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### The violence of finance in Bait (Mark Jenkin, 2019)

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## Class and Contemporary UK Film and Television

The Violence of Finance in *Bait* (Mark Jenkin, 2019).

This paper examines *Bait* as a film that places a narrative of class conflict in dialogue with an experimental form, resulting in an aesthetic of politicised temporality that addresses decades of congealed class exploitation. I adapt Mark Fisher's concept of capitalist realism and his counter-aesthetics of eerie and weird hauntology as a means of thinking through the film's visualisation and auditisation of historical conflict.

When asked if he considered his film to be a 'Brexit film', Jenkin suggested that it is if Brexit is connected to decades of the neoliberal 'disfranchising of the working class, being completely abandoned and being put on the scrapheap'. *Bait*, from this perspective, can be understood in terms of its story of the abandonment of its characters to precarious employment and to unemployment and the wasting of their community by financialised dispossession. However, it does so in an experimental manner that embodies, in its form, temporal disjuncture and a wearing away of social relations. The film's purposeful deteriorations invoke the cinematic equivalent of the 'crackle' of vinyl records. Fisher describes crackle as 'the principal sonic signature of hauntology...Crackle makes us aware that we are listening to a time that is out of joint; it won't allow us to fall into the illusion of presence'. *Bait's* crackle, the deformations of its surface, its scratches and glitches, applied to its narrative of class exploitation, creates a hauntological neorealism that unsettles any reference to a punctual political issue, Brexit or otherwise, and instead mediates the sensation of historical crisis.

A close examination of *Bait's* form highlights how the film looks at and hears capitalism from the inside, i.e. not as something which is complete and settled (the fantasy of capital imagined in capitalist realism) but as something that is essentially incomplete and dependent upon the political decision to accede to mandatory intensive and expansive marketisation. This paper's claim is that *Bait's* use of post-synchronised dialogue and the distortions of its surface textures disrupt any phenomenological solidity of a capitalist realism that insists on the naturalness of marketisation. It will be argued that *Bait* is neither a timely Brexit allegory nor a timeless piece of cinematic art, rather the film's agitated heterotemporal perception offers a cohesively awkward critique of capitalist realism's enclosure of time within the neoliberal present.