

leave their mucky paw prints, but inside which the rich get richer in each case, but not much. Many of the world's leading cities becoming like the Berlin that Benjamin called a prison, and the newspaper essays in the 1920s and early 1930s, as well as in the *Arcades Project*, remains fascinating and instructive, and the zones of segregation, exclusion and control. His writing is compelling because he also found the opposite – flashes of the utopian in the abject – and suggested that cities as a result could provide solutions to, as well as be the causes of, alienation.

Especially if, as Benjamin sometimes did, you experienced the way that the appearance of things touched me with a magic wand. I sank into a dream of them; he wrote in 'Hashish in Marseilles'. 'People and things behave at such hours like those little stage sets and foot-rubbed, are electrified and fall at every moment into the most unusual relationships'. Benjamin found here what his beloved Baudelaire found when taking hashish in Paris nearly seventy years earlier – an artificial paradise. He felt, he recalled in 'Hashish in Marseilles', as joyful as Ariadne unwinding her thread:

And this joy is related to the joy of trance, as to the joy of creation. We go forward; but in so doing we not only discover the twists and turns of the cave, but also enjoy the pleasure of discovery against the background of the other, rhythmical bliss of unwinding the thread. The certainty of unrolling an artfully wound skein – is that not the joy of all productivity, at least in prose? And under hashish, we are enraptured prose-beings in the highest power.³²

Even in drug-induced reverie, Benjamin was dreaming like a Marxist, putting the joy of productivity and the dignity of labour at the heart of his vision. The trance-like work of unwinding the thread resembles D. H. Lawrence's very nearly contemporary poems of the late 1920s.

there is no point in work
unless it absorbs you
like an absorbing game
If it doesn't absorb you
it's never any fun,
don't do it.

When a man goes out to work
he is alive like a tree in spring,
he is living, not merely working.³³

The kind of work Benjamin and Lawrence blissfully celebrate here is precisely the kind of work denied in machine-age capitalism, wherein the worker is alienated from her labour, what she produces, and therefore from herself. This kind of work, too, is an antidote to passive consumerism; to what Adorno and Horkheimer would later call the culture-industry.

In the late 1920s, there was a thread binding Benjamin and Lawrence. The latter wrote:

Whatever man makes and makes it live
lives because of the life put into it.
A yard of Indian muslin is alive with Hindu life.
And a Navajo woman, weaving her rug in the pattern of her dream
must run the pattern out in a little break at the end
so that her soul can come out back to her.

Benjamin wrote in *One-Way Street* that 'Work on good prose has three steps: a musical stage when it is composed, an architectonic one when it is built and a textile one when it is woven.'³⁴ For both writers the joyful absorption in work is dialectical, a self-actualising process through which one weaves into being, not just text or textile, but oneself.

The thought that Benjamin unravels here – that one realises oneself through creative productive labour – was especially pertinent as capitalist production processes and capitalist dreams of endless