

**RESTRAINTS OF THE LABOR'S WELFARE IN LYNN NOTTAGE'S
PLAY SWEAT (2015)**

THESIS

*Submitted as Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements
to Obtain Strata 1 (S1 Degree)*



By:

CITRA AIDILLA

14019002/2014

Advisor:

Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum, Ph.D

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS
UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG
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HALAMAN PERSETUJUAN SKRIPSI

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Nama : **Citra Aidilla**

NIM : **14019002/2014**

Program Studi : **Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris**

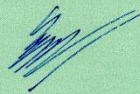
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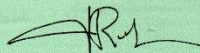
Disetujui oleh,

Pembimbing



Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D
NIP. 19710525 1998 02 2 002

Mengetahui
Ketua Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris



Dr. Refnaldi, S.Pd., M.Litt.
NIP. 19680301 199403 1 003

HALAMAN PENGESAHAN LULUS UJIAN SKRIPSI



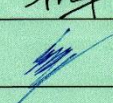
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Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Negeri Padang
dengan judul

Restraints of The Labor's Welfare in Lynn Nottage's Play *Sweat* (2015)

Nama : Citra Aidilla
NIM : 14019002/2014
Program Studi : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

Padang, 13 Februari 2019

Tim Penguji

	Nama	Tanda Tangan
1. Ketua	: Dr. Muhd. Al Hafizh, S.S., M.A.	: 
2. Sekretaris	: Leni Marlina, S.S, M.A	: 
3. Anggota	: Desvalini Anwar, S.S, M.Hum, Ph.D :	: 



UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG
FAKULTAS BAHASA DAN SENI
JURUSAN BAHASA DAN SASTRA INGGRIS
Jl. Belibis. Air Tawar Barat. Kampus Selatan FBS UNP. Padang. Telp/Fax: (0751) 447347

SURAT PERNYATAAN TIDAK PLAGIAT

Saya yang bertandatangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Citra Aidilla
NIM/TM : 14019002/2014
Program Studi : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

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Diketahui oleh,
Ketua Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris

Dr. Refnaldi, S.Pd., M.Litt.
NIP. 19680301 199403 1 003

Saya yang menyatakan,



Citra Aidilla
14019002/2014

ABSTRAK

Aidilla, Citra. 2019. "Restraints of The Labor's Welfare in Lynn Nottage's Play *Sweat* (2015). Thesis. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Pembimbing: Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum, Ph.D

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa drama *Sweat* karya Lynn Nottage. Masalah yang diangkat adalah sejauh mana naskah drama ini merefleksikan isu yang dialami oleh karakter mengenai pengekangan kesejahteraan yang dilakukan perusahaan terhadap pekerja yang bertujuan untuk memperoleh keuntungan yang banyak. Tujuan penganalisaan ini adalah sejauh mana setting dan konflik (plot) memberikan kontribusi dalam mengungkapkan cara-cara yang dilakukan perusahaan untuk mengekang dan membatasi kesejahteraan yang seharusnya didapatkan oleh pekerja. Analisa ini juga dihubungkan dengan konsep alienasi oleh Karl Marx. Hasil analisa ini menunjukkan bahwa perusahaan telah melakukan berbagai macam tindakan pengekangan kesejahteraan terhadap pekerja yang dapat dilihat dalam dua aspek, yaitu pengekangan kesejahteraan dalam aspek keuangan dan aspek kesehatan.

Kata kunci: Pengekangan, Pekerja, Kesejahteraan, alienasi.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Job is an important thing for human to earn money and survive in life. Job can affect human position in the society. According to Karl Marx in Merada (2017) society divided human being into two groups based on their job or the economic class, such as bourgeoisie and proletariat. Bourgeois is a term attached to the middle class, consists of educated and wealthy people. Bourgeois people mostly are entrepreneurs who do thing to get much profit. Meanwhile, proletariat are also known as lowest class or one of the lowest economic and social classes in a society. They mostly work as labors.

According to Alison Doyle in The Balance Career official website (2019), The United States Department of Labor oversees and enforces the employment laws that regulate hiring, wages, hours and salary, discrimination, harassment, employee benefits, paid time off, job applicant and employee testing, privacy, and other important workplace and employee rights issues. Alison Doyle in The Balance Career official website (2019) said that there are several federal employment and labor laws in United States; they are The Fair Labor Standards Act that determines about the minimum wage and overtime pay, The Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) that determines about the retirement fund that should the laborers get after the retirement, The Family Medical and Family Leave Act that explain about health insurance and the day off that the laborers get in every years, the last federal employment and labor laws is The

Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) that determines about health and safety condition while the working time.

Despite the laborers' right have been protected by the legal, but they still faces challenges in life. This happens because the working class people often experience injustice in the company. The workers may be skilled or unskilled and work in a wide range of fields such as manufacturing, mining, construction, home renovation, temporary daily labor, maintenance and repair, and other forms of physical labor. They should work hard and use their physic to preserve their job. Even though they have been worked hard and obtained a lot of profits for their company, they still experience unequal treatments. The policy that the company create to obtain much profit have been wrench the laborer's right as human beings. The company already restraint their welfare.

Restraints of the labor welfare are one of the treatments that the laborers get from their company. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary (2018) restraint is a way of limiting, controlling, or stopping something. While, in American Heritage-Dictionary of English Language (2018) welfare is health, happiness, and good fortunes; well-being. Restraint of the labor welfare refers to the company way in controlling the laborers in order to get more profit.

For the company, the laborers are only a commodity to get much money and profits for the company itself. They do not care about the laborers welfare. They give low payment, and do not give career advancement to the laborers. The company also do not give health insurance, because they do not want to spend much money. As a person who has authority, they utilize it to repress and force

the laborers to do what they want. They tell that the provisions is for the company development, but actually it is only for their own benefit. The laborer cannot revolt because they did not have an authority, and their life rely on that job.

The company make the laborer live in misery. They can't save money for their future life, because they earn money only for their daily life cost. They do not have enough money to get an education. It make they live in poverty. It's difficult for them to change their life. The company also restraints their welfare in mental condition. They should work overtime every day. They do not have a quality time with their family. They cannot hanging out with their friends. They being stressed out.

The issue about restraints of the labor welfare is the phenomenon that can be found in real life. There are novel, short story, and poetry reflect the issue which is related to the restraints of the labor welfare. One of literary work that exposes the issue of restraint the labor welfare is a play that written by Lynn Nottage entitle *Sweat* (2015). Restraint of the labor welfare in this analysis refers to the company way in controlling, limiting and stopping the laborers' welfare in order to get more profit. They treat the laborers unfairly. They have some provisions that make the laborers live in the misery.

1.2 Restraints of The Labor's Welfare

There are three terms to form the terminology in this study, they are *restraint*, *labor*, and *welfare*. Restraint in Merriam Webster Dictionary (2018) is a way of limiting, controlling, or stopping something. According to American Heritage-Dictionary of English Language (2018) labor means physical or mental

exertion, especially when difficult or exhausting. While, in American Heritage-Dictionary of English Language (2018) welfare is health, happiness, and good fortunes; well-being.

The term Restraint of the Labor Welfare in this analysis refers to the company ways in controlling, limiting, or stopping the laborers' welfare to get more profit. The company does not provide appropriate salary. They do not give the health insurance because they want to spend less money. They fired several labors without reason. They do not care about the laborers' welfare because they just want to get more profit.

1.3 A Brief Description of the Author's Biography

Lynn Nottage is an American playwright and screenwriter was born on November 2nd, 1964 in Brooklyn, New York, United State. Her mother Ruby Nottage was a school teacher and principal, and her father Wallace Nottage was a child psychologist. Her husband is a filmmaker, Tony Gerber. She has two children, Ruby Aiyo and Melkamu Gerber. She had already written her first play when she was eight years old. She grew up in a family of storyteller. Her grandmother become her inspiration in writing. She went to Saint Ann's School for elementary school, and graduated high school from New York's High School of Music and Art in Harlem in 1982. Nottage attended Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1986. In 1989, she earned a master of fine arts degree from the Yale University School of Drama.

The History Makers magazine (2005) state that Nottage become a full-time playwright in the 1990s after spending four years at Amnesty International as national press officer. Her first break came as a commissioned monologue for a musical entitle, *A...My Name is Still Alice*. Nottage took a break from writing for nearly seven years, but in 2003, her drama *Intimate Apparel*, won major awards including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Francesca Primus Prize and the Steinberg Award.

She also won several award for her other play. Her play *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine* won 2005 Obie Award for Best New American Play. *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark* won 2011 Lily Award. *Ruined* won 2009 Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play, 2009 Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Off-Broadway Play, 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Furthermore, her other best play *Sweat* (2015) won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama 2017. According to her official Website *Lynn Nottage* (2018) this play also won the OBIE Award 2017 for playwriting for its run at the Public Theater, and was nominated for 2017 Drama Desk Award, Outstanding Play and Outstanding Fight Choreography. Tim Teeman in Daily Beast (2017) said that *Sweat* is an excellent and highly charged play...it is refreshing to hear characters talk about politics as urgently, and realistically, as people are affected by it. *Sweat* is politics as lived and spoken about on the ground, not as an abstraction, not as a Washington power-game, or a shrieking panel on CNN. *Sweat* explains the gestation of discontent, mixed with racism and fears over migration that led to many perhaps casting their vote for Trump.

This play examines the lives of working-class Americans in the early 2000s and shows how periods of economic downfall and poverty can affect the dynamics between friends, family, and community. During working on this play, she went to Reading, Pennsylvania to interview the class-working there. In an interview with *Andy Warhol's Interview* in 2016, Nottage said;

“I would go and investigate in my own way a city that I felt was representative of what was happening in the United States on a larger scale. I found a city called Reading, Pennsylvania, which was in the 2011 census as the poorest city in America for its size. I spent two and a half years going to Reading as often as I could trying to listen to folks and understand what their situation were. I found that their story was incredibly compelling and representative of a lot of what I was hearing from other people in that they had been solidly middle-class they had completely and totally invested in the American dream and then had found that the rug was really pulled out from under them.”
(December, 13rd 2016)

In Reading, Pennsylvania, she gets much information about what happen to class-working people in this time. People in reading struggling from the economic crisis. Nottage realize that economic crisis is the important issue that must be handle immediately.

Her play mostly talks about women, black, and diversity. She criticizes society that discriminated black and women playwright for so long, especially in United States. In an interview with *The Guardian* online magazine Nottage said;

“Across American theatres over the past three seasons, only 12% of plays were written by black playwrights, and the latest season of Broadway plays feature no plays, old or new, by black or female

writers. I think that theatre has been the last bastion segregation. You see plays by African-American playwright, by-and-large, have majority Asian or African-American cast and are produced either on smaller stages or produced in theatres that are specifically geared towards work by people of colour.” (February, 22nd 2016)

The statement proves that women and black people have been discriminated in many aspect of life. Their skill do not appreciate by society for so long. They only have limited place to show their best play, and they do not have the same chance as men. Lynn Nottage is a women and black playwright who has won many awards wants to change this condition. She encourage other women and black people to realize that they have ability and depth of knowledge, and their voices are rich and relevant to everybody. She wants to make other women and black people explore their ability and produce their best play.

1.4 SWEAT

A play entitled *Sweat* (2015) written by Lynn Nottage reflects the issue of restraint of the labor’s welfare. It can be seen from how the characters who work as a labor in a steel mill treated by the company in Reading, Pennsylvania. The laborers are the lower class. They work as floor staff from generation to generation. The laborers work for more than 20 years without an advancement. They forced to work more than 10 hours a day. The company give the low payment to them. They have health problem. They are going to be laid off because the company in economic crisis. The company tend to spend less money to gain the profit. Restraint of the labor welfare is reflected through two aspects, financial and health.

The laborers are in bad financial condition. They receive low payment. It's difficult for them to get a job promotion. They work more than 10 hours a day without advancement. The company cuts their salary in order to spend less money. The laborers cannot save money for their future life. They do not get the retirement fund.

The laborers are in bad health condition. They get physical health problems and mental health problems. They get bunions because of the overtime work. The company does not give the health insurance for the laborers. The laborers cannot get the day off. They are stressed out. They do not have quality time with their family and friends. It's difficult for them to express their opinions.

1.5 Problem of the Study

Restraint of the labor welfare emerged as an important issue in Lynn Nottage's play, *Sweat* (2015). Thus, there are some research questions used to analyze the issue of restraint of the labor welfare which is formulated as follow:

1. How far does the play *Sweat* (2015) by Lynn Nottage show the issue of restraint of the labor welfare?
2. To what extent do the character, setting, and plot (conflict) in play *Sweat* (2015) support the issue of restraint of the labor welfare.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to find out how far play *Sweat* (2015) exposes the issue of restraint of the labor welfare. It is also intended to find out how the character, plot, setting contribute in revealing the meaning of restraint of the labor welfare.

1.7 Previous Study

The analysis of *Sweat* (2015) by Lynn Nottage that focuses on analyzing about restraints the labor's welfare has not been found yet. However, there are two studies that are related to this analysis and give contribution and inspiration in analysing this play. They are the study done by Courtney Elkin Mohler, Christina McMahon, and David Román (2016) entitled *Three Reading of Reading, Pennsylvania: Approaching Lynn Nottage's Sweat and Douglas Carter Beane's Shows for Days*, and the study by Mohamed Meranda (2017) entitled *The American Society During the Great Depression in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath*.

The study done by Mohler, McMahon, and Román entitled *Reading of Reading, Pennsylvania: Approaching Lynn Nottage's Sweat and Douglas Carter Beane's Shows for Days* discuss about feeling of nostalgia between moments in the past and the future and about how the economic system in the past can affect the economic system in the future. This study uses the concept "ironized nostalgia" by a literary critic, Linda Hutcheon. This study show that the citizen did not realize that neoliberal project in 2000 has changed America's industrial cities into economic ghost town. According to Courtney Elkin Mohler in this study:

"Nottage develops tension in the interplay between the scenes that take place in 2000 and those few that happen in 2008. This dual-time dramatic structure

supports two levels of interrelated tragic irony; first, the societal foreknowledge that we as a nation are headed for disaster; and second, a more personal.” (p.81)

This study use the crisp projection of text to communicate the time and setting for each scene to show the ironize nostalgia concept. Setting use to show that the economic system in the past can affect to the economic system in the future.

This study also use the mystical symbolism to show the conflict in this play. Characters as a symbol of dreams that dissolve when their jobs are threatened. The character also show about the racial tension. The character symbolizes a rise in Latino business leadership in Reading. Furthermore, this study focuses on how the character’s racist tendencies are initially subtle, underscored as micro-aggression. This micro-aggression action growing and escalate into full-throated hate speech later in the play.

The second study done by Mohamed Meranda entitled *The American Society During the Great Depression in John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath* discuss about the American low-class fugitive families who were oppressed by both the richer capitalist and the government. This study use the concept bourgeois and proletarians by Karl Marx. The researcher find out that the character divided into two different groups just like the division Karl Marx has suggested. The bourgeois is in the form of the bank’s envoys and later on they are depicted through the farm employers of California. The proletarians represented by the immigrants in both Oklahoma and California. Later on, the clash of the social classes sharpens when the landowners of California use the immigrants as cheap source of labor and an available means to increase their own profit. The

landowners as the bourgeois group use the immigrant from Oklahoma as cheap source of labor and treat the immigrant unfairly. The result of this study is the character divided into two group in society. The bourgeois people refers to the rich people who has authority to treat the other group unfairly. Meanwhile, the proletarians refers to the lower class who be an immigrant in California and work as a labor. The immigrant treated as bad people by the bourgeois group.

Those two works give contributions and inspirations in analyzing the play *Sweat* (2015) by Lynn Nottage. Unlike the previous study, this analysis focus on the company way in controlling the laborer's welfare in order to get more profit. This study use characters, plot (conflict) and setting to reveal the issue of restraint of the labor welfare.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The analysis about restraints of the labor's welfare in this play related to the concept of alienation by Karl Marx. According to Marx in Oliver Christ (2015) the individual is a creature who acts in relationship to his own species and to human society. Under the conditions of private ownership and exchange, the individual alienates himself from his species-being and his fellows, who he views solely as a means of achieving personal objectives. The laborers alienates themselves from the society because of the company that forced them to work overtime.

Marx in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1932) state that;

“This fact simply means that the object that labor produces, its product, stands opposed to it as *something alien*, as a power independent of the producer. The

product of labor is labor embodied and made material in an object, it is the *objectification* of labor. The realization of labor is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy, this realization of labor appears as a *loss of reality* for the worker, objectification as loss of and bondage to the object, and appropriation as estrangement, *as alienation*.” (p. 33)

The quotation explains that the laborers are considered as objects or commodities that produce a product to sell in the market, not as human beings. The laborers have been alienated from society. They were only forced to work without having time to socialize. They are treated as slaves to obtain a lot of profit for the company. They were forced to dedicate their time only for working.

This alienation happened to the laborers who work in a steel mill in Reading, Pennsylvania. They were forced to work overtime, without the day off. The company does not let them have fun with their family or friends. They work more than 10 hours a day to obtain the target income that is set by the company.

The laborers will be more suffering when they obtain more profit for the company. This happens because they are not able to get the profit from the product that they have produced. Marx in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) said that;

“The more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more value he creates, the more worthless he becomes; the more his product is shaped, the more misshapen the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous the worker; the more powerful the work, the more powerless the worker; the more intelligent the work, the duller the worker and the more he becomes a slave of nature.” (p. 34)

It means that the laborers cannot get the benefit from the product that they have been produce. Even though they obtain a lot of profit from the product, but they cannot get the wage raise. The profits that they make are only for the company, and they do not earn the additional wage. This is happen because the company considered them as commodity to earn profit, not as human being.

Marx in Oliver Christ (2015) said that;

“Alienation differentiates between four different dimensions of alienated labor; the alienation of worker from the product, alienation from the economic activity itself, alienation from humanity as a species-being, and alienation from other individuals” (p. 555)

Karl Marx categorized four different dimension of alienated labor. The alienation of worker from the product means that the laborers force to produces goods and do not know how much money they will get from the product. The laborers alienated from the economic activity itself means that they do not know about the economic system in that company. They forced to work overtime without realize that they have been exploited through the system. The third dimensions is alienated from humanity as a species-being. This dimension means that they cannot get their right as human being, such as the company do not give the laborers the day off. They cannot explore themselves in other thing because they are required to produce the good product for the company. It is difficult for them to reach their dream. The last dimension is alienated from other individuals. It is means that the laborers alienated from their society, because they have to focus to produce the product. They do not have much time to socialize with others.

The laborers in Reading, Pennsylvania do not get their rights as human beings. The company restraints their rights to get the welfare. They get low payment, even though they have been working hard without a day off. It's difficult for them to get career advancement. They cannot save money for their future life. The laborers were forced to work every day so that they do not have time to socialize. They also do not get the retirement fund. They are stressed out because they do not have the chance to change their life to be better.

The analysis of this play also uses context-based interpretation. Guerin (2005) states that context-based interpretation is the approach of analyzing and interpreting of the text. This approach means that the analysis of the play involved the phenomenon that really happens in the real world and also based on the circumstance of culture, and social. It means that some of fictional devices such as character, setting, plot and the meaning of the circumstances help the reader to reveal the meaning of this play.

The process of analyzing this play uses some fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting. The most crucial fictional devices to revealing the meaning of this play is character. According to Childs and Fowler (2006:23), character is the fictional representation of a person, which is likely to change, both as a presence in literature and as an object of critical attention, much as it changes in society. Ideas of the place of the human in the social order, of human individuality and self-determination, clearly shift historically; and this is often mimed in literature by the relation of characters to actions or webs of story.

Meanwhile, according to Abrams and Harpham (2012:46) characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it-the dialogue-and from what they do-the action. A character may remain essentially “stable,” or unchanged in out-look and disposition, from beginning to end of a work, or may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual process of development or as the result of a crisis. In this play the characters are the laborers who cannot get the welfare from the steel mill, the company where they work.

The second device is plot (conflict). Plot is sequence of events for the things that happen in the story. Abrams and Harpham (2012:293) state that plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects. As a plot evolves it arouses expectations in the audience or reader about the future course of events and actions and how characters will respond to them. There are two kinds of conflict, they are internal conflict and external conflict. The characters in this play have external conflict. The character have been exploited by the company. As a labor they do not get their rights. They live in poverty, even though they have been work very hard.

The third device is setting. This device include the time, place taken in the story, situation, condition, and atmosphere or mood that happen along the story. According to Barnet and Cain (2014:139) setting includes not only the physical surrounding but a point or several points in time. The background against which we see the characters and the happenings may be specified as morning or evening,

spring or fall, and this temporal setting in a good story will probably be highly relevant; it will probably be part of the story's meaning, perhaps providing an ironic contrast or perhaps exerting an influence on the character. In this analysis, the setting occur when Reading, Pennsylvania sustain the economic crisis and become the poorest city in America and it is affect the characters condition.

1.9 Methodology

The analysis of play *Sweat* (2015) is done through the text and context-based interpretation. The play analyze by using fictional devices on drama such as character, plot, setting, and stage direction. The devices are connected each other and give support to reveal the meaning of the play. Character is used to reveal the act done by the characters through analyze attitude, believe, and action. Plot is used to solve the conflict that face by the character. Setting has function to show the situation, atmosphere, and condition face by the character. This analysis used the concept alienation by Karl Marx.