (2004), following Turner, writes, “celebrity culture is one in which the personal and the intimate are fetishized, and in which commodification of identity is consistent with, and in the service of, wholesale commodity culture” (p. 2). The five auto/biographies that I examine reflect a typical normative auto/biography that follows the bildungsroman plot (Stanley, 1992). All five celebrities come from a humble beginning. They faced difficulties and hindrances, and finally overcame the problems and emerged successful—and wealthy (Stanley, 1992). This article discusses auto/biographies of Indonesian female celebrities to elaborate on the complex and complicated performance of femininities in their auto/biographies.

The Study

In this article, I examine auto/biographies of five Indonesian female celebrities, namely, Krisdayanti, Yuni Shara, Lenny Marlina, Dorce Gamalama, and Tiara Lestari, as follows: Si Lenny dari Ciateul: Otobiografi Lenny Marlina (Saïd et al., 2004), Seribu Satu KD (Endah, 2004), Aku Perempuan (Gamalama & Gunawan, 2005), Tiara Lestari Uncut Story: Playboy, Ibunda dan Khalifah (Lestari & Ariestanty, 2007), and Yuni Shara: 35 Cangkir Kopi (Geraldine & Triadi, 2007).

Krisdayanti is often regarded as Indonesian “Diva,” referring to her long successful career as a singer. She is also known as a model and an actress. To a lesser extent, Krisdayanti’s elder sister, Yuni Shara, is also a prominent singer. Another prominent figure discussed in this article is Lenny Marlina, who was a successful and prolific actress in her heyday in the 1970s. Lenny Marlina started out as a participant in beauty pageants before her career as an actress and model flourished. At the time her auto/biography was published, she was married for the second time to a national politician. As described in her auto/biography, she quit her entertainment career to function entirely as a wife to her politician husband, which renders a full-time job. Dorce Gamalama is a male-to-female transgender. She is a singer and comedian, a divorcée, and a mother to four children. Tiara Lestari used to work as a nude model whose pose in Playboy published in Spain caused a stir in Indonesia. As having been argued elsewhere, Tiara Lestari’s auto/biography is arguably her strategy for damage control and image fixing. More importantly, it was an announcement to the world how she had been transformed back to the “right path” (Priyatna, 2018). In this context, the article argues that celebrity auto/biographies help establish their celebrity status through their exemplary lives that also acknowledges the complexity of the cultural intertwines that constitute their specific forms of femininity.

Maneuvering Success: Celebrity Narratives as Bildungsroman

Liz Stanley (1992) argues that the prototype of auto/biography presents the life and the subject as exemplary, which transcends obstacles and hindrances or transforms “trouble to triumphs” (p. 11). However, there has been criticism against celebrity auto/biography for its “predictable and clichéd narratives of success and failure and has been dismissed as a far too primitive version of the Bildung narrative” (Gäcs, 2014). All auto/biographies in this study seem to highlight the ability of the five selected celebrities to survive the hardship and difficulties and to emerge as a successful person. Furthermore, the emphasis on success signifies their individuality and difference from others.

All five celebrities—Lenny Marlina, Krisdayanti, Yuni Shara, Tiara Lestari, and Dorce Gamalama—include the story of their humble beginnings. They all belonged to a lower-middle-class with rather impoverished childhood, and in some cases, raised in non-normative family structures. Lenny Marlina comes from a big and supporting family, albeit in borderline poor. Krisdayanti and Yuni Shara were brought up by their single mother, who worked in a beauty salon and did not make much although they enjoyed some treat, such as cheese, now and then. Tiara Lestari comes from a poor family of farmers in a village in Central Java. She was actually born in a cowshed next to her grandfather’s house. Like the other four, Dorce also had a difficult beginning. Her mother died when she was just 3 months, followed by her father 9 months later. Dorce was taken care of by her grandmother, who took her from Padang in Sumatra to live with her aunt in a crowded and poor area in Jakarta where Dorce lived in poverty and was also abused and bullied by her elder cousin. Things got complicated for her as her grandmother passed away, leaving him without a genuine carer, and as she began to be aware of her gender ambiguity. How Dorce overcame her gender ambiguity and challenges has been discussed elsewhere (Priyatna, 2016a), but as any bildungsroman narrative, Dorce overbore all the difficulties and challenges. She became a successful entertainer and a woman, and to complete her victory and mostly her womanhood, she describes herself as a happy and proud mother.

In auto/biographies, women are “always placed inside ideologies of gender. But she simultaneously occupies an ‘outsider’ position, placed on the margins of culture”
Failure in marriage is also depicted to be a critical impetus in Yuni Shara’s auto/biography. Despite her early financial struggle during her childhood, her failed first marriage proves to be a forceful point that would later define her success, which implies not only her career but also her personal struggle. Focusing heavily on day to day description of her personal life, the auto/biography unavoidably portrays her journey to success more in overcoming her personal challenges and problems. In this case, the bildungsroman chronicles Yuni Shara’s overcoming her first failed and abusive marriage. Like Lenny Marlina’s depiction of her first marriage, in Yuni Shara’s auto/biography there is a clear reference to the husband’s failure to fulfill his normative obligation of being a breadwinner. By using Yuni’s mother’s point of view, the first husband is explicitly called out as “mosquito[s]” (Geraldine & Triadi, 2007). The auto/biography seems to depict her second marriage to be her prominent success that enables her to thrive as a person, as a woman, and, more importantly, as a wife and mother. Emphasis on this can be seen in the auto/biography part where she offers tips to happy marital relations that play around the ideas that somehow submit to and, at the same time, resist the normative construction of marital relationships.

Given the constant insistence on women’s normative roles, balancing the depiction of success with portrayals of their domestic duties as wives, mothers, and even a daughter is closely observed in all auto/biographies. Speaking from their position as women, some vulnerability, even failures, can be displayed to contextualize their success. The portrayal of failure thus has multiple functions in the selected celebrity auto/biographies. One is to establish a balance of celebrities’ success so that they will emerge grounded and unthreatening. Depiction of failures also contributes to establishing celebrities’ image as “ordinary” (Dyer, 2001; Redmond, 2006). The failures presented also help build the relatable traits of the celebrities, while at the same time the narrative of failure works to heighten the narrative of success. The delineation of failures alongside success also serves as a reminder of celebrity culture’s ephemeral nature. In celebrity culture, success is not eternal, and it is always overshadowed by potential failure. Moreover, their established celebrity status is always hanging on the thread where they need to balance between being ordinary and extraordinary, a success and a failure. For example, Tiara Lestari opens her auto/biography by acknowledging the difficult situation she found herself in as her nude pose got discovered. Her photograph in Spanish Playboy magazine caused a stir in Indonesia, where Muslim values are upheld. Despite the trouble, she is depicted to eventually emerge as a victor, transformed from “sensuality,” which refers to her sexual poses to “elegance,” which must be read as “transformed.” Lestari (2007, p.1) She writes,

My journey as a model has taken me to the cover of Playboy Magazine in a faraway land and right in the center of a national controversy. It plunged me into a depth of humility without
prejudice or guilt. It guides me to see through changes, places, and faces. Through it all, I understand that life itself is full of surprises that neither reason nor logic can comprehend. It certainly has been a journey filled with joy and turbulence. It is a journey from sensuality to elegance.

Tiaras Lestari’s auto/biography constitutes a form of public relation stunt for damage control, which is quite common in celebrity culture. As Janangelo (2010) writes, auto/biographies launched in a time of crisis “served as effective vehicles of recalling and renewing bonds with her audience and repairing the damage done to her reputation and career” (pp. 157–158). In many cases, such practice is also used to control any transgressive portrayal of celebrities to avoid any potential damage to reputation and public acceptance.

Following Gilmore (1994), I argue that Tiaras Lestari’s confession of her past experience can also be regarded as a form of “self-policing.” As I discuss elsewhere, her auto/biography shows her acknowledgment of and redemption for her sins. However, I am also arguing that in the act of confession, Tiaras Lestari is taking charge of herself. Rather than letting herself get reduced to being labeled as “a loose woman,” she acknowledges her “sin” of “sensuality” and reclaims her place in the society, which she calls “elegance.” Tiaras Lestari presents a compelling instance on how women are constantly under surveillance, more pertinently when it concerns women’s sexuality, but at the same time how she portrays herself as a subject that takes control of the situation and enforces her narrative to be articulated. In this sense, she has transgressed her unfortunate situation and even capitalizes it to establish her celebrity status using the means that have caused her tragic fall.

All five auto/biographies examined fall into the category of bildungsroman that paints celebrities as perseverant and aspiring, surviving poverty and various challenges to thrive finally. More significantly, they are delineated to have always aspiring, surviving poverty and various challenges to thrive finally. More significantly, they are delineated to have always had determination and strength, the attributes that have marked their distinction, through which their success has become possible.

**Relationality: Voices of the Fragmented Selves**

All auto/biographies are narrated in the first-person narrator “I,” establishing the narrative to be autobiographical despite it being written by people other than the celebrities themselves. However, the different auto/biographies constitute varied ways the auto/biographical subject is presented, which I argue contribute to the construction of femininity of the celebrities concerned.

The auto/biography of Lenny Marlina presents a compelling case. The title of the book, *Si Lenny dari Ciateul: Otobiografi Lenny Marlina* (Said et al., 2004), which literally means “Lenny from Ciateul: the Autobiography of Lenny Marlina,” I will refer onward as *Si Lenny*, may lead to the expectation that Lenny Marlina has written her own life. This expectation is disrupted as the title page verso page unapologetically shows the five authors’ list. However, her claim of “autobiography” is disturbed by the insertion of the names of the authors. The list refutes the authorship of Lenny Marlina and thus breaks the autobiographical pact of identicalness of the author/narrator/protagonist. Interestingly, even as it has broken the pact, it still strongly suggests that this book is the authorized auto/biography of Lenny Marlina as marked by her signature in the title: “The Autobiography of Lenny Marlina.”

The autobiographical performance goes further as Lenny Marlina claims back her “authorship” in the preface. In this piece, she writes about the impetus of auto/biography. She also reveals the writing process of the auto/biography, asserting her role as the author and the narrator, not just the mere subject of utterance. This claim to authorship shows the way performativity plays in this complexity of author/narrator/protagonist.

Second, looking into the performativity of authorship in the context of the five authors of her auto/biography, it can be argued that the book is written by five authors who perform as one author in a team. It already suggests the possibility of fragmentation and ruptures. To be able to write as one, the five authors have to refute their singularities as writers and perform in writing as one person supposedly having one stabilized voice and style in the project. Thus, this auto/biography has two performative narrative processes. First, Lenny Marlina performs as the author. Second, the authors perform as Lenny Marlina.

The narrative reflects fragmentation and it is partially shown through the distinctive features of multiple referentiality to the “I”/eye of the auto/biographies. This diverse referentiality also manifests in witness narrative, used to make the story seem factual (Bruner, 1993). Some chapters in Yuni Shara’s auto/biography are written from Yuni Shara’s point of view; some others are told from the points of view of her intimate others, including her mother, her husband, her father, her sister, her friends, her former teacher, and a self-proclaimed fan (who is also a celebrity of his own). There is even a fraction of narrative from the point of view of a Longan tree in the front yard of her childhood home in Batu, a small town in East Java. In some other narratives, Yuni refers to herself in third-person narrator, distancing herself from herself. While the perspectives vary, the coherent tones and linguistic stylization across the auto/biography suggest a single voice is actually at work, namely the voice of the authors that represent the “I.”

Yuni Shara (2007, p. 4) dedicates the first chapter of her auto/biography to her failed marriage and how the marriage has alienated her from herself and how she has subjected herself to the pain of the marriage because she feels she has nowhere to go:

I sometimes wonder why I stay motionless every time the pain rushes and smile instead when loneliness unsettles. “Yuni, why do you insist on sitting on the nail mat and not shifting from it?”
Yuni’s utterance marks the significance of personal relations and how she perceives herself, and subsequently how she wishes to portray herself. The depiction also implies her position in the normative culture that upholds marriage as sacred and positions the wife as secondary to the husband. In Indonesian culture, divorce is often regarded as shameful (Parker & Creese, 2016). This excerpt also shows how a multivoiced narrative works to describe the complexities of the auto/biographical subject. Here, Yuni Shara as “I” who seems to address the “you” the readers while at the same time talking to herself addressing herself as “Yuni.” In the latter, Yuni signals her fragmented construction of self, namely her consciousness of what she is doing and what she is supposed to be doing. The awareness that she has been made an object marks her transformation of becoming a subject.

In Yuni Shara’s auto/biography, Yuni Shara, the real person, cannot be smoothly represented by any narrative. She emerges out of the “chaotic” representations of herself through pictures, scraps of articles, and the poetic narrative of the narrator who focalizes different people in Yuni’s life. Whatever knowledge imparted by the narrator of the story is always partial, but at the same time, the partiality can also be considered as the reflection of the structure that constructs women to be always partially closed/covered. As Arswendo Atmowiloto (2007, pp. xv-xvi) remarks in the introduction to the auto/biography, perhaps this is the real women’s world—Yuni and Tamara are both women who, despite their differences in their openness, still feel the need to cover some parts. It must be typically women things, concealing or not revealing something because they do not feel comfortable doing so or are worried that they might hurt others.

I argue that the multiple limited points of view enable Yuni Shara to be present without really having to expose her voice. In other words, such narratives help to reveal and also to conceal. Yuni Shara is presented as fragmented, a partially knowable and known person. If this auto/biography is representative of women’s world, as Arswendo Atmowiloto argues in the introduction of the auto/biography, then the structure of women’s way of understanding and experiencing their lives is partially dependent on other people. In other words, the way a woman sees herself is through the way people see them and how people perceive their connection with others. Yuni Shara, the auto/biographical subject, is fragmented through the memory of others. At the same time, cohering these views signifies an attempt to produce a reasonably stable auto/biographical self of Yuni Shara despite its fragmentation.

In Tiara Lestari’s auto/biography, one chapter is written from the point of view of Tiara’s mother, using the first pronoun, “I,” making it auto/biographical in its own right. The chapter is called “Ita Rohani: Siapapun Tiara, dia tetap anak saya.” Ita Rohani is Tiara Lestari’s mother and the title reclaims her daughter, “Whoever Tiara is, she is still my daughter.” This part is made darkened in print to distinguish it from the “main auto/biography of Tiara Lestari” presented in plain white. The narrative told by Tiara Lestari’s mother provides the needed witness narrative about Tiara’s humble past when she was destitute. However, most remarkable about this narrative is the implied acceptance and recognition of Tiara’s past “sin” for being a nude model. The mother’s acceptance is critical in the Indonesian Muslim context, which believes that a mother’s blessing is the most crucial key to God’s grace. This part also marks Tiara’s return to the right path of Indonesian Muslim femininity.

Three auto/biographies—Seribu Satu KD, Yuni Shara, and Si Lenny—contain parts that accommodate stories from people close to the respective celebrities. In Lenny Marlina’s auto/biography, it is called “witness,” containing witness narrative from various people around her, notably her husband, children, stepchildren, relatives, and friends. This part also provides a glimpse of the past through retrospective narratives of the selected witnesses. Thes to the past through retrospective narratives of the selected witnesses. These narratives are not written in consistent enunciation. Some are written in the first-person narrator, some in the third-person. Although it can be bluntly argued that there is a careless writing process by the five authors in this regard, it can also help understand how Lenny Marlina, the auto/biographical subject, is narratively constructed as fragmented. In Seribu Satu KD, nearing the end of the auto/biographies, there are four pages, each containing a statement from four celebrities attributing Krisdayanti to her beauty (Jay Subijakto), her capacity to pose (Darwis Triadi, a photographer), her appeal to her audience (Melly Goeslaw, singer and songwriter), and her ability to influence people’s appearance (Iwan Tirta, designer). These statements contribute and emphasize the depiction having been imparted using Krisdayanti’s own voice.

Falling into the bildungsroman’s normative genre, all auto/biographies examined present all celebrities to display optimism, determination, independence, and various unique qualities to persevere and transgress their respective challenges and humble beginning. The portrayal of those traits marks their narratives of individuality and difference. However, as I have previously discussed, even in their act of asserting their distinction, they continue to maintain proximity and relations with others.

In her auto/biography Aku Perempuan (Gamalama & Gunawan, 2005), Dorce represents herself as different from “common” people, but also different from her transgender and transsexual group people. She writes that a lot of transgender pretend to be transgender only to earn money as sex workers (Gamalama & Gunawan, 2005). Interestingly, this brings Dorce’s work to the characteristics of those of male autobiographers who tend to glorify one’s difference signified as one’s excellence over others. At the same time, it continually implies the need to maintain relations with other people as a form of interdependence, which is supposedly
typical of women’s auto/biography. Dorce delineates her relationship with other women and her efforts to belong to women as a collective group. She recollects meeting the former President Megawati Sukarnoputri and claims it was highly influential in building her sense of womanhood. She writes, “performing in the presence of Ibu Mega is the performance that I can enjoy most. I feel comfortable. I don’t know, probably because we both have the same instincts, feelings, and hearts. Because we are both women” (Gamalama & Gunawan, 2005, p. 82). Her statement is worth noting in two ways. First, her proximity with the president implies her success. Second, it suggests her relationality and belonging to other women. In her specific case as a transgender, the acceptance of other women insinuates the acceptance of her womanhood.

I am proposing that while a woman auto/biographical subject is fragmented, the fragmentation is precisely what completes her. Through such narrative, femininity is presented as the different ways, roles, and identities within the contextualized culture and society. The autobiographical subject is depicted on “multiple stages simultaneously, calling to different recitations of identity. These multiple calls never align perfectly. Instead, they create spaces of gaps, ruptures, unstable boundaries, incursions, limits and their transgressions” (Smith, 1998, p. 110). More importantly, all auto/biographies imply the significance of relationality and connection as the formation of their celebrity femininity in the ways that do not always conform to the normative expectation and construct.

Performing the Feminine Subject: Celebrity as Role Models

As I have previously explained, in their auto/biographies, celebrities tend to portray their lives as exemplary, which entails them to be role models, particularly in the context of performing their femininity and womanhood. To a certain degree, all auto/biographies discussed offer advice and information on matters that are central in women’s celebrity life, relating to appearance, personal relations, and public and domestic roles, notably as a wife and a mother.

Following Bartky (1997) and Ussher (1997), who argue that femininity is a spectacle, I contend that if femininity is a performance, then it has to be acknowledged as “scripted” and intended to be put on stage. In this study, it is the performance staged through the narrative that makes the self, not the other way around. As Smith (1998) maintains, “autobiographical storytelling is always a performative occasion [that] produce[s] effects through reiteration” (p. 109). Furthermore, as practices, auto/biographies “are a complex meeting-ground between self-expressions which are the compelled results of audit and surveillance acts, an approach which might be expressed as a concern with ‘the exteriority project of audit’” (Stanley, 2000, pp. 44–45).

Using the notion of the panopticon as the framework, Bartky (1997, p. 132) maintains that women are disciplined in the same way that the prisoners are being subjected to constant surveillance. The panopticon effects result in women’s consciousness of being watched and monitored. Subsequently, women develop self-surveillance over their bodily performances and practices as culturally embedded. This is also reflected in the auto/biographies examined.

Although celebrities have a certain kind of freedom to traverse different boundaries, they are also limited in the way they bring their performative self in public, even within their private terrain and roles. Self-audit is part of their performativity and performance. The notion of performativity also brings into the surface the possibility of transgression and resistance. Butler affirms that in its performative character, gender identity promises “the possibility of contesting its reified status” (Butler, 1990, p. 271). In this case, while celebrities can present themselves in line with the normative, they also have the potential and capacity to ensue change, which I would argue to be the case where the celebrities examined in this article portray themselves in their respective auto/biography. After all, celebrity status also empowers their position as role models.

“Instructive features” appear in celebrity auto/biographies addressing different issues around the celebrities’ life. In Yuni Shara’s auto/biography, there is a chapter called “Water in the cup, Monday to Sunday (Tips to Loving a Husband ala Yuni),” where she puts forward her doctrines regarding sex, food, and relationship with others. There are 35 “tips” in this chapter. The number 35 comes as the auto/biography was published to celebrate Yuni Shara’s 35th birthday. The tips altogether suggest the need for the wife to observe their normative duty to serve the husband. At the same time, Yuni also insists on women taking care of herself first and foremost.

What is interesting about the tips put forward is the sense of humor that comes with most of them. For example, she writes as tip no 26, “Never curse (if you have to do it, do it only in your heart)” (Geraldine & Triadi, 2007, p. 86). I argue this is also a strategy to balance the authoritative voice in advising with a certain degree of humility and self-deprecation. In such a tip, the wisdom being imparted is not only about not cursing. The act of cursing is acknowledged as being potentially destructive, but at the same time, there is the recognition that even a good wife perhaps has the right to vent her anger. So cursing is allowed despite not being expressed out loud. Being able to contain emotion represents Yuni Shara’s Javanese cultural background and values in a wider scope. Javanese people hold up the philosophy of “mikul duwur mendem jero” which is teaching not to cause a scene or to disclose shame—in short, to maintain dignity by burying (mendem) deep (jero) whatever disgruntlement so as not to create a scene or shame. This is especially applied to women. So, Yuni shows how to be a woman of dignity and how to be a woman who observes cultural norms, preaches
it, and submits to it. However, her statement in bracket con-
tending that women can still curse, despite doing it secretly
and silently, resonates her feminist spirit of self-love. After
all, her first doctrine is that for women to say “I love you” to
ourselves before telling it to the husbands (Geraldine &
Triadi, 2007, p. 82).

Despite their somewhat covert articulation compared with
that of Yuni Shara’s, the doctrines on how to manage
relationships appear as a chapter in Tiara Lestari’s auto/
biography entitled “Trust and Its Rule of the Game” (Lestari
&Aristanty, 2007, p. 83). In this chapter, Tiara Lestari lays
out what she considers a good relationship and a good part-
ner as embodied by her [then] husband. Ironically, except
for Lenny Marlina’s, all marriages of the other three celebri-
dies depicted in the auto/biographies ended in divorce. Yuni
Shara divorced in 2008, Krisdayanti in 2009, and Tiara
Lestari in 2011.

A harmonious marital relationship is also depicted in
Lenny Marlina’s auto/biography, which again delivers mes-
gages and wisdom of how to maintain a healthy loving rela-
tionship. At the same time, Lenny furnishes the auto/
biography with a retrospective narrative of her previous
failed marriage.

As role models, the somewhat ideal feminine self in
celebrity culture is also projected through the notions of
commodity, commodification, and consumption. Women
consume products to perform or to enhance their femininity.
After all, “femininity is an artifice, and achievement”
(Bartky, 1997, p. 95). Lazar (2006) even argues that local
products are branded and marketed, bearing the global camp-
paign of the feminine as power or “power femininity.”
Having dismissed its political weight, such articulation
makes use of feminism in such a way that it might as well
sell feminism as a commodity, which Goldman (2011) aptly
labels “commodity feminism.” I find one aspect of celebrity
auto/biography that may not be found in other kinds of auto/
biography, namely the inclusion of advertisements that fea-
ture the auto/biographical subjects as the [role] models.

Krisdayanti’s auto/biography is an excellent example of
this direct use of advertisements in auto/biography to illus-
trate and heighten her celebrity status. The auto/biography is
densely populated with product placements that are both
explicit and covert, and are interlaced with the narrative.
Krisdayanti’s Seribu Satu KD is structured around advertise-
ments modeled by Krisdayanti, as well as various editorials
and features that further suggest the importance of the prod-
ucts on offer. As a whole, there are 14 commodities adver-
tised in this auto/biography; each fulfills one or two pages
of the auto/biography; two products appear in different parts
of the auto/biography.

The organizational structure suggests quite clearly that this
auto/biography draws on the need to actively create and pro-
duce femininity, with a focus on beauty, sexuality, and bodies.
Krisdayanti’s celebrity femininity relies heavily on images
(Mercedes Benz, Rumah Kertanegara, Octagon); appearance,
including beauty and body (Felice Jewelry, different design-
ers, Kenanga Cosmetics, Exoticon, Impressions); domestic
life (KIRIN, Gaga Star Mie, Marimas); public life and work
(MultiVision House); and sexuality (Hemaviton Tonic). This
is certainly not an absolute categorization because they are all
interconnected in a way that is typical in celebrity culture
where the private/public spheres, the local/global, and ordi-
nary/extraordinary are blurred.

A home appliance, KIRIN, advertisement appears in
Krisdayanti’s auto/biography in the form of auto/biogra-
phical narrative particularly describing the domestic side of
Krisdayanti (in opposition to the public one) as follows:

I am a practical housewife.

Even though I am busy, I am actually a housewife who is always
“anxious” to take care of the house. Choosing home appliances
is among other things that I think about. When our whole family
moved to a bigger house around Radio Dalam, I did a lot of
refurbishment of home appliances.

Because I have a more stylish kitchen, I also bought electronic
kitchen appliances that are more stylish. I chose KIRIN because
of the variation of the products and beautiful designs. I started
with an electric oven. Then the collection expanded to blender,
microwave, beauty cooker, and cookware. Even the whole
corners of the house are air-conditioned by KIRIN air
conditioner. It turned out that KIRIN is not only stylish. Time
has proven that its products are long-lasting and work well. So,
what is it that any housewife wishes for apart from “a friendly
range of helpers”? (Endah, 2004, p. 181)

This narrative contributes to the construct of her celebrity
femininity. It reinforces the possibility of advertisements
operating as a form of auto/biographical practice, presum-
ing celebrities’ status as role models. This advertisement
of homewares seems to expose Krisdayanti as a “real person”
behind the glamor that surrounds her as a celebrity, someone
that is “like any other housewife.” The term “practical” also
suggests her ordinariness as a housewife. Nevertheless, the
liberty to choose luxury home appliances and their exten-
sive use is obviously not a capacity that every housewife
has. Such a portrayal creates the image of her extraordi-
nary and status as a role model, creating the illusion of her
ability to traverse the different domains smoothly and
perfectly.

I have shown that in the five selected auto/biographies,
the celebrities establish their image as role models and their
lives as exemplary as such that they are entitled to give
advice and impart some wisdom on matters that are central in
women’s celebrity life, relating to appearance and personal
relations. Most importantly, they provide to their fanbase
their being role models pertaining to their domestic roles,
notably as a wife and as a mother.
Conclusion

The celebrity auto/biographies that I have discussed serve as very compelling cases of the complexity of feminine subjectivities. They delineate their road to success in a way that they acknowledge and recognize their success as the result of hard work but at the same time contextualize their success as part of the collective undertaking involving their significant others. These auto/biographies also bear the supposedly typical characteristic of women’s auto/biographies, especially in the delineation of relationships with others. The auto/biographies show that celebrities as feminine subjects are defined not only by their distinction from others but also by their proximity and relationship. The fragmented narratives and the myriad narrators show that celebrity femininity is constructed through fragments and ruptures around which the auto/biographical subjects have been shown to navigate.

Through a focus on the content and narrative structures of the selected auto/biographical texts, I have suggested that in these new forms, the “auto/biographical pact” and the authenticity of an auto/biography are negotiated in complex and innovative ways. While the voices of the auto/biographical subjects are fragmented due to the different voices, points of view, and different narrative techniques and strategies, the production and presentation of these different text elements have worked to create a coherent self-referential position for the celebrity. Despite the fragmented constructions and mixed texts in these auto/biographies, the auto/biographical subjects are ultimately authoritative in the auto/biography context. Narratives of transformation from being the impoverished or marginalized to their celebrity status are consistently used to establish authoritative narratives of transformation and success. In the auto/biographies examined, celebrity femininities are performed through blurred boundaries of public/private as well as global/local. These auto/biographical subjects overcome obstacles and move through space and time as they obtain celebrity status.

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