

DISCUSSION OF VICTORIAN UTILITARIANISM IN PITT'S THE STRING OF PEARLS OR THE FIEND OF FLEET STREET

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas sebuah melodrama karya George Dibdin Pitt berjudul *The String of Pearls or The Fiend of Fleet Street* (1847) dengan fokus pada kritik konsep utilitarianisme dari Jeremy Bentham dan pengikutnya, John Stuart Mill yang terefleksikan lewat karya sastra ini. Ditulis di pertengahan abad ke-19, kisah tragis Sweeney Todd tidak pernah habis dibahas karena muatan kritik sosialnya yang sangat mengena dan masih relevan di masa kontemporer ini. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, penelitian menunjukkan bagaimana melodrama ini merefleksikan sekaligus mengkritik konsep filosofis dominan saat itu dan ide-ide fundamental dari zaman Victoria di Inggris. Berdasarkan hasil analisis, ditemukan bahwa karya ini berhasil mengkontestasi konsep utilitarianisme sebagai filsafat etika di satu sisi dan filsafat politik di sisi lain lewat dua karakter utamanya. Disimpulkan juga bahwa modernitas zaman Victoria di Inggris ternyata merefleksikan nilai-nilai paradoks yang ditunjukkan lewat masyarakatnya dan apa yang terjadi pada masa itu. Zaman tersebut, yang kelihatannya seperti zaman "*Gilded Age*" menunjukkan ketidakseimbangan perkembangan antara kemajuan industri serta teknologi dan kemakmuran masyarakatnya.

Kata kunci: Utilitarianisme, Melodrama, Zaman Victoria

ABSTRACT

This article discusses a melodrama written by George Dibdin Pitt entitled *The String of Pearls or The Fiend of Fleet Street* (1847) with a focus on critique of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill's concept of utilitarianism which is reflected in this literary work. Although written in the middle of the 19th century, the tragic story of Sweeney Todd is timeless as the social criticism in it is very striking and is still relevant to this contemporary era. This research is a qualitative study that shows how the literary work reflects the dominant philosophical thought at that time and the basic ideas of the English Victorian era. The findings show that this work succeeds in contesting utilitarianism as an ethical philosophy on the one hand, and political philosophy on the other hand, through its two main characters. It is also concluded that the modernity of the English Victorian era reflects paradoxical values shown through the society and events at that time. That era, which seems to be "*Gilded Age-like*," shows the imbalance of development between industrial and technological advancement and the prosperity of society.

Keywords: Utilitarianism, Melodrama, Victorian era

INTRODUCTION

The 19th century melodrama *The String of Pearls or Fiend of Fleet Street* (1847) by George Dibdin Pitt is an adaptation from a 12th century French ballad. In terms of academic research on the play, there are limited numbers of analyses on this melodrama. Mack has so far written the most comprehensive literature on Sweeney Todd in *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd: The Life and Times of an Urban Legend*, which becomes the central reference of this analysis. For reference on Victorian drama, Williams' canonical work *The Representation of London in Regency and Victorian Drama (1821-1881)* remains the best in elaborating the progress and function of Victorian drama in that period. The melodrama was adapted from the so-called 'penny dreadful' fiction that appeared periodically in a newspaper, which loosely defined as an idea to describe, "all depressing tales of horror and terror" (Kimball, 2017: 4)

The fiend of Fleet Street as the title suggests is tied to the infamous story of Sweeney Todd, indubitably a name that has made its mark in the literary world. Originating from an urban legend in France, Sweeney Todd's infamy has gone beyond the border of cultures and nations. Starting as a French ballad, the narrative has built its way up from prose, to drama, marionettes, ballet, opera, and radio plays to, eventually, film. The earliest English written prose on Sweeney Todd's legend appeared in installments in a periodical paper, *The People's Periodical and Family Library*, in 1846-47. It was written by Thomas Peckett Prest under the title "The String of Pearls: A Romance." It first gained fame in Victorian society were then easily thrilled and excited by gothic stories, as Mack (2007) states, "From the 1780s and 90s onward, England—and London in particular—was to be increasingly obsessed with narratives of terror...gothic images of destruction proliferated in an era of anxious political and social change" (17).

George Dibdin Pitt was the first to transform prose into melodrama form. There is not much literature about Pitt beyond his famous melodrama on Sweeney Todd. He was born in 1799 and since his family was close to theater life it was inevitable that George also would find his livelihood there. His first drama, *My Own Blue Bell*, was written in 1831. He worked as a stage manager and later was a stock-author until his death in 1855. He was one of the dramatists who worked in an assembly-line manner at that time, writing as many melodramas as he could to fulfill the market demand.

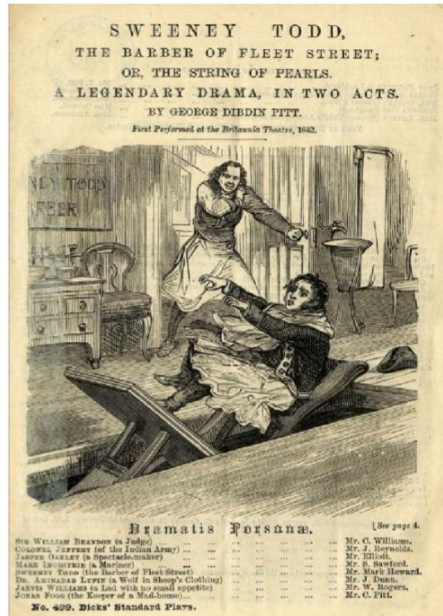


Image 1.

Title page of *Sweeney Todd* by G.D. Pitt (1842)
(Elliot G., 2020)

Pitt's version of *Sweeney Todd* is faithful to the original prose. It tells about a barber named Sweeney Todd in London during the Victorian period. He collaborated in a devilish plan with Mrs. Lovett, owner of a meat pie shop. Todd would kill his customers, steal all their belongings and at the same time provide fresh human flesh for Mrs. Lovett, who turned it into meat pies. They then shared the profit. In the beginning, they managed to get away with it, but their employees and the authority's suspicion grew stronger and in the end their devious action was revealed; they both met a tragic end. The legend of Sweeney Todd is still relevant today, as its message is universal and timeless. It never loses its appeal to an audience as Mack (2007) states,

“... (it) has demonstrated itself to be peculiarly resonant; each successive generation has been compelled to use the mythic and metaphorical elements inherent in the tale of Sweeney Todd—the themes of avarice, ambition, love, desire, appetite, vanity, atonement, retribution, justice and cannibalism in all its many forms—effectively to mirror its own concerns, both as individuals and as members of society at large” (xvii).

In addition, Labrande (2020) argues that “its potential did not wane and Sweeney Todd as a character lived on, until the 1979 Broadway musical adaptation by Stephen Sondheim made it a Neo-Victorian fixture of contemporary popular culture, as *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* was acclaimed as a musical theatre masterpiece” (1-2). From there,

Hollywood taps into Sweeney's popularity through Tim Burton's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon of Barber Street* in 2007, with Johnny Depp as Sweeney and Helena Bonham Carter as Mrs. Lovett.

It is often said that melodrama is devoid of values and full of exaggerated emotions and dialogues. In addition, the melodrama of that period is seen as escapism for lower-class people from their routine and stressful everyday activities. Thus, it is a challenge to show how this melodrama reflects the philosophical values and basic ideas of the Victorian period that it carries around despite its being unpleasantly judged.

The English Victorian period, roughly from 1830 to 1901, is often referred to as tumultuous, a period of early modernization in Europe, when people witnessed great achievements in technology and industry, particularly in England. It was a period full of contrasts existing side by side; as Jenkyns (1992) states, the Victorians were fond of contrasts and dichotomies (17): science versus romance, technological progression versus moral regression, Greek versus Gothic, upper class versus lower class and the Tories versus the Whigs.

In art, it was the flowering age of melodrama and the celebration of neo-classicism. The shift to Greek art was reflected in the term "Victorian Olympus" (Leoussi, 1998) which refers to the subject matter taken from Greek history and mythology. On the other hand, science and technological advancement took place as the result of the British Empire's desire to conquer the world. This shift not only influenced art production but also influenced the education, religious, scientific, and political contexts (Leoussi, 1998: xix). To conclude, the Victorian period is a problematic one in England. As Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* poetically shares his feeling on Victorian England, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity..." (3).

The 19th century English Industrial Revolution was marked by the development of cities, factory construction, and increased urban population, and, at the same time, it also witnessed increased unemployment, crime, and poverty. Urbanization was inevitable due to the centralization of working opportunities in the new modernized developing cities. In addition, the imbalance between jobs and immigrants caused unemployment and poverty. Gilmour (1993) states that modernity in England was out in the open from the evidence found in the material and technological advancement, the continuous growth of London and other industrial cities population, the construction of railways, steam navigation and the electric telegraph (4).

Other consequences were a wider gap between social classes and other social problems. London was in many ways a jungle, just like other developing European cities around that period. Behind its glimmering modern advancement, for a far greater number of less fortunate inhabitants London was a city of "... narrow lanes and musty counting houses, with tall chimneys vomiting black clouds, and huge masses of doors and warehouses with doors and cranes ranged one above another...it was a city of despair and the darkest crime" (Mack, 2007: 74).

In the context of drama, Reynolds (1936) argues that “The best drama flourished when the artistic spirit of the age was at once conservative and progressive” (20). Nineteenth-century England did just that. It was a moment of conservative (with the return to Greek art) versus progressive (technological advancement in a theater) is how Williams (2000) defines melodrama as involving, “... stage machinery, the use of spectacle, a direct appeal to elementary feelings, a lack of psychological investigation, and the simple defeat of vice by virtue” (4). That is why the 19th century was the period of the flowering of melodrama in England. Kilgariff (1974) offers another viewpoint on this matter, “Melodrama’s essential melancholy and Gothic romanticism were exactly suited to the moods of that strangely dark and passionate age, the nineteenth century” (11). Further, Reynolds (1936) states that the “... reflection of modern life was left largely to melodrama” (127). All the above citations explicitly mention contrasting matters in the context of Victorian melodrama. Melodrama production was, then, supported by technological development; producers applied new technology in making stage spectacles. By the same token, modernization also provided playwrights with fresh new issues. Williams (2000) says that melodrama had a central function in the Victorian period. It could reach large audiences of common people and it provided them with an interpretation of the conditions in which they lived, as well as a means of escape from their miserable lives (6).

The Victorian Period was also one of the Gothic Revivals that could be seen clearly from the architecture and was also reflected in literature. The majority of people in Victorian London were obsessed with horror, gothic, or mythic stories, probably due to their re-attachment to Greek art and myth, and in reaction to dark, mysterious and sinister Victorian London. Pitt did not miss this opportunity to compose a gothic melodrama from the Sweeney Todd narration. He inserted such elements of gothic as blood, violence, dark alleys, a secret tunnel, and a trapdoor to complete the gothic ambiance of the melodrama.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative research and interdisciplinary in nature as it combines literary, historical, and philosophical approaches, to be specific the concept of utilitarianism. In the context of the literary approach, the primary data for the research is the plot and the characters, supported by references as the secondary data. A close reading of the literary work is required to gather and classify information contained in the play, especially through the aspect of the plot and the characters through their action and dialogue. The play is then put against utilitarianism thought and the historical background of the Victorian era, which includes the values and the condition of the society. From there, the analysis is conducted and the conclusion is drawn to show how the play reflects the paradoxical values of utilitarianism during the Victorian era.

From the philosophical aspect of the research, there are two significant English philosophers whose thoughts and concepts influenced the Victorian way of life and which were reflected in melodrama. They are Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Jeremy Bentham focuses on the meaning of happiness or prosperity for the majority under the concept of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is an ethical philosophy that attempts to regulate a mode of behavior and decision-making based on the happiness of the greater majority. He argues that every human action is ruled by two elements—pleasure and pain—and that both are quantified. His principle of utility is referred to as 'hedonistic utilitarianism', as he focuses on physical pleasure and pain. Every human action is based on achieving as much pleasure and avoiding as much pain as possible. Happiness is measured by maximizing pleasure, the more pleasure something gives, the happier one will be. To ensure that everyone performs for the good of the majority, he suggests the authority impose a social external sanction of punishment and blame. This is his political philosophy. The realization of this concept was the penitentiary and the insane asylum where he introduced his panopticon method. To reach an ideal society, the government should be able to make decisions and regulations that bring happiness to the majority, what Bentham calls the principle of utility that "defines the meaning of moral obligation by reference to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people who are affected by performance of an action" (Kemerling, 2002: 2).

John Stuart Mill is one of Bentham's followers of utilitarianism. He extends the utilitarianism concept, in some ways differing from Bentham, although his definition is very similar. He states, "By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure" (Anderson 46). Mill made improvements in the utilitarianism structure, meaning, and application. In Utilitarianism he argues that "the principle of utility is the ultimate principle of morality, that those actions are right which are likely to result in the greatest net pleasure, considering both the quantity and quality of the pleasures or the least displeasures, taking everyone affected into account" (Anderson, 2000: 62). He disagrees with how Bentham argues that all pleasures can be quantified. He also comes up with a more detailed elaboration on the concept of pleasure and pain. Bentham's pleasure and pain are merely physical, while Mill states that pleasure and pain are not only physical but also intellectual. In fact, he argues that a person's ultimate goal is not physical pleasure, but moral or intelligent pleasure which pleasurable is determined by "... those who have experience of both types of pleasure (physical and intelligent)" (McCloskey, 1971: 69). On political philosophy, Mill comments on Bentham's strict external social sanction although he does not fully disagree with it. He argues that a person has an internal sanction that may prevent them from doing bad. This internal sanction can be in the form of a guilty feeling or conscience. In *On Liberty*, Mill (2001) strongly argues for individual liberty in opposition to the 'tyranny of the majority'. This view seems to negate his own concept of happiness of the

majority as it focuses on the individual who is free to achieve happiness in his or her own way.

DISCUSSION

Just like other melodramas of the Victorian period, *The String of Pearls* bears the marks of excessive emotions, dialogues and actions added to stunning, breathtaking spectacles. The audience is helplessly drawn into this different world, to a realm where the hero is gallant, the heroine is adorable and the villain is repulsive. The idyllic realm is wrapped up with the victory of virtue over vice. All these too-good-to-be-true images might be the cause of critics' condemnation of melodrama. Art is supposed to represent real life and melodrama overdoes it. Nevertheless, melodrama has had its golden age and in many ways is still adored today, most likely because of its unique mode of performance. In the Victorian Period, the life burdens of middle-lower class people were in some way temporarily lifted by watching melodrama. It was an escape from harsh reality and this is one of the reasons it flowered during Victorian times. Production of melodrama was increasing, and just as Pitt did, the dramatists had to work day and night to fulfill the market demand for melodrama. In such hectic production, questions may arise: Is it possible that all melodramas during the Victorian period were devoid of values and offered nothing but entertainment? Is it possible for the audience or reader at that time or any other period to gain some knowledge of the values or basic thoughts of the Victorian period? Reynolds (1936) argues that in such hard conditions with many social problems, "... it was very difficult for any vital form of literature to dissociate itself from social problems in the nineteenth century" (8). Further, he states that the national conscience was aroused by all the miseries the lower class suffered. Reynolds' argument seems to resolve the questions clearly, but then Kilgariff (1974) defies it by stating that melodrama is a kind of entertainment "... based upon the concept of man as an individual rather than an abstraction of ideas or philosophies" (16). He also states that the debility of the drama was caused by "materialism that conquered art; rationalistic hedonism permeated down to the boards of our theatres, and left them impoverished" (Kilgariff, 1974:16).

I grounded the research on *The String of Pearls* from these two contradicting views of melodrama. From my first reading of it, there is hardly anything that could provide access to the reality of the Victorian period. It seems that the melodrama only offers spectacles and entertainment. My first reading concurs with Kilgariff's argument. However, through a more detailed and thorough reading and analysis supported by sufficient knowledge about the prominent philosophical figures of that period, I gained abundant information as well as reflection of Victorian values and thoughts. The same melodrama turns out to possess 'hidden' unintended reflection and criticism of the times. I argue that both critics were right in their own way; *The String of Pearls* can be read as mere melodrama or as something beyond that.

The first thing that struck me when I read the melodrama thoroughly is its stark reference to the philosophical thoughts of two prominent English

thinkers: Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. The melodrama deals with matters such as poverty, unemployment, repression, famine, greed, individuality, wealth, and happiness, all of which point to the concepts offered by the two philosophers.

The second thing that attracted me was the list of dramatis personae which somehow reflects the social 'British Bee Hive' during Victorian period (image 1). There is a Judge who represents the higher class, a Colonel who represents the less high class, followed by a Mariner, a Spectacle-maker, a keeper of a mad house, a lapidary, a barber, a meat pie shop owner, a wife, a daughter, an apprentice boy, a lad with no small appetite, and a minister who is referred to as 'a wolf in sheep's clothing'. I notice that they all represent the realm of social division in the Victorian period. It is clear from the character list that the majority is lower class people, but the powerful and powerless among these people are also obvious. Todd and Lovett are in a way the 'authority' or the new capitalist class that rose during the Industrial Revolution. They exploit others for the sake of their own happiness. In this context, they become the extreme distortion of hedonistic utilitarianism par excellence. The melodrama seems to criticize the new capitalist class and the vagueness of utility concept, in particular its suspicious inclination toward individual pursuit of happiness.

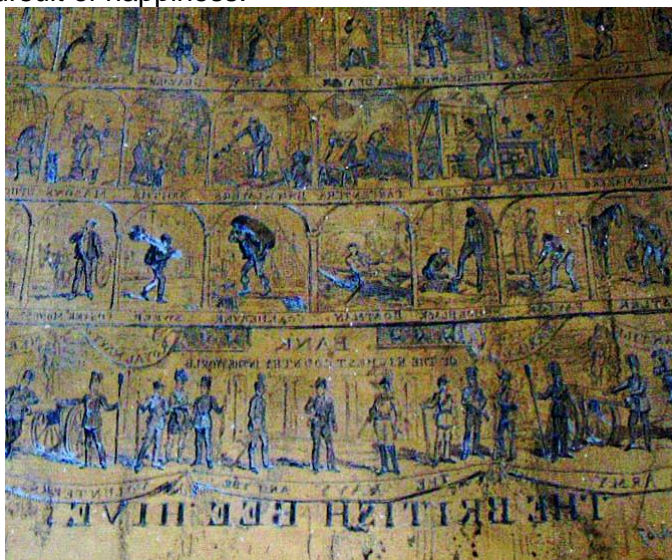


Image 2: The British Bee Hive by George Cruikshank (1840) on a copper plate

Through his artwork, Mellby (2009) states that "The section displays fifty-four 'cells,' with each class and trade represented, from the royal family to the omnibus conductor, and having for a foundation the army, the navy, and the volunteers; surmounted by the crown, with the royal standard on one side, and the union jack on the other". The list of the dramatis personae has clearly elaborated this social class division and further satirized this structure as well.

Sweeney Todd's action in cutting his rich customers' throats is a perfect example of how the melodrama seemingly satirizes the class division. His customers are mostly rich people or sailors who have just returned from faraway lands and brought some treasures with them. This, in many ways, is closely relevant to how Britain at that time became the 'ruler of the sea' and many young people were eager for adventures in strange lands.

Pitt also remarks on the hypocrisy of the upper-class people represented by Colonel Jeffery and Dr. Aminadab Lupin, who both lust after Johanna. Jeffery is Johanna's fiancé's friend and Lupin is Johanna's guardian. I notice that both characters can be seen as a contrast representation of Bentham's and Mill's utilitarianism concept of pleasure. Bentham's concept is not focused on the individual but more to the public. The greatest happiness and moral justification "... has an essential *public* dimension: it is justification "by a person addressing himself to the community" (Bentham, 1970: 28). In his first dialogue with Johanna, Lupin attempts to "establish his position" by referring to and acting as the authority who gives him consent to 'take care' of Johanna. The person who has authority over Johanna is her mother, and Lupin himself, as a minister, in some ways acts as the authority. If the greatest happiness is the greatest of the majority, then Lupin attempts to be the majority. "Lupin: Yes, maiden. I am that chosen vessel whom the profane call 'Mealy Mouth'. I come hither at the bidding of thy respected mother to partake of a vain mixture which rejoiceth in the name of 'tea' (*detains her*)...Thy mother hath decided that I take thee unto my bosom, even as a wedded wife" (Pitt, 2011). Obviously Lupin undermines Bentham's moral principle that says "a standard of right and wrong, with respect to every other man... must be neither 'despotical' nor 'anarchical'" (Postema, 2006: 30) although he does properly reflect the principle of utility. However, it is arguable that in such difficult economic conditions in London, one might sacrifice one's happiness to gain pleasure or elevate to a higher social level. Lupin's social status is noticeably higher than Johanna's and her mother's, and such an offer is conceptually accepted by the principle of utility although morally wrong.

On the other hand, Jeffery in a way reflects Mill's thought on internal sanction that he claims everyone has. Although Jeffery loves Johanna and comes from a higher social class (a colonel) than Johanna and her fiancé, he manages to restrain himself from doing an immoral action to fulfill his desire/pleasure. This is obvious from his inner conflict in a soliloquy, "I love her, but she seems in no respect willing to enchain her heart. Alas! How sad it is for me, that the woman who above all others I would wish to call my own, instead of being a joy to me, I have only encountered that she might impart a pang to my soul" (Pitt, 2011). Jeffery has a conscience and realizes that he cannot force his desire to love Johanna. Both characters embody the idea of how the principle of utility related to morality is applied. Lupin reflects the weakness of Bentham's principle of utility which is quite rigid compared to Mill's. Lupin's desired pleasure is merely physical toward Johanna, while

Jeffery's desired pleasure is more psychological as clearly seen from his soliloquy.

Bentham argues that pain and pleasure are the sovereign masters of the moral life on the assumption that everyone aims at pleasure and avoids pain. Thus, all human actions that are related to pain and pleasure can become the basis of morality. He believes that promoting good to the community is the aim of morality. Further, he states that pleasure is related to good things which focus on human beings not on an "abstract entity" such as community. It leads to "individual welfare" where happiness is understood in terms of human subjective feelings. Mill adds that moral judgment should be impartial. To determine whether our actions are qualified as "right" and not partial, there should be an "elite" who has competence to judge the quality of our actions. Both Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett distort their concept of moral judgment. They embody the idea of "individual welfare" and subjective happiness. In an extreme melodramatic way, they expose this "egoistic view" of happiness. They take full advantage of the meaning of happiness based on subjective feelings. To them, what is morally right is whatever action leads them to achieving their goal: happiness. As happiness is subjective, they may disregard other people's views on happiness. Thus, they try to gain as much pleasure as they can. They murder others so they can get rich and at the same time avoid the pain of poverty. Their moral judgment may be based on the thought that they are doing a favor to the community by "reducing" the population which is already excessive and providing a "food supply" for the community. In a way it reflects Bentham's concept of happiness of the majority (except for the victims). Todd and Lovett are egoistic individuals par excellence. It can be seen from Todd's soliloquy, "... Mrs Lovett, too, grows scrupulous and dissatisfied; I've had my eye on her for some time, and fear she intends mischief. A little poison, skillfully administered, may remove any unpleasantness in that quarter..." (Pitt, 2011). Todd plans to remove all "unpleasantness" which means things that hinder him from achieving his personal pleasure. Mill further states that "... if each person's happiness is a good to that person then the general happiness must be a good to the aggregate of all persons" (Skorupski, 2006: 52). This statement seems to take for granted that everyone's happiness is the same, while it can in many ways be very different, just like the meaning of happiness to Todd and Lovett.

Another flaw of utilitarianism is that happiness is viewed from the *result*, not the process. Thus, the result of Todd's and Lovett's egocentric actions is probably for the greater majority happiness; they become rich and being rich is certainly what the majority wants in such a difficult condition. Some people such as Tobias and Jarvis get jobs at their place, and people are grateful for the abundant meat pies Mrs. Lovett provides. To defend his concept against the egoist, Mill comes up with the concept of impartiality that still has a flaw. "The principle is a mere form of words without rational signification, unless one person's happiness, supposed equal in degree (with the proper allowance made for kind), is counted for exactly as much as another's" (Skorupski, 2006: 52). This is another ambivalent statement as it

would be difficult to judge which action to take and whose action is more important for the happiness of the majority. In this context, Todd's and Lovett's actions express an extreme application of the partial moral judgment as well as a strong satire on the flaws of Bentham's and Mill's utilitarianism concept on moral judgment. Their actions are morally wrong, they sacrifice some people but the result is for the good of the majority.

To make sure everyone does good for the majority, Bentham offers a social external sanction of punishment and blame that can make people feel suffering when they do wrong. Mill adds that besides social external sanctions, he argues for the existence of a human internal sanction in the form of a guilty feeling or conscience. Both social external and internal sanctions are reflected in the last scene when Todd becomes a witness in court. At first, he tries to blame Jeffery for the death of Mark, Johanna's fiancé, by secretly putting Mark's string of pearls in Jeffery's possession. When Todd is called as a witness, Mark, who turns out to be alive, disguises himself as a ghost, and finally, Todd, out of fear, admits everything. In this case, Todd's fear triggers his guilty feeling (internal sanction). The court scene itself refers to Bentham's social external sanction: enforce punishment and suffering on those who do wrong.

The melodrama also reflects Bentham's concept of regulating society through construction of asylums. For Bentham, people who are "constrained, involuntary and unwilling" should be "separated" and supervised in an asylum or a penitentiary to ensure the well-regulated and safe society. To control the place, he offers a method called panoptican. Through this panoptic method, the guards of an asylum or penitentiary can easily supervise the inhabitants who do not know whether the guards are there or not. There are two asylum scenes in the melodrama. I noticed that the melodrama satirizes the existence of the asylum, particularly on how people may arbitrarily claim that one is insane for the sake of their happiness/pleasure. Asylum can be misused by people who want to get rid of someone. Tobias, Todd's apprentice, finds out that Todd has murdered lots of people. For fear of being caught, Todd sends him to the asylum. Todd pays Jonas, the asylum keeper, to keep quiet about it and tells him to let Tobias die in the asylum. It is not for the first time Todd has sent his apprentice to the asylum and let them die, as seen in Todd's dialogue with Jonas, "I am rather unfortunate with my boys. I have got another here who has shown such decided symptoms of insanity, that it becomes, I regret to say, absolutely necessary to place him under your care" (Pitt, 2011). Further, the concept of happiness for the greater majority does not seem to work inside the asylum, the inhabitants have no right whatsoever to feel pleasure; on the contrary, they only feel pain. This is a form of satire on Bentham's political philosophy that seems to be inhumane, in particular toward the inmates and the lunatics, as proven in the following dialogue, "*Jonas (to the keepers)*: You will take this lad under your care, as he seems extremely feverish and unsettled—shave his head and put a straight waistcoat on him. Let him be conveyed to one of the dark, damp cells, as too much light encourages his wild delirium" (Pitt, 2011). The situation for

the unwanted and marginalized is, as the lad in the quotation above will experience, dark and uncertain, untouched by Bentham or Mill's political philosophy of pleasure.

CONCLUSION

Bentham and Mill have a slightly different idea on the greatest pleasure that all human seeks. Bentham states that the most intense and qualified pleasure is the greatest human goal. Mill goes farther by saying that the greatest human goal is not the physical quantifiable goal, but intellectual pleasure. Todd and Lovett in a way reflect both views on the ultimate life goal. Just as Bentham's view is perfected by Mill, Todd's and Lovett's effort to achieve their happiness also develops. At first, they only think about the quantifiable pleasure in the form of wealth. When they have achieved this, according to Bentham, they have reached their ultimate pleasure. But then Todd and Lovett search for more, they need acknowledgment from others, Todd wants to be acknowledged as not only the richest but also the most skillful barber in town, while Lovett as the richest and most skillful meat pie maker. Their goal has developed from quantifiable physical pleasure to a more intellectual pleasure. However, unlike Mill's idea that the quality of the pleasure should be judged by someone who knows well the level of all pleasures, Todd and Lovett are basing their pleasure quality on their own assessment.

Utilitarianism as an ethical and political philosophy is strongly contested in the melodrama through the two major characters, Todd and Lovett. Bentham's and Mill's different concepts of utility are noticeably reflected and satirized. The question of which action should be taken to achieve the happiness of the greatest majority is constantly debated and criticized. In many ways the argument is still relevant to today's ethics. People today often argue about certain decisions or policies their government made which they think are unfair to some people. Bentham's and Mill's flawed utilitarianism are constantly attacked. Their idealistic concept of happiness seems to have no solid ground when applied to the lower-class society. In such harsh conditions, people already face difficulties in achieving their own pleasure or happiness, let alone prioritizing others. Whichever action or decision they take tends to focus on their own happiness, just as in the case of Todd and Lovett. The condition is more like "the survival of the fittest situation", where the cleverest and the strongest will survive and the rest will perish. To talk about maximum pleasure or intellectual pleasure as the greatest ultimate happiness among poor and hungry people is useless. This statement probably represents what the melodrama thinks about the utilitarianism.

Modernity, now and then, is paradoxical. English Victorian modernity also reflected the paradoxical values that show through the society and events that occurred at that time. This "Gilded Age-like" period is reflected through the unbalanced development between industrial and technological advancement and social prosperity. A work of art becomes the mirror of the

imbalance, as reflected by *The String of Pearls*. It provides entertainment for lower class people but, paradoxically, its way of providing an escape from the difficult condition is done by exploiting and exaggerating *the* difficult condition. However superficial and valueless the melodrama at that time is regarded, it somehow 'unconsciously' reflects the way of thinking and values of its period as *The String of Pearls* shows. Through a thorough reading and analysis, the melodrama poses "unintended" criticism toward the values and politics of the Victorian period.

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