

Queer Temporality and the Poetics of Entrapment in Asset Manager Society

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As Brett Christophers has argued, we now live in an ‘asset manager society.’ Asset managers wield an outsized impact on everyday life, by controlling essential infrastructure, such as housing, education, energy, telecommunications, and health care. Combined with Christophers’ previous work on rentier capitalism, this work paints a bleak picture of the consolidation of control over assets since 2008. When asset managers and large rentiers control critical infrastructure *en masse*, everyday experiences of entrapment proliferate, from the trivial to the profound. Renters trapped in overpriced, asset-manager-controlled tenancies; gym users, caught in contracts with above-inflation fee rises, whose gym is part of a private equity firm’s investment portfolio; and asylum seekers detained in facilities managed by a for-profit prison and skills training company granted a large government contract are just a few of the many faces of the asset manager/rentier society Christophers describes. What might it look like to articulate asset manager society from the perspective of these everyday experiences of entrapment, and their specific temporalities? This paper offers a preliminary exploration of this question, by exploring the temporalities of asset manager entrapment, in dialogue with debates on queer temporalities and the temporalities of financial markets. I draw queer theory debates from Elizabeth Freeman, Eve Sedgwick, Jack Halberstam and others into dialogue with those on financial market temporalities, such as Elena Esposito’s *The Future of Futures*. As the conditions that led to the 2008 financial crisis give way to new configurations of assetization and asset manager power, there is need to update prior accounts of the ‘financialization of daily life’ (as Randy Martin termed it), to account for the everyday experiences of being trapped within ‘boiled frog’ asset manager contract conditions (in which an initial favourable rate becomes increasingly steep over time, as one finds one’s future being reconfigured as a future revenue stream). The pervasive condition of asset manager entrapment, which relentlessly perceives and pursues people’s futures as sources of future revenue or rent, seriously throws into question whether liberal conceptions of freedom will suffice as a critical ground upon which to found opposition to an asset manager’s vision of the future. Asset manager entrapment makes it increasingly difficult for many people to pursue the ‘good life’ and its associated ‘cruel optimism’ (as Lauren Berlant called it). Nor is it clear how, or from where, to begin to develop a critique of asset manager society. Could it be possible to start from the specificity of the experiences of entrapment under asset manager society? Entrapment is often understood – and experienced – as something passively suffered. However, despite this, I would like to open up a set of enquiries into being entrapped as a *practice*, of sorts – a set of experiences and acts within entrapped conditions that, when studied closely, upset the active/passive binary that seems, at first glance, to orient understandings of entrapment; and point to how the potential to live otherwise remains alive within baleful conditions of trapped futurity.

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