

# MONEY CONTESTATION: PROSTITUTION SNARE SALES PROMOTION GIRL IN INDAH HANACO'S THE CURSE OF BEAUTY

## KONTESTASI UANG: JERAT PROSTITUSI SALES PROMOTION GIRL DALAM NOVEL THE CURSE OF BEAUTY KARYA INDAH HANACO

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### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the phenomenon of money contestation that affects the life of the Sales Promotion Girl (SPG) represented in Indah Hanaco's *The Curse of Beauty*. This novel portrays SPG women who are forced to sell their bodies to get money because of economic pressures, demands for work, the environment, and broken home. Therefore, there are several issues discussed. First, the meaning of money contestation for the life of the SPG is represented by *The Curse of Beauty*. Second, how is the relationship between education and the life of the SPG represented by Hanaco. Third, how money influences women's oppression so that it ensnares the SPG into the prostitution represented by this novel. This study uses descriptive qualitative data analysis methods. The data was taken from all the descriptions of the SPG body represented in Hanaco's novel. This research uses the theory of power and subject by Michael Foucault. The contestation of money is interpreted as a trap of capitalism which makes SPG experience an internal upheaval because they have to sell their bodies to get a lot of money that is not in accordance with their conscience. This novel also presents the struggle of an SPG to finance higher education which is expensive so it requires a lot of money to pay for education costs, by prostitution way. High lifestyle needs and hedonic work environments also trap the SPG so that it experiences oppression as represented by Hanaco.

**Keywords:** money contestation, sexuality, sales promotion girl, the curse of beauty

### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membongkar fenomena kontestasi uang yang mempengaruhi kehidupan Sales Promotion Girl (SPG) yang direpresentasikan dalam novel *The Curse of Beauty* karya Indah Hanaco. Novel ini memotret perempuan SPG yang terpaksa menjual tubuh untuk mendapat uang karena tekanan ekonomi, tuntutan pekerjaan, lingkungan, dan keretakan rumah tangga. Ada beberapa masalah yang dibahas dalam penelitian ini. Pertama, arti kontestasi uang bagi kehidupan SPG yang direpresentasikan oleh *The Curse of Beauty*. Kedua, bagaimana hubungan pendidikan dengan kehidupan SPG yang direpresentasikan oleh Hanaco. Ketiga, bagaimana representasi pengaruh uang terhadap opresi perempuan sehingga menjerat SPG ke dalam dunia prostitusi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis data deskriptif kualitatif. Data diambil dari semua deskriptif tentang tubuh SPG yang direpresentasikan dalam novel Hanaco. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori kuasa dan subjek Michael Foucault. Kontestasi uang dimaknai sebagai perangkap kapitalisme yang membuat SPG mengalami pergolakan batin karena harus menjual tubuh demi mendapat banyak uang yang tidak sesuai dengan nuraninya. Novel ini juga merepresentasikan perjuangan seorang SPG untuk membiayai pendidikan tinggi

yang mahal sehingga membutuhkan banyak uang untuk membayar biaya pendidikan, yaitu dengan jalan prostitusi. Kebutuhan gaya hidup yang tinggi dan lingkungan kerja yang hedonis juga menjebak SPG sehingga mengalami opresi sebagaimana direpresentasikan dalam *The Curse of Beauty*.

**Kata kunci:** kontestasi uang, seksualitas, sales promotion girl, the Curse of Beauty

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past up to now, sexuality is not only biologic-physic but also social interaction. Hence, the sexual relation is a reflection of social values, traditional laws, religions, big institutions and power relationships between men and women. Sex is the first thing that defines us as a human; men and women, including maturity. This aspect always influences somebody in the whole life; moreover, the human is tending to be pushed see himself from sex type. From many human attributes such as race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, and profession, the fundamental identity is sex (Hernandez LM, Blazer DG (Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Assessing Interactions Among Social, Behavioral, 2006). In short, sexuality can define us personally, socially, and morally. Sexual activity is often expressed and managed socially. Like food needs develop until etiquette and ritual, the expressing of sexuality is also arranged morality, taboo, ceremony, and social values system. Therefore, the conception of sexuality is always set up a family relationship, social and economic change, adjustment of social dynamics, political moment and resistance movement. Therefore, sexuality has always been an interesting and controversial theme to discuss (Putra, 2018).

Sometimes, talk of sexuality is wrapped up in religious arguments to be legitimate to discuss it. Discussion of sexuality is also covered by the arguments of cultural about

harmonious home life. Javanese culture is one example. This reality is reflected in the Javanese manuscript. For example, *Serat Centhini* composed by Paku Buwana V talked about Javanese sexuality. Then there are *Serat Gatholoco*, *Serat Panitisastra*, *Serat Wulang Putri*, and *Serat Wulang Estri* which talk a lot about sexuality issues. The contents of the text also talk a lot about the obligation of a woman to serve her husband (Susanto, 1992, pp. 38--44).

These texts illustrate that Javanese are very interested in the issue of sexuality. But, it cannot be discussed in public freely so that the manuscript becomes a medium to express. In addition, social sexuality is also controlled by the community. Weeks says, the society needs to control the erotic life of its people, what is defined as "sexuality" in its contents and implication is different from one people to the other people, or from the same people but in different the period of history thus, it needs to be controlled in order not to evoke the big problem of the social interactions (Suryakusuma, 2012, p.161).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a different approach to sexuality was begun to be done by modern society in Europe. Sigmund Freud uses medical science, mentality, and psychoanalysis to analyze the problems related to sexuality. It is also started to become a science. It is examined and formulated properly like the other sciences. The control of human sexuality is not only based on from divine reasons which happen in the Middle Ages but also begun to be founded

on scientific reasons of clinic health (Kali, 2013, p. 67). At least, in this era, it does not become the taboo again in a science discipline.

In postmodern society, sexuality is colored by all sort of a sexual phenomenon which contradicts to the ethics or social norms. One of the examples is the exploitation problems to sexual attraction together with human organs that have high sex appeal. This condition happens because of the representation of mass media. The logic of capitalism that creates the necessities through imaging creation using the advertising agencies against the ideology of the old capitalism (the small of the production cost should produce a big profit). At this point, mass media takes place an advertising and sex appeal as new capitalism.

Nevertheless, capitalism and politic become the actor of cultural transformation. The paradox behind the sexuality taboo is a culture that is used to get much financial advantage. Sexuality is shown up to the public. Sexuality desire jacks up the popularity of the product. From sexual desire production, women always become an object. Their body is considered to increase product selling. It is because of beauty discourse that constructs the ideal beauty of the body. Women body is constructed by the capitalist. The beauty of women is constructed as women who have white skin, are slim and have straight hair (Winarni, 2015). White skin women are symbols of purity, innocence, cleanliness, and flawlessness (Puspa, 2010).

Capitalism makes women body become an important tool in every social process and economic, to give erotic attraction of the products through mass media imaging. The body with its parts has been filled with cultural symbolism, public and private, positive and negative, politics and economic, sexual, moral, and controversial (Synnott, 2003, pp. 11--12). They have their body but do not have the power to control it. Women body is seen in the reproduction role of species biologics and it

closer to nature. The identification of women with the body is used as proof that women are not enough to think and the consequence is women is lower than men socially and politically.

In a patriarchal culture, women body is also consumed as the object of view, touch, men desire, and ideology. Commonly, women are consumed and perceived as the object, means the recipient of action/behavior. Beauvoir and Irigaray state we can play in the hegemony of this subject-object, but it is not easy to play, even though it is not impossible (Prabasmoro, 2007, p. 81). They are pressed to be sexual and asexual, seducer and virgin at the same time. They should not be desirous, moreover, show it in public. It is because they should be nice. They have to do their role properly. If they do the wrong role, it will be fatal. For example; in bed, their role is as the media to comply with the sexual desire. While for men, the desire is acceptable in public area even in the domestic area.

Foucault analyzes, sexuality always relates to the power system. It is a nucleus aspect of a human such as sex, identity, and gender, sexuality orientation, eroticism, pleasure, enjoyment, intimacy, and reproduction (Kali, 2013, p. 57). From this power system, sexuality discourse is formed. Before this system operating, sex stands alone that live on the subject. When the power relations move through the discourse strategy, then the discourse about sex which is entered into the power matrix becomes the sexuality. This process is called by Foucault as "*the way in which sex is put into discourse*" (Kali, 2013, p. 60).

Sex and sexuality is a construction; thus, sex and sexuality is not only a discourse of body and desire or biological needs but also a discourse of power. Kate Millet argues, a private thing is not really private. Further, sexual is politics. Sexual politics concerns socialization weather for men and women in

the categorization of character, role, and social position (Prabasmoro, 2007, p. 292). In the *Greco Roman* period, self-control to sexuality becomes the main character. In middle ages, sexuality problem becomes church authority. In the modern era, sexuality becomes country affairs to keep economic stability and politic. Therefore, it always becomes a pretense from the truth which is covered for the sake of certain importance.

However, capitalism and politics become actors of cultural change. The paradox that lies behind the cultural taboo of sexuality is used to gain many financial benefits. Sexuality is exposed to the public. Lust becomes the booster of the popularity of a product. In the production of lust, women are always the object. Their bodies are considered capable of increasing product sales. This is because the female body has been constructed by culture as an invader of lust.

The body with its parts has been filled with cultural symbolism, public and private, positive and negative, political and economic, social, moral, and controversial (Synnott, 2003, pp. 11--12). They have their body but do not have the power to control it. Women body is seen in the reproduction role of species biologics and it closer to nature. The identification of women with the body is used as proof that women are not enough to think and the consequence is women is lower than men socially and politically.

Women sexuality which is attached to their natural body is often opposed to men, then they are undertaken the binary opposition like feminine/masculine, inferior/superior, private/public, object/subject., passive/active, etc. where right side is seen as the positive and superior to men while left side is negative and inferior for women. Women sex is made into a myth as passive sex, not consistent, strange (pathologic), therefore it is not more than the sexuality object of men. It has been embedded in their mind that their sexual satisfaction

is located and depended on their role as the canister of the sexual satisfaction of men. Men like the conqueror, the predator are a normal thing to be sexual subject. It is different from women who are natural as the side that is conquered or sexual object.

This social reality is portrayed by Indah Hanaco as the writer of *The Curse of Beauty*. This is an Indonesian novel. Thus, this novel uses Indonesian language event though has English entitled. This novel tells about a woman who works as SPG because she is oppressed by life necessities. The main character is told from *broken home's* family. Mental burden influences her in daily life. Besides, the profession which should attract the consumer to buy the product that is offered, an SPG is demanded to have good looking. Attractive appearance needs capital. This condition makes her trapped to her side job, prostitution. It means that SPG's life is interesting. Therefore, the description of SPG's life that is written by the authors is interesting to be analyzed. The SPG in this story becomes a social identity. Supporting figures recognize the main character's social identity as an SPG. There are also other figures who recognize the social identity of the main character as a prostitute.

Women's life issues are discussed by Kurnianto (2016) in "Ketidakberdayaan Perempuan Atas Persoalan Kehidupan dalam Novel Garis Perempuan Karya Sanie B. Kuncoro". The article discusses the domestication of women so that the main character experiences subalternation. Gending and Ranting become figures who are forced to sell their virginity to pay off the debt of their parents. This female helplessness is similar to the SPG story discussed in this paper. Therefore, this study is important in this paper to give an idea of the sub-alternative of women in the novel narrative.

The story of the struggle of women in the dominance of patriarchal culture is also

explained by Dewi (2018). She explained that Tohari built a narrative of women's struggles to survive in a culture of marriage with age. She also explained that Toer built a narrative of resistance to patriarchal dominance, feudalism, and capitalism in the culture of underage marriage. Furthermore, the narrative that places women as important figures in literary works is explained by Hardiningtyas (2010), Kurniawati (2014), and Negari (2015). Their articles are important as an illustration of the female figure in literary work.

Then, to understand social, cultural, economic, and sexuality relations there are other writings that become references. The relationship between culture, religion, and female sexuality is explained by Parker (2009) Meanwhile, the phenomenon of sexuality and consumerism is explained by Katz & Marshall (2003). In addition, the writing describing the construction of beauty ideal discourse with the SPG was explained by Nurfaidah. Nurfaidah (2017) has analyzed the identity changes of the character in the novel because there is family dysfunction. It also explains the mobility class of the main character because of her job, i.e. SPG. Then, she trapped in prostitution. The main character also snares because of the beauty ideal discourse. Therefore, this paper purposes to show the form of the women oppression that is created by capitalism in this novel. Then, it tries to find the effect of women oppression in their life. Finally, it comes to snatch the innocence of SPG beauty and life as the way of sexual politics to the capitalism for subordinating SPG body. Because as Endraswara said the authors never create their story suddenly, they are always influenced by the environment which happens when they create it (Endraswara, 2013, p. 34)

## METHOD

The research is focused on analyzing the representation of the sexuality of SPG in the

novel "The Curse of Beauty". The design of the research is descriptive qualitative. Data are taken from all descriptive concerning SPG body appearance to understand the narrative meaning of the body. It applies the subject and power theory of Michael Foucault. Armstrong (2015) explains Foucault's opinion that "power-knowledge is effective in shaping the subjectivities of its subjects are the various forms of recidivism". Thus, the relation between power and knowledge always exist in everywhere, including literature works. It used to analyze the relation between power and the knowledge of sexuality discourse in *the Curse of Beauty*.

The analysis technique is begun by reading to know the content and the purpose of the author then continues with references reading which has relation to this paper. Then, the novel is analyzed by using the theory that is mentioned before. After finishing the analysis, it comes to the writing into a research paper.

Foucault says "the subject is either divided inside him or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the good boys. The human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification; he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex. Everybody is aware of such banal facts. But the fact that they're banal does not mean they don't exist. What we have to do with banal facts is to discover--or try to discover- specific and perhaps the original problem is connected with them. This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence;

and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to” (Foucault, 1982, p. 5).

This means the body does not have freedom. It is like a machine controlled by power. This phenomenon is called bio-power. In the development of capitalism, bio power is an essential element to growth reinforcement and obedience. Hence, the politic of the body is a way to discipline and control the body according to the interests of the ruler, who in this case are the capitalists. This theory is used to reveal the power of the capitalist to control the SPG’s body as like in *the Curse of Beauty*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Prostitution in History

Prostitution has a very long history. Lamijo says that prostitution in the archipelago had existed since the days of the kingdoms. Feudalism has the power to bring village girls to the satisfaction of the authorities. Girls also became part of the tribute to the king at that time (Lamijo, 2002). In addition, girls also became part of the Bhairawa Tantra ritual to increase the supernatural power of the king. In rural areas, there were girls who work as *ronggeng* who not only dance but also serve male sexual desires in fertility ritual wraps. They were indeed not prostitutes, but they are like merchandise that the owners of money and power are fighting over.

Lamijo (2002) states that the concept of unlimited king power was reflected in the number of concubines. The king and the regional rulers (small kings) had the power to take concubines and give them to other noble. Therefore, the position of women is like a commodity that is easy to sell and transfer. He also says that such a feudal system did not show prostitution as in the modern era, but the patriarchal power and appetite of men was enough to explain the existence of prostitution

which was covered by various kinds of cultural and religious discourse. A more open and organized form of prostitution can be traced since the Dutch colonial period.

Europeans who live in Java need women to vent their desires. Therefore, European society sought out indigenous women as concubines (Baay, 2010, pp. 1--10). Female slaves became commodities in concubines. During the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), this trading company implemented an anti-prostitution policy. However, the need for prostitution cannot be intercepted by company officials. Prostitution continued to grow and develop in ports, city centers, urban poor areas, and around military vehicles in Batavia (Jakarta). Prostitution spread rapidly to almost all areas of the city (Lamijo, 2006). The development of prostitution did not decrease after the VOC went bankrupt.

The Dutch East Indies government could not suppress the growth rate of prostitution. The existence of a brothel is likened to a canteen by van Haeften (Jaelani, 2013, p. 57). Brothels run by Chinese people are crowded with masher men. The prostitutes did not only come from the natives, but also Chinese, Japanese, and Indo (European-Asian descendants). High sexual activity has a negative impact, namely the spread of venereal disease. One type of venereal disease that is an outbreak is syphilis.

Jaelani (2013, p. 111) quoted the opinion of van der Burg as saying that syphilis was the first gift brought by Western civilization. Syphilis is an outbreak of venereal disease that is very worried by the colonial government. This disease extends along with the development of prostitution. Therefore, the government supervises prostitutes. According to Jaelani (2013, p. 21), venereal diseases develop rapidly in military custody. Baay describes it in the following narrative; sex life is very vulnerable to the spread of venereal disease, even being an epidemic. Baay (2010, p. 105)

explained that the spread of the disease was very fast because military members' lust was quite high. Therefore, the colonial government implemented a hard policy on prostitution.

The morality discourse was developed by the government to reduce the rate of spread of venereal disease. However, this effort cannot reduce the growth rate of prostitution. The difficult economic situation, the need for prostitutes, and slavery were the causes of prostitution that existed and developed in the colonial period. After the Dutch surrendered the Dutch East Indies to Japan in 1942, prostitution still existed.

The Japanese military government developed prostitution to meet the sexual needs of its troops. Village women were forced by the Japanese military to become complacent. Lamijo (2006) explained that many women became prostitutes because they were deceived and forced to enter the world of prostitution. In addition, there was a network of trafficking in women at that time. Women satisfied with lust in Japan were referred to as *Jugun Ianfu*. After Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945, prostitution continued to develop especially in Jakarta.

In the revolution period, many women who have economic difficulties and Despair decided to become prostitutes. Low-class and upper-class institutions emerged. Lower-class prostitution is usually visited by the lower middle class, while high-class prostitution is usually visited by the upper middle class. In the 1970s, Jakarta had carried out localization (prostitution center) policies at the time of Ali Sadikin to oversee prostitutes and pimps (Lamijo, 2006).

During the colonial, Japan occupation, Indonesian revolution, Sukarno government, New Order, until the reform period, the practice of prostitution continued to exist, especially in Jakarta (Priyowidodo, 2015). Prostitution still exists even though the government issued an

anti-prostitution policy. In 1999, the Governor of Jakarta, Sutiyoso, closed the localization of Kramat Tunggak, one of the prostitution centers in Jakarta. Kramat Tunggak was changed to Jakarta Islamic Center. However, the problem turned out to be even worse because prostitution became uncontrolled and became increasingly widespread illegally (Priyowidodo, 2015).

In the present day, the central and regional governments, in general, banned prostitution and carried out repression at certain times (Priyowidodo, 2015). This is because prostitution exists but the authorities pretend not to see. The community and the government consider prostitution to be a moral destroyer, but many seek and need it. Industrialization and capitalism ensnare women to enter the world of prostitution. Prostitution comes in various forms.

Online media also makes prostitution more diverse. Through the media, commercial sex workers are offered. They are no longer in the center of prostitution but use virtual networks to make transactions (Priyowidodo, 2015). One of them is ensnaring the Sales Promotion Girl (SPG) which is the inspiration in the novel.

According to news media, there have been cases of online prostitution offering models, flight attendants, and SPG. The police found sites that provided model services and SPG to fill in certain events, but apparently provided prostitution services (Tempo.co, 2016). In fact, there is an SPG Agency that offers employees for prostitution (Bangkapos.com, 2018). Customers consist of diverse backgrounds such as entrepreneurs (Pratama, 2016). One type of SPG that is involved in cases of prostitution is SPG cigarettes as represented by Hanaco in *The Curse of Beauty*.

SPG Cigarette can be involved in prostitution in various ways, each of which has a relationship with a different sector in the industry they are currently living. They consider offers that are relatively compensated

through several types of work, taking into account the various benefits and disadvantages of selling sexual services with various types of clients, and then they decide that they prefer prostitution to other jobs

Based on Rachmawati's research, SPG cigarettes are required to look attractive and sexy. SPG cigarettes work with a contract system, which is an average of 3 months with a fee of IDR 100,000--150,000 / day. The SPG must establish communication with men who are consumers of cigarette products. They are often tempted by customers because they look sexy. Customers also often ask for mobile numbers or meet at nightclubs. If someone asks for a date, they already understand what must be done (prostitution). This job is very tempting because it can produce a lot of money. In addition, there are those who use an intermediary system or pimp to connect consumers and SPG prostitution (Rachmawati, 2013).

The development of prostitution-related to SPG above shows that prostitution is a very complicated polemic in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, like the one setting the location of the Hanaco's *the Curse of Beauty*. Patriarchal culture and masculine viewpoints are always used by the authorities to discipline prostitutes. Female prostitutes have always been the main suspects of depravity in the viewpoint of morality ruled by patriots. Therefore, prostitutes are disciplined by authorities at every age. The discipline of prostitute's parallels Foucault's opinion.

He said that discipline is complicated methods that operate to control the body, believe in the constant subjectivity of its coercion, and overload them a compliance-usability relationship (Foucault, 1995: 137). In addition, prostitutes are vulnerable to punishment from authorities both legally and socially as part of disciplining the body. As Foucault analyzes that punishment is not only a consequence

of violations of rules and regulations but as a political tactic in the snare of power relations (Foucault, 1995, pp. 9--24).

Thus, the reality of prostitution certainly affects the novelist in developing her narrative. This is because there are always social factors that influence the author in writing of her work. Therefore, the author raises the themes of prostitution and prostitution which are veiled in society; moreover, the novel is based on a true story.

### **Sales Promotion Girl**

Sales Promotion Girl (SPG) is a terminology that refers to girls who work and are tasked with promoting and selling a product. However, this terminology does not have a clear definition. According to Essays (2013), this terminology does not have a clear history of when it was first used by audiences. The searches on the sites also did not find scientific articles about the early history of the use of this terminology.

Sido (2013) browses various kinds of pages to trace the use of this terminology. He found that this terminology existed in several web and blog sites in Asia, but the results were not satisfactory. He also browses the [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk), [reuters.com](http://reuters.com), or the [caranddriver.com](http://caranddriver.com) website, but he did not find the use of this terminology in these articles. He found terminology that is almost similar in [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org), namely promotional models. Meanwhile, Essays (2013) also did not find the beginning of the use of terminology on the [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org) site. Therefore, the use of this terminology seems to only be used by the people of Indonesia.

Sido (2013) stated about the definition of the promotional model which is almost similar to the terminology which states,

A promotional model is a model hired to drive consumer demand for a product, service, brand, or concept by directly interacting with potential consumers. A vast majority of promotional

models typically tend to be attractive in physical appearance (Wikipedia, n.d.).

From these searches, this terminology seems to come from a foreign term, namely a promotional model. Because most models are women, there is the term girl. Meanwhile, the addition of the sales term comes from the task of a promotional girl, which is selling products. This is why, according to Sido (2013), there is the term Sales Promotion Girl which is more exclusive than the original term. Thus, the writer of Essays states that,

Sales promotion girl in Indonesia is identical with young girls wearing sexy outfit seducing people to buy something. They are usually high school or university student -young and attractive essentially stealing all the glances from people around them (Essays, 2013).

This definition shows that SPG in Indonesia is a young woman who has a high school education or college, has a beautiful appearance, and looks attractive to attract the hearts of those around her. These meanings clearly show that the views on SPG tend to be sexist and get negative stereotypes. Search results on Youtube sites based on the number of impressions show a lot of negative content when typing the SPG term.

### Picture 1

#### Search Results on the Youtube.com



Source: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

According to Sido (2013), the Google search engine will display pornographic content by just typing SPG. This shows that SPG is vulnerable to the world of prostitution. They are also vulnerable to becoming victims of lifestyle consumerism. This is because they must always look beautiful, attractive, and sexy. They also must always maintain body shape. This, of course, requires a large amount of money. To fulfill these various needs, they need a lot of money. Income from working as an SPG is considered insufficient. Therefore, many SPG takes shortcuts by becoming prostitutes. This is the cause of negative stereotypes from the community.

Even though it gets negative stereotypes, this work is hard work. They not only have to look beautiful but must be able to provide interesting explanations about the products sold. They also have to be able to stand for hours to sell their products. They are also vulnerable to sexual harassment by potential buyers. This work is narrated by the Essays writer as follows,

Sales promotion girl must master the product which they are going to sell. She must know what their competitor does. For example, a sales promotion girl of Kartu Halo must understand the product knowledge of Kartu Halo and understand all of the other postpaid services such as Xplor from Excelcomindo Pratama and Matrix from Indosat, and vice versa. That's why the company and the sales promotion girl will need CAD (Competitor Activity Data). After the sales promotion girl has mastered more product knowledge and competitors, this sales promotion girl will be a qualified sales promotion girl. It is not uncommon for this type of non-organic sales promotion girl could enter the high position of the company and get an important position at the company which she used to join partially (Essays, 2013).

This explanation shows that SPG must have good communication skills. They also have to be smart in delivering their products. They also have to compete with other SPG. If they are able to meet the target and work well, their position can rise. This means that SPG work is a job that has many challenges. According to Essays (2013), SPG which is very popular is in the automobile industry and cigarette. The latter is very easy to find in various events.

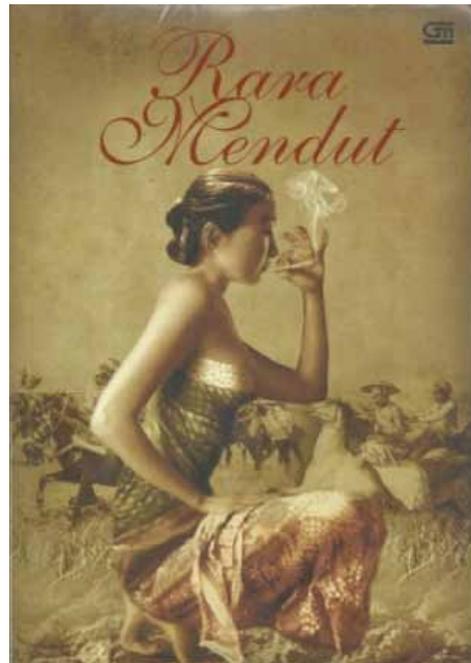
**Picture 2**  
**Cigarette Sales Promotion Girl**



Source: merdeka.com/images03.olx.co.id

Based on a search on Google, the first form of SPG cigarettes is the story of Rara Mendut. This is a popular story in Java. In the story, Rara Mendut had to sell cigarettes to pay high taxes. She had to pay taxes because she refused to be made a concubine by Tumenggung Wiraguna. The figure of Rara Mendut, the cigarette seller became very famous. The cigarettes sold by Rara Mendut sell well. Moreover, the cigarette butts smoked by her were contested by buyers. Therefore, he was considered by several articles as the figure of the old SPG cigarette (Djanu, 2016; JPNN, 2016; Wicakson, 2017). The story of oral literature also inspired novelists to write it (Dewi, 2014). This proves that social, historical, and cultural factors can influence novel writing. Therefore, the theme of SPG is interesting to write as a novel story.

**Picture 3**  
**Rara Mendut the Cigarette Seller**



Source: histori.id/kisah-rara-mendut

### **Women and Money in the Curse of Beauty's Novel**

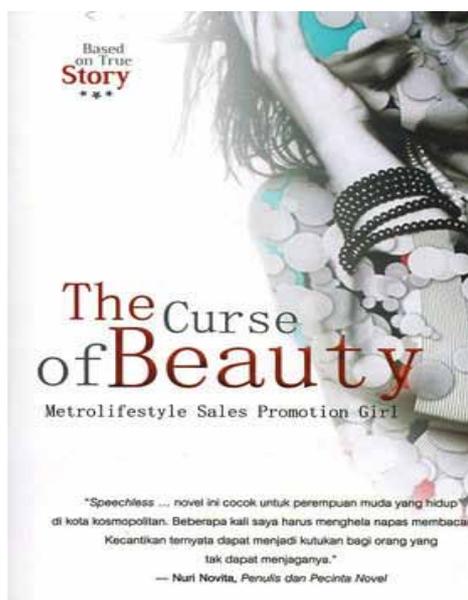
*The Curse of Beauty* is a true story novel about *Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)* life. It was written by Indah Hanaco. She was born in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatera. She likes writing since she was in junior high school. Her work was published for the first time in 2009. This novel tells about Laela who is lawyer candidate. She lives metropolitan city in Depok. She is a student in the first graduate in low major. She is from a rich family. She lives without lack of everything. Everything in her life is going so easily until their parent divorce. The cause of their divorce is because her father is unfaithful to her and her mother. Her mother who cannot accept it also does a similar thing just like he does.

As a child of them who is difficult to accept the reality choose to drop out of her house and try to live alone in the boarding house where her friend, Kimi lives. She is also her classmate, but she has a part-time job as a sales promotion girl (SPG). She always tries to invite Laela to join

her but she is always rejected. Until the time when something bad happens to Laela's life and she chooses to live alone, she accepts Kimi's offer. Laela has boyfriend namely Keenan. He is her first boyfriend. In the beginning, she thinks that he is the best boyfriend ever that she met in her life. He disagrees when her girlfriend works as a sales promotion girl.

#### Picture 4

#### The Curse of Beauty's Cover



Source: [www.goodreads.com/book/show/17191255-the-curse-of-beauty](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17191255-the-curse-of-beauty)

Both of them see that this job is a bad profession for women. Why they should use their body and beauty with inappropriate clothes only for offering product and they have to be watched by people not from their skill only from their sensuality. This is how Laela and Keenan see about sales promotion girl job. Now, she comes into this profession just like she imagined before. The most hateful profession is being her livelihood now.

It does not mean that her parent does not give her money. They always send her money by transfer. It is only her way to make over her life from her dissatisfaction with her broken life. It can be a form of her unreadiness from

what happens to her life. The happiness of a family that becomes her strength to go through her life is gone now. She also has to accept that now her boyfriend change. He is not like a person that she made proud so much. He has betrayed her. He never loves her. He only wants to take something important to her, her virginity. Her life is like a piece of paper. It is meaningless. Only blackness is left over.

Because of this condition, now she becomes a sales promotion girl (SPG). For the first time, she still feels uneasy to do it. Moreover, her clothes should be mixed with heavy makeup on her face. She also has to wear a high heel and walk through the whole place using it to interest the customers. Some of them come close to her to buy her product and some of them also come to her only for seducing her. Seduce abuse, reject, insult and ask her phone number is a common thing that she should face it every time she introduces her product. But she has still to smile at them. In her previous life, she is an innocent girl who dresses up naturally. She never applies makeup to her face. Her clothes that she wears are polite and never show her body dip.

She tries out various sales promotion girl from being a sales promotion girl of cosmetic, electronic, vehicles and cigarette. The salary that she gets cannot be compared with the difficulty when she works. Sometimes she gets more when there is a big event. But it comes only once a month or perhaps once in a year. From those products, the cigarette is the most comfortable product toward her. She can get a salary bigger than selling the other product. And most of her customers are rich people. She can get a lot of new boyfriends.

From this situation, her life changes again now she does not only sell the product but also sells her body. Her virginity became the reason she left her boyfriend Keenan in the past, and now she gives it to one of her customer Levi. She gets much money from him as the mutual

of her important thing. Then she becomes the concubine of Irvin, a man who is loved by her but he gets married to the other woman. Her beauty is like two sides of money, it can be a favor or something that can hurt the owner.

Through this short storytelling, it shows SPG phenomenon both in literary work or reality is interested to be analyzed. It is because women life is never free from sexual oppression since in the past. As like Prabasmoro states women are taught their sexuality belongs to men. And it is pointed out to satisfy them (Prabasmoro, 2007, p. 289).

### **Women Sexual Oppression and Money**

Foucault argues that view of an object is created in boundaries that have been established by discursive structure; discourse is characterized by a surface border from the object, the definition from the perspective which can be trusted and regarded as the most truthful. Perception of an object is created with limited by discursive practice; defined by the view that gives a meaning something is true and the other is not. Discourse blocks the public views, direct to a certain train of thought and appreciates it as the true one. It becomes something that directs, limits, and constructs reality to the narration that can be understood. It is related to the discursive structure; a big building and those limitations curve episteme systemically. Through episteme, reality can be understood by the statement and certain view, not the others. The different discourses which represent particular ways of talking about and understand the social world, struggle continuously to reach hegemony; determine language meanings according to its own ways. Thus, hegemony is known as domination in one special perspective. In all, a sight of reality is a discourse construction which does not deny the existence of reality (Foucault, 1978, pp. 17--35).

Foucault (1978) states that what the significance of reality (object) and how to

interpret it is based on discursive structure. This thing from his point of view about the relation between discourse with 'something real' (reality). Adrienne Rich in 1997 argues that "women body is an area where patriarchy is built" (Rich, 1997, p. 55). At the beginning of our conversation, we find four cultural conceptions about femininity that we have together in one meaning; women as inferior, passive, beautiful object, mother, and wife. In our first discussion, we realize that how bad those ideas have restricted us, how as human we feel restricted because we become a passive dependent creature without our own identity. Because the time has passed, with support for each other, we start to find ourselves (Thornham, 2000, p. 18). Patriarchal ideology makes objectivity and distorts women body and when they are trapped in this ideology, it isolates them from their body (Kuhn, 1995, p. 6).

Seemingly culture in 1980 explodes in beauty body; gymnasium, piercing body, dance culture, and safety sex (take a part of the body that do you want and that stuff will be yours with buying it). That conception does not ask about body status as the object (reflection, intervention, exercising or reconstruction) moreover, never consider the possibility of the body can be understood as a subject, agent or activity. This elastic body is what Foucault described as obedient, whereas with difficulties that cannot be seen before; this obedient does not function through regulation, control and external obstacle as like what Foucault's claim, on the contrary, it is self-regulation, self-management, and self-control that is more intensive no end (Grosz, 1995, p. 2).

Now, women are still valued as a sex object. They are considered as a commodity that can be sold door to door, rented, and bought. This condition is a public assumption that is stated by mass media thus, now; they want to be success instantly. No work hard, no need to

be brief for having work, and unimportant to study hard. The most important thing is the face that decorated beautiful, good looking and elegant attitude. They are like the other thing that becomes stuff which is consumed and become a sex object. As like stuff that is rolling transformation quickly like electronic that decreasing model and withdraw in its rotation. Women are showing off and expose themselves has come to highlight nominalization, materialistic, hedonistic, secularistic, and individualistic deep era. Materialistic, because of seeing the body (tending to in short time), and not seeing personality (tending to eternal). Hedonistic because of wanting short pleasure. Secularistic, because of not caring of moral value that thought by all ethos doctrine and religion. Individualistic because they do not care how the impact of their stubborn always brings out sensuality and body dimpled (Mizan, 1997, p. 101). Young women especially girl teenagers undergo a deep impression to adapt themselves to the beauty competition that is continuous. They have to evaluate and criticize their own body from the outside as like men that see their body. In that time they should deny their body in the internal thing (Rueda, Marta, Watkins, 2007, p. 138). This phenomenon can be seen from the following passage in the novel.

*“Apa? Ke klub striptease?”*

*“Dalam mimpi paling buruk pun aku tidak pernah membayangkan akan datang ke sebuah klub striptease. Dimana para perempuan bertubuh sintal melepaskan pakaiannya satu demi satu tanpa merasa keberatan”.*

*“Ketempat kayak gitu mungkin menarik untuk laki-laki, tapi sebaliknya untuk cewek. Itu kan saja ngeliat diri sendiri berdiri di panggung dengan tiang dan menggerakkan tubuh dengan seksi?” (Hanaco, 2012, p. 155).*

From the dialog above, can be seen how women sensual body has been used for satisfying men desire. They should strip their cloth one by one in front of the public. These

behaviors against moral values have been tutored by society. It is also not suitable with the tradition always teaches the women to have manner and politeness. Sometimes, they actually aware, they have been humiliated in the public. They also totally know; their pride has been lost. Not little of them feel disgusted when they do it. Moreover, perverted gaze from men who have imagined buying their body.

This dialog also shows how women have been underestimated by men because of money. They are willing to be embarrassed in front of audiences only to get money for fulfilling their necessity. Moreover, some of them will do not have a chance to feel study in academic learning. They only know how to entertain and satisfy the audiences using their body. They are thought their sensual body only to lust men desire. As Foucault said “the form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects” (Foucault, 1982, p. 5). The other passage gives the same opinion can be seen in this following scene.

*“Bagaimana mungkin orang bisa makan sambil ngeliat para cewek melepaskan bajunya? Sungutku sambil menunjuk ke atas meja” (Hanaco, 2012, p. 160).*

This scene shows how the position of women as objects of sex-exploitation displayed in front of a crowd to attract the interest of men to attend and watch it happily. Then these conditions have given the maximum benefit for the authorities over themselves while the women who work in the night entertainment industry, as well as this striptease, only get a small wage compared to the treatment that lowers their self-esteem and the insults and

insults from the surrounding community those who still assume that a woman's self-esteem lies in their manner. The public sector capitalizes on female workers as a cheap marketing tool to achieve infestation to attract economic growth in factories.

### **Educational Background and Women Oppression**

Talking about power, this discussion will be related to Foucault's power concept. According to him, the subject is persons that are drowned out in context. From this point of view, the individual does not think or create meaning, a system that thinks and produce meaning through individual and every subject can choose based on subjectivity intuition but power is not a power that is controlled by country, otherwise, it is a something that can be measured. Power is in everywhere and there is relation over there. In short, power is in everywhere and appears from relations between various strengths, happen absolutely and do not suspend to human consciousness. Power is only a strategy that occurs in everywhere and there are systems, rules, structures, and regulations. On the other hand, power is not born from the outside, in contrary, it determines the structures, rules, and inside relations that enable everything to happen (Foucault, 2000, p. 144).

The power relates to the body because through the body, an individual can use their power to control as what he wants. Foucault says that the body is always disciplined in the name of the medical science, demography, economic, and political problems by the power of a regime. He says: "one of these poles, the first to be formed, it seems centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the

discipline: an anatomy-politics of the human body (Foucault, 1982, p. 139).

In the Sales Promotion Girl (SPG) phenomenon, women who work as SPG are trained to be an interactive and communicative girl. They are taught to attract their consumers. Therefore, some agencies look for good looking ones. They add some beauty standardization as the requirement of being SPG. They like experience applicant in marketing more. They also put an educational background as the last requirement or never see them from their educational background. The most important things are they should be good looking, ideal body, beautiful face, capable to make up by themselves, etc. These requirements show women are never seen in their brain skill. They are only viewed from their physic potency. They are not important to have high education background if they cannot serve the customer with their body quality. On the contrary, they who has good body quality and persuasive but not from high education are more useful than they are who graduate from university.

About the salary, they are not paid by their level education but they will be paid from the amount of selling product. Thus, some of the companies choose women workers with low education more than women workers with high education as SPG because they do not want to take the risk with the educated workers. And they cannot make them as the subject loyal if they are educated. As like Foucault's argumentation "There are two meanings of the ~word" subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1998, p. 6). This condition is also portrayed by Indah Hanaco in her novel.

*"Pernah nggak kamu bayangin beratnya harus berdiri selama berjam-jam demi melariskan*

*sebuah produk? Belum lagi harus berdandan heboh dan selalu tampil cantik. Padahal kadang nggak ada hubungannya antara produk dengan penampilan si SPG. Intinya, perempuan hanya dijadikan pajangan. Dan itu rasanya... hmmm...Sangat merendahkan” (Hanaco, 2012, p. 18).*

From the passage above can be seen women who have a job as SPG is always suffered. They are not like educated women. On the other hand, they are not respected because they must stand all a long day with the proper dress and superfluous makeup only to get the customers and sell the product. Moreover, they should walk in a long time using high heels that hurt their feet so much. Hence, sometimes there is no relation between the product and their appearance. This illustration shows how restricted their world without high education. This condition will not happen if they are educated. They will get the proper job suitable for their level of education. Moreover, they will be paid the same as their level of education not because of the product selling.

The body figure becomes the requirement or dominant factor in every social exchange. Social acceptance and the boundaries of social relationships are influenced by the person body shape which becomes the standard size of someone's attracting. Foucault explains sex is an integral part of sexuality apparatus and because of it, power on sexuality can be positive in creating politics of the body and pleasure (Kali, 2013, p. 61). As like Bordo says “they define precisely the dimensions of her physical freedom. And of course, the relationship between physical freedom and psychological development, intellectual possibility, and creative potential is umbilical one (Bordo, 1993, p. 195).

### **Prostitution in the Curse of Beauty**

Through the explanation above women experience the subordination through their

sensual body potential. Their sensual body becomes the sexual tool of attracting men's sexual desire to be their consumer. Their body is controlled and they do not have the right to rule. Strangely, they do not realize that they are being used. They only know their responsibility is getting many consumers and selling the product as many as possible to get a big salary. They never know that their unconsciousness actually refuses it.

This way is carried out by them to be in the same class as high-class women commonly. They think much money from being SPG can change their social class life. In fact, it is only their hallucination. They are still in the low class. Moreover, their class is lower than the proletariat. High-class women never take a difficult profession like this. They only stay at their home with many servants beside them. They are never difficult to seek much money. On the contrary, their habit is spending much money. They are hegemonized by the dominating class which produces noble life imaging. This condition is illustrated in Indah Hanaco's *Curse of Beauty*.

*“Lagian Aku selalu merasa kalau pekerjaan sebagai SPG ini sangat ... hmmm ... berat.” Leala berkata.*

*“Berat? Kenapa bisa gitu? Aku nggak merasa pekerjaan ini berat, kok!” Kimi penasaran. “Jam kerjanya cukup fleksibel. Kamu tetap bisa kuliah sambil bekerja. Pokoknya, enak. Kita juga bisa kenal banyak orang, teman-teman baru.” Kimi mengerjapkan matanya jenaka. “Banyak cowok berkantong tebal, siapa tahu kamu udah bosan sama Keenan. Tapi, kenapa kamu merasa pekerjaanku berat? Coba jelasin!” (Hanaco, 2012, p. 14).*

From this story can be seen, women who work as SPG never realize that their profession is not normal. They are shadowed by a moment of pleasure because of their perfect environment. They can get much money easily

and meet amazing people from the upper class who will change their life like Cinderella. There is no successfulness instantly. Although with their beautiful and perfect body never bring them to be high class. On the other hand, they are being a toy for them. A moment toy will be thrown out when they are getting bored. In the end, they are trapped in the prostitution world. As like Indah Hanaco describes in her novel.

“Aku.... aku bukan Kimi yang kenal.  
Aku....”  
“Apa?” tanyaku tak sabar.  
“Aku sudah jadi pelacur.....”  
Petir terasa menghancurkan telingaku  
(Hanaco, 2012, p. 41)

From this citation of the novel, most of the public view of being SPG is like being a whore is true. Although, not many of them who are not have a side job as a whore, it cannot cover the negative image. Finally, the prostitution world should be the end of their precious life. They become the victim of symbolic violence of the high class to take advantage of them of enriching and satisfying themselves. They are also subordinated and marginalized to become the low creature which is obedient to money and pleasure.

In the end, they become the victim of sexual and emotional harassment; there are many types of it such as unwanted attention from men. It is actually an action that is not comfortable for women. It usually happens as the way to be closer to them, but it is the wrong way to make a friend to them and the doer never consider the women feeling. For example; give a dirty joke, interrogating about the privacy or sexual activity, ask sexual repayment as the promise to get promotion in work, touching the body without permission, etc.

Talking about SPG has a strong relation with mass media. Being SPG means being the icon of a product. SPG is sold to the consumer through mass media imagery. As the icon of a

product, women who have a job as SPG must have a good appearance that is constructed by mass media. Abdullah in *Sangkan Paran Gender* says, in mass media, women body becomes persuasive tools to sell the product, the erotic attraction is a strong stimulus factor to pull the consumer. Pleasure, beauty, pleasantness, freshness, and agility are the women characters that are produced by mass media (Abdullah, 2006, p. 20).

This phenomenon can be seen in mass media which always features various necessities. Various advertisement and promotion always present women as an attraction. The advertisement for a beauty product dazzles women. Beauty, white skin, sexy body, big breast, and high body women always fulfill television every day. The print media always present their image in every column. As Baudrillard (2006) said in *Ekstasi Komunikasi*, public space that is signed by advertisements. He gives addition that advertisement colonizes hinge of life because the public stage and public space have been changed by ventilation, circulation room and huge connector that connect each other.

The advertisement shows the image world. An image that is produced by capitalism describes that men eyes are seemingly interesting to that standard. This condition is called standard beauty construction that is created by the capitalist. Women do not realize that the beauty standard has controlled their own body. Beauvoir has states that the body is the root of the oppression of women body itself (Prabasmoro, 2007, pp. 50--51).

Finally, its purposes of making women as a victim. They become the tool in the distribution process and lifestyle. They are also exploited through forming and featuring the part of their body to expose the image of the product that they sell. From this point, as the icon of the product, they have to care their body to always show the good appearance of their body while

they work as SPG and offer the product to the consumer, regardless they also need to consume a various beauty product. Here, they also become the object of capitalism product. In this condition, Foucault states “body and sex are often treated as a commodity to satisfy the desire and get the profit” (Foucault, 1978, p. 140). This condition is also portrayed by Indah Hanaco in her novel.

“*Aku selalu merasa kalau ...eh ... menjadi SPG itu agak .... Bagaimana yaa... tidak manusiawi...*” (Hanaco, 2012, p. 16).

“*Bagus, kalau gitu. Aku juga kurang setuju. Profesi itu seringkali merupakan topeng*”.

“*Topeng?*” *tanyaku tidak mengerti.*

“*Keenan mengangguk. “banyak diantara mereka yang berprofesi ganda. Yang dipromosiiin tidak hanya sebatas produk yang diwakili. Tapi yang lain juga”* (Hanaco, 2012, p. 21).

From this piece of the story, it is told that most of SPG sometimes have a side job as a whore. From their job as SPG, they not only introduce the product but also themselves to the consumer. Sometimes they give their phone number to know each other. After that, it continues to become a personal business.

Beauvoir’s argumentation is a critic of body exploitation which becomes very large in the globalization era. Global capitalism era makes women do not have their own body. They are forced finely to dress up as capitalists want. Beauty product becomes opium for them. This phenomenon can happen because they have become a part of the addictive economic system. Sumrahadi in the preface of *Ekstasi Komunikasi* (in Baudrillard, 2006, p. x) said that addictive economy is a principle of an individual who likes consumption more than production until they are addicted.

Every individual who is addicted is easy to be seduced. Seduction is a part of the production

system. According to Sumrahadi in the preface of *Ekstasi Komunikasi* (in Baudrillard, 2006, p. xxvi), seduction problem always duplicates the new ways to get mutualism. He also illuminates SPG (*Sales Promotion Girls*)’s consolation method. They are the backbone of *marketing*’s division in every company to attract the consumer. They have been tried specially to know the sensual potential of their body. Sexy clothes should be worn to communicate the body and themselves as a consolation work method. This phenomenon shows that consumption does not only talk about the product but also desire.

The conditions which are experienced by SPG shows that as women who can be controlled by the capitalist as their puppet through their body rule and discipline have caused them as the victim of women marginalization. The mechanism of the marginalization proceeds softly until they are not aware, and obedient. If men and women have the same chance, gender inequality will never show up just like in Indah Hanaco’s *the Curse of Beauty*. Through her literary work, she tries to describe the women oppression as the sexual object of men from their profession as SPG. Their portrayal is not different from the reality. Either in the past until now, women position is still weak and inferior. Therefore, many women writers often tell their condition through the work to express their care and sympathize with their condition. They wish this way, it can awake them to overcome the marginalization.

Nowadays, there are many women writers appear. They write about themselves. They break up social repression which is suffered by women. Through their writing, they try to fight their destiny to have the same chance as men. With their story, they try to awake the other women reader to arise and change their life until they can live better. By their words, they try to fight the marginalization which is experienced by women in reality. From these efforts, they

hope that there is no oppression more to women and the will get an equal position to men in society. Bandel said without entering literary work, women movement issues will only wallow in standard issues which are imported from the other places (Bandel, 2006, p. 5).

## CONCLUSION

*The Curse of Beauty* is an Indonesian-language novel, although it uses English titles. This novel was written by Indah Hanaco. This novel tells the story of the life of an SPG involved in prostitution. This novel represents a change in the identity of the main character who experienced class mobilization from a good moralist woman to become an SPG involved in prostitution. This was caused by a broken home which experiences by the main character's parents. The main character, Leala, decided to live independently by trying to fund her own education at the college level. She became a student and SPG and a prostitute. She is a victim of a broken home, the environment, economic needs, and lifestyle stresses. The contestation of money is interpreted as a trap of capitalism which makes SPG experience an internal upheaval because they have to sell their bodies to get a lot of money that is not in accordance with their conscience as represented by Leala's figure. This novel presents the struggle of an SPG to finance her studies. Expensive tuition fees, high living needs, and high costs to always look beautiful make the SPG have to collect a lot of money from prostitution as represented in the narrative of *The Curse of Beauty*. Prostitution is considered to be able to make a lot of money in a short time. At this point, the SPG experienced oppression carried out by capitalists for not having freedom of their own body as represented by *The Curse of Beauty*.

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