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“‘Smile, Boys, Smile’: War Photographs, Photo-literature and the Connective
Memory of War in Beryl Bainbridge’s *Master Georgie*”

Decades after Ernst Jünger’s observation that “day in and day out, optical lenses were pointed at the combat zones alongside the mouths of rifles and cannons,” the photographs of war have prevailed in collective consciousness as carriers of the battlefield’s imagery. They have variably functioned as a source of information, subject of historical research, evidence of the troops’ glorious feats, or testimony of the war’s *terribilitá*, visual representations of atrocity. This paper submits that, within the context of photo-literature, the photographs of war could also act as instigators of a connective type of memory resulting in a dialogic exchange of different instances of warfare. Following an exploration of Beryl Bainbridge’s narrative strategy in *Master Georgie*, a novel set against the backdrop of the Crimean War, I will argue that the emphasis on the description of life on the sidelines and the novel’s “photographicity” lay the ground for the instillation of indeterminacy with reference to public history and for the employment of the photograph as *aide-mémoire* in its most fundamental, individual-related sense. The potential development of arbitrary associations between public history and the private images residing in the readers’ memory suggests that, when placed within photo-literature, the photographs of war may eventually lead to the emergence of images that highlight wartime violence as a connecting experience, irrespective of the specificities of a particular war.