In the 1840s the young Friedrich Engels reported from the industrial areas of England: “It is not surprising that the workers should drink heavily. Sheriff Alison asserts that 30,000 workers are drunk in Glasgow every Saturday night. And this is certainly no underestimate. . . . It is particularly on Saturday evenings that intoxication can be seen in all its bestiality, for it is then that the workers have just received their wages and go out for enjoyment at rather earlier hours than on other days of the week. On Saturday evenings the whole working class streams from the slums into the main streets of the towns. On such an evening in Manchester I have seldom gone home without seeing many drunkards staggering in the road or lying helpless in the gutter. On Sunday the same sort of things happen, but with less noisy disturbances. And when the revellers have no money left they go to the nearest pawnshop with whatever they have. . . .

When we consider the vast extent of drunkenness among the English workers, Lord Ashley's assertion that the workers spend 25,000,000 pounds sterling a year on spiritous liquor can be readily accepted. It is easy to see the consequences of widespread drunkenness—the deterioration in personal circumstances, the catastrophic decline in health and morals, the breaking up of homes." If one compares this depiction of proletarian drunkenness in the nineteenth century with similar complaints from the sixteenth century, little enough seems to have changed. The texts agree down to their very wording. Again we have the vision of drunkards reeling and wallowing in the gutter, as distressing to observers of drunkenness in the age of the Reformation as in that of industrialization.

Are we to conclude from this that in these three centuries nothing had changed in the character, quality, quantity, or social import of drinking and drunkenness? Did people in the age of the Industrial Revolution still drink and get drunk in the same way, with the same motives, the same consequences, and the same drinks as people in the sixteenth century?

On the contrary, the success of the new beverages coffee, tea, and chocolate prove that in the interim a quite considerable shift in drinking mores had occurred. As we have seen, these hot beverages deprived alcohol of the status it had once enjoyed as the universal drink. Yet the sobriety they established was limited to specific sectors of the population, primarily the middle class. From the seventeenth century on, the bourgeoisie found unrestrained drinking increasingly offensive. Alcohol was not banned, of course, but it was domesticated. The middle-class citizen drank moderately, and he drank in a private circle (at home, in his club, or out amid a table of "regulars"). In Victorian England stopping in at a pub became almost as scandalous as visiting a brothel.

Things were quite different, however, for the lower classes. They had never had a share in the coffee culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They remained bound to medieval custom in their drinking habits. Alcohol had an incomparably larger place in the lives of the proletariat than it did among the bourgeoisie. For the former, drink and drunkenness carried no social stigma; on the contrary, they were almost a symbol of class identity. In no other class did the archaic drinking rituals—toasting of drinking buddies, competing over how much you could
hold, etc.—survive as vigorously as they did among the working class. Traces of these rituals can still be glimpsed today in workers' pubs. Yet it would be pure romanticism, that is, pure cynicism, to describe the role of alcohol among the proletariat as nothing but a survival of these archaic customs. Alongside the motive of drinking to symbolize social fellowship, there is another motive at least as important—escapism. Workers do not drink out of sheer exuberance; they drink to cast off the misery of their lives for a few hours. In every age, even in the Middle Ages, alcohol has to some extent been a "cure for cares," "for what ails." It would be a mistake to idealize the past by suggesting that before industrialization peasants drank solely out of joie de vivre, while later workers "drowned their sorrows" in drink. Both motives have always been a part of drinking.

TRAGEDIES OF ALCOHOL
Pictorial narratives describing the ruinous path that led from the first swallow of gin to murder were very popular in nineteenth-century antialcohol propaganda. The illustrations shown here are taken from one such series: above, the youngest child has died due to the negligence of its alcoholic parents; top of facing page, the violent husband kills his wife; bottom of facing page, the husband goes mad at the sight of his wife's corpse.
connections. Alcoholic inebriation gave way to alcoholic stupor. The eighteenth-century novelist one penny, assuring them that they might be dead drunk for two pence, and have straw for they lay until they recovered some use of their faculties, and then they had recourse to the cultures. The traditional drinking patterns could not cope with this highly concentrated inebriant. The same mischievous potion."

conveyed those wretches who were overwhelmed with intoxication. In these dismal caverns destructiveness was comparable to the effect whiskey later had upon the North American Indian Gin struck the typically beer-drinking English populace like a thunderbolt. Its social nothing. They accordingly provided cellars and places strewed with straw, to which they Drunk and intoxication totally lost their characteristic role of establishing social bonds or compound set up painted boards in public, inviting people to be drunk for the small expense of same mischievous potion.

In this sense the so-called gin epidemic was a historical episode. But for that very reason it offered clear indications of the interconnection between the Industrial Revolution and the need for the sugar content of the plants from which they are prepared. In liquor this relationship with nature was severed. Distillation raised the alcohol content far beyond the natural limits. To be intoxicating liquors, and particularly by that poison called Gin [at the time the generic term in English for all liquors]; which I have great comment upon the so-called epidemic of the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding, the author and Hogarth's contemporary, wrote on this subject: "I have reason to think is the principal sustenance (if it may be so called) of those wretches who are overwhelmed with intoxication, and particularly by that poison called Gin."

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Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century industrialization brought such an intensification of the inebriation process is gradual, liquor is tossed off, and intoxication is more or less precise, distilled spirits contained ten times the alcohol of traditional beer—which could not help the traditional lifestyle as industrialization had on the craft of weaving. In fact, liquor and the medical. It seems to have been a concomitant of the new discipline to which the military was required measure of anaesthetization (that is, not intoxication) to make the soldier an integral part of the nation's armed forces. Liquor, which he received in his daily ration, served as a sort of physiological and psychological lubricant to his body, enfeebled through bad air and bad nutrition, urgently demands some stimulus from the sugar content of the plants from which they are prepared. In liquor this relationship with nature was severed. Distillation raised the alcohol content far beyond the natural limits. To be intoxicating liquors, and particularly by that poison called Gin [at the time the generic term in English for all liquors]; which I have great reason to think is the principal sustenance (if it may be so called) of those wretches who are overwhelmed with intoxication, and particularly by that poison called Gin."

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THE GIN PALACE
Caricature by Cruikshank. Hogarth's motif of the mentally incompetent alcoholic mother (see p. 154) is given a variant here in the mother who gives her child liquor. The drinkers stand inside a giant fox trap; Death stands by, ready to take them. The illustration is of interest not only for its moral message. It is one of the earliest pictures documenting the new mode of drinking while standing at the bar. (See also pp. 200 and 201.)

The gin epidemic has rightly been called a "social catastrophe of enormous proportions" (Monckton). Yet the drunkenness of the masses at this time merely reflected another social catastrophe. What was euphemistically termed "rural exodus," the "flight from the countryside," and in reality meant the expulsion of whole village populations from their indigenous soil through the so-called enclosures (another euphemism for expropriation by large landowners) formed the background, or rather the breeding ground, for the gin epidemic. The uprooted masses poured into the cities. There they found themselves exposed to a frightening, alien world. All their traditional self-definition, the old norms and lifeways, had suddenly broken down. The result was utter disorientation.

Gin held out the promise to working-class people to help them forget their unbearable situation at least momentarily. It provided alcoholic stupefaction, not social intoxication. So began solitary drinking, a form of drinking limited to industrialized Europe and America. In every other age and civilization drinking had been collective.

Liquor has never lost the stigma of having been involved with this first brutal phase of the Industrial Revolution. It would henceforth be considered the vicious form of alcohol. Beer in contrast was the benign alcoholic beverage: it represented, so to speak, the golden age. It was viewed—as in the engravings of Hogarth—as a guarantee of happiness, contentment, health. The world of beer was all right; with liquor the world came apart at the seams.

But this was the predominant view even at a time when liquor did not yet represent a threat. Thus a petition to the English Parliament from 1673 reads: "Before brandy, which is now become common and sold in every little ale-house come into England in such quantities as it now doth, we drank good strong beer and ale, and all laborious people (which are for the greater part of the Kingdom) their bodies requiring after hard labor, some strong drink to refresh them, did therefore every morning and evening used to drink a pot of ale or a flagon of strong beer, which greatly helped the promotion of our own grain, and did them no great prejudice; it hindereth not their work, neither did it take away their senses, nor cost them much money, whereas the prohibition of brandy would . . . prevent the destruction of His Majesty's subjects many of whom have been killed by drinking thereof, it not agreeing with their constitution."
also no political, life.

The history of the European workers' movement shows that from the outset the public houses were the working class as the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century coffeehouse had been for the middle class. You might even say that the alcohol that was drunk here had a stimulatory effect on rationality, sobriety, and individualism, whereas coffee stimulates the intellectual and social virtues.

On the other hand, theoreticians like Engels and Kautsky saw clearly how crucial practical importance. The first workers' associations in England, the so-called Friendly Societies and the Trade Unions, met in pubs. Members drank while they debated and discussed the problems of the working class. They would have liked best to channel the proletariat through a model on the working class. They would have liked best to channel the proletariat through an organization similar to the Coffeehouse, which stimulated the qualities and abilities crucial to their respective classes. Just as coffee stimulates rationality, sobriety, and individualism, alcohol stimulates the proletarian virtues of collectivity and solidarity. Socialist teetotalers like Viktor Adler, who sought to deprive the worker of alcohol, were essentially trying to impose a bourgeois-puritanical model on the working class. They would have liked best to channel the proletariat through a model on the working class. They would have liked best to channel the proletariat through an organization similar to the Coffeehouse, which stimulated the qualities and abilities crucial to their respective classes. Just as coffee stimulates rationality, sobriety, and individualism, alcohol stimulates the proletariat's virtues of collectivity and solidarity.

When Kautsky conceded this political role to the tavern, what he had in mind was the situation in Germany under the laws enacted under pressure by the Socialists, when all official meeting places were closed and the consumption of spirits was forbidden. "Without the tavern," says Kautsky, "the German proletariat has not only no social, but no political center, as is true even today. In the nineteenth century the tavern was as important a place for political activity as the parlor; if he wishes to get together with them, if he wishes to discuss with them common problems, he must go to the tavern. The working class has no salon at its disposal, he cannot receive his friends and his companions in his home."

Not only did the consumption of wine and beer not harm the working class, but it was actually physiologically and even politically salutary. Engels in his descriptions of alcohol abuse by the working class pointed out that alcohol was a necessary evil, but it was actually harmless but actually beneficial. (Clearly the two sides represent a new version of the Calvin-Luther opposition.) The Austrian socialist Viktor Adler, a defender of abstinence, offers a fine insight into the psychology of socialist self-discipline with his condemnation of beer drinking, which had more of an influence over them than ever. Serious and highly successful rebellions in the end of the 'twenties the lowering in price of brandy suddenly reached the industrial region of the Lower Rhine. Particularly in that region and specifically in Elberfeld-Barmen, the mass of the working population succumbed to drink. . . . It is even open to question whether the dullness which the north German workers in particular allowed the events of 1830 simply to ride over them, without being moved in any way by them, was to a great extent due to brandy, which had more of an influence over them than ever. Serious and highly successful rebellions.