

## A New Historicist Perspective of When We Were Orphans by Kazuo Ishiguro

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### Abstract

The "new" literary trend known as "new historicism," which gained popularity in the 1980s, emphasises personal histories to question the conventional perspective of the past. Authors popularised this approach. Since New Historicists maintain that there is more than one version of history, their primary focus is on analysing different interpretations of past events. This article aims to examine *When We Were Orphans* by Kazuo Ishiguro via the theoretical framework of the New Historicist movement and its critique of traditional historiography. Specifically, this analysis will focus on time, memory, and narrative technique to demonstrate how history is subjectively narrated in various ways and how personal and public histories are intertwined. Key ideas discussed in this piece centre on New Historicism, historical representation, the historicity and textuality of historical writings, memories, and Kazuo Ishiguro

We make up a story to explain away the facts we do not understand or refuse to accept, and then we build fiction around those facts. Only soothing fabrication, which we call history, can ease our tension and pain.

### Global History in Eleven Chapters

A new literary critical theory and movement known as New Historicism is emerged in the 1980s; it challenges the traditional presentation, objectivity, and universality of history by viewing "works of literature as historical texts." Since a text is a product of the social, political, and cultural forces of its age, New Historicists believe that it is difficult to view a text/work of literature as a solid, independent entity unaffected by the moment's external impacts. Thus, according to the New Historicists, a text is not a fixed, immutable thing but rather a product of the time and place in which it was written. As a result, it takes work to pin down a single, definitive interpretation that always works for everyone. Each new interpretation is made in a cloud of ambiguity, adding complexity to comprehending it.

The decade 1980s witnessed the ascent of a 'new' literary movement called 'new historicism'. This cultural shift asserts individual experiences on textbook interpretations of the past is doubtful. Since New Historicists emphasise on competing interpretations of the past, they put majority of their attention here. This article examines the novel, *When We Were Orphans*, by Kazuo Ishiguro from a New Historicist perspective to throw light on the novel's treatment of its historical subject matter. Here time, memory, and narrative technique are analysed to show how history is subjectively told in different ways and how personal and public histories are connected.

### Altering Occasions

When seen through the lens of New Historicism, it becomes clear that the protagonist, when discussing his inner history, makes subjective and unreliable interpretations of his past using his current way of thinking. He uses his adult mind and his recollections from his youth to track down his past. New Historicism is grounded in history, but it argues that the past must

be viewed through the lens of the present. Hence, only individual and subjective histories are to be taken into consideration. This concept is emphasised in *Learning to Curse* by Greenblatt (1990), the author responsible for the ideology of New Historicism. Cultures of the Early Modern Period: While New Historicism does not view historical processes as fixed and unchangeable, it highlights the limits within which human agency can operate. An individual's seemingly lonely strength as a creative genius is shown to be interwoven with collective societal vitality (Greenblatt, p. 221).

Greenblatt challenges the objective and universal depiction of history as a grand tale by asserting the many feasible explication of history. Because the novel's key topic is between real-time and the time of the protagonist/imagined narrator, also known as the imagined time, the novel's temporal shifts provide clear evidence. There were three distinct areas in Shanghai beginning in 1863: the International Settlement, the French concession, and the territory ruled by the Chinese (Ristaino, 1987, p. 9).

This novel's main focus. The novel's time structure is unstable since it changes from the beginning to the end. Readers should be wary of the depicted historical time since it has been tainted and misinterpreted by the protagonist's time/history. As a result, what is real and imagined is only sometimes clear. The present and the past, as well as real-time and imagined/remembered time, and presence and absence, become indistinguishable after Banks' trip to Shanghai.

Thus, the narrator confuses the reader's sense of time and place throughout the work by jumping back and forth between the past and the present, as well as between reality and fantasy. Its plot is not "presented in straight, chronological sequence" but rather "loosely constructed around a repeating encounter with some erroneous recollections," as Tim Christensen (2008) puts it (Christensen, 2008, p. 210). Time and place shift as the story is told by a future narrator about events that occurred in the present. Also, the narrator's revelations shift from section to section, with the story starting at a new point in time each time. Despite the author's claim that it is July 24, 1930, in London, the narrator's story in the first section begins, "It was the summer of 1923," implying a seven-year gap (Orphans, 3). Part Two begins in "London on May 15, 1931," and continues with various dates and times from that day. The story's narrator begins recounting events when he and his childhood friend Akira were only six years old. This must be a fond memory from his youth. The effect is that the readers, like Christopher Banks, get perplexed by the concept of time and the ability to move backwards and forth in it. The novel jumps back and forth in time to fill up the blanks left by the narrator's memory loss, and the readers are privy to his internal struggle to both recall and forget. The narrator is uncertain of what he recalls and has forgotten since he cannot move on from his childhood memories and the time and place they represent. As a result, the narrator and the readers experience a blurring of the boundary between the present and the past. At the end of the book, it becomes clear that Christopher Banks, now 60 years old, is narrating the story of Christopher Banks, now 30 years old, who is searching for his parents through recollections of Christopher Banks, then 9 years old. Christopher Banks, therefore, sees no clear delineation between the past and the present, between the actual and the imagined, and between the remembered and the forgotten. For instance, one of his most important recollections involves the mysterious absence of his father, which becomes a recurrent subject in the games he and his boyhood companion Akira played together. When Banks was young, he and his friends played a game in which they said his parents had disappeared and that his father was being held hostage "in a house someplace beyond the Settlement bounds." It is not surprising that this is the only thing he remembers clearly when he returns to Shanghai in his thirties in search of his family and Akira, but he cannot be sure that the game he recalls is the one they played (Orphans, 131). Banks acknowledges that he and his childhood friend Akira were always looking for new ways to pass the time, so they came up with "endless variants" of his father's narrative (Orphans, 131). Due to his intense need to reunite with his family, he

cannot tell the difference between the childhood games he played and the actual events that took place during his return many years later. When he finally returns to Shanghai, he spends days looking for the house in the Settlement where he believes his parents are being held hostage.

Because Christopher Banks and his boyhood pal were often switching things up, it is clear that Christopher's recollections of their games are only partially reliable.

The sections about his parents being held captive particularly irritated me. In other words, each time they played, the game of his parents' abduction was altered to suit Banks' preferences. Banks reflects on this experience; [...] I saw this as a sign from Akira that I should play with him, so he said, "You tied up on the chair." The momentum we had built up suddenly halted as I paused. I strongly disagreed and stated as much. My dad is not in jail, garb. Just how can he be confined all the time?

Akira, who hated being interrupted while telling a story, kept insisting that I act out the scene where my father was chained to a chair at the base of a tree right away. I yelled back, "No!" and stormed off. [...] Hearing Akira's footsteps behind me, I sped up to have an all-out argument with him within a short while. However, when I looked up, I saw that my friend was staring at me with an unexpectedly apologetic expression. Closer now, he murmured, "You are correct. The older man is not restrained. His level of ease is high. The kidnapper's residence is a nice place to stay. Extremely relaxing. (Lost Children, 131)

After so many years, Christopher's only connection to his boyhood in Shanghai is in these recollections. After he gets separated from his parents during the Sino-Japanese War, he writes to the only person from his past he can remember, Akira (or the soldier he thinks is Akira), and their exchanges assure him that his recollections of the events are correct. As he describes this hopeful moment, "it was as though I had interrupted some dark ceremony; my first reaction was to move on through," we can see how he can portray the feeling of having shattered a ritual of some kind. Maybe it was a noise; maybe it was my sixth sense, [...] After then, I noticed a Japanese soldier lying motionlessly on his side in the red light. [...] Dust and blood had settled on his face and hair. Even so, I had no trouble recognizing Akira (Orphans, 293).

On the cusp of the present and the past, Banks is willing to accept the possibility that the Japanese soldier he encounters while searching for a house during the Sino-Japanese War is Akira. While he has doubts about whether or not the soldier is Akira, he never lets them get in the way of his need to believe in this identification. On the other hand, the wounded soldier Christopher may believe to be Akira is just answering Christopher's questions in order to keep himself safe. The Japanese soldier shows no sign of recognizing Christopher, despite Christopher's repeated attempts to have him do so. On the other hand, Christopher would not rest until he got an answer that satisfied him: "Christopher," he whispered almost experimentally. Yes, it is me, Christopher. Really. We have not seen each other in a very long time. Moreover, not a second too soon. "Christopher, my friend" (Orphans, 296).

Even though the Japanese soldier uses Christopher's name, the readers can only take Banks' word for it. Since Christopher Banks is revisiting his past with his childhood recollections formed and reshaped in his every recalling, the dependability of what he tells suffers as a result. However, there is a distance of thirty years between his memories and the present. Because he needs help understanding this, he constantly switches back and forth between real-time and his internal clock, making it impossible for him to solve the puzzle of his origins.

Memory Having Issues with Dependability.

The novel's focus on the relationship between truth and memory serves as an illustration of the fallibility of memory, a key tenet of the New Historicist movement. The story revolves around the subject of "whose reality is it?" and the plausibility of the memories, especially the narrator's/protagonists. As a result, New Historicism emphasizes a variety of facts, and it is clear that the novel's protagonist experiences at least one of these truths.

Truths fluctuate as he looks for a solution to life's mystery. The reader's memories and many facts could be more reliable and clearer than the novel's period. Christopher Banks is convinced of his truth and is on the lookout for it after 30 years; as a result, his memories become much more significant than the public history or the documents; and as he remembers and forgets and distorts and misinterprets the memories by his desires, both he and the public/private history become unreliable, variable, and confusing for the readers.

Repressed emotions and thoughts, distancing oneself from the past, and the struggle to reshape both the past and the present are the causes of memories that idealize the past and create a different past in the mind of the rememberer as something better than the present, as stated by Frederic Jameson (1993). (Jameson, 1993, p. 18). Christopher Banks recalls events from childhood, but they have taken different forms in each of his memories. Jameson calls this a "simulacrum" because it represents a revised history that gives him hope for the present. It takes Christopher Banks thirty years to accept and begin the journey, during which time he pieces together memories from his youth to form an idealized picture of Shanghai that is very different from the city as he finds it upon his return. The truth is, I have become increasingly interested in my recollections over the past year, a fascination fueled by the awareness that my childhood memories and my parents suddenly began to jumble. Sometimes I forget things that were quite clear to me just a few years ago; for instance, the story I just told you about my mom and the health inspector; I am pretty sure I have got the gist of it right, but I could be wrong about some of the details (Orphans, 80-81).

The hazier the line between reality and imagination gets, the more enmeshed Banks becomes in his recollections, especially as they grow more difficult to recall, and he becomes less confident in the accuracy of the facts they include. As he recalls and recollects the past, his recollections become less reliable, leading him to believe in what he imagines.

Memory and how people manipulate it for their reasons intrigue me more than anything else," Ishiguro said in an interview with Gregory Mason (1989). (Mason, 1989, p. 347). The protagonist of Ishiguro's story, Christopher Banks, reconstructs himself from the scraps of his childhood memories so that he can live in the present. Interestingly, Greenblatt's concept of "resonance" fits well with how Banks remembers the same story. According to Greenblatt, the term "resonance" describes a sound that is "deep, clear, and reverberating" (Greenblatt, 1996, p. 228). Also, he looks at how "verbal, auditory, and visual traces to construct, shape, and organize community bodily and mental experiences" reverberate (Greenblatt, 1990, p. 6). Because of this, every time Banks thinks back on the past, his thoughts echo, loop, and grow; he constantly modifies his memories, consciously and subconsciously. Each recollection then (re)sets the past in its proper historical and social perspective. This has an effect because of the connection between the reader and the work, between now and the past, and between textuality and historicity. Thus, New Historicism is interested in how remembering and forgetting the past affect the present-day interpretation of a book.

Given that every person's recollection of the same event is unique, the most crucial factors are what is remembered and what is forgotten and the time that has passed since the occurrence. It is possible that, like Banks, the rememberer does not realize he is changing his past and

present with each memory and forgetfulness. As a result, the Textuality and history, past and present, and reader position to inspire cultural wonder at resonance are not just for now.

To paraphrase Greenblatt's argument from *Learning to Curse: Historical events disclose an "otherness" that might affect one's personal experience and cognition* (Greenblatt, 1990, p. 14). Therefore, the past is always otherized by the rememberer in each retelling or remembrance since it is in the rememberer's hands to be reformed and improved. The sight of the house and the guy Christopher Banks assumes to be his childhood friend Akira brings back vivid memories from his youth, and for the first time in a long time, he starts to believe his recollections. As he digs deeper into the past, though, he uncovers a different truth, making his truth that much more excruciating. Banks is left confused and dejected as his curiosity about his past, and the truth about his life and parents leads to its "de-familiarization" and "re-fashioning." His truth and the truth offered by his so-called aunt and uncle are opposed, and he must find a way to reconcile the two.

### **Differences in Personal and Public Histories**

The novel is complex on many levels (historical, psychological, personal, and autobiographical), with the central theme of New Historicism being the transformation of public history due to the intersection of private and public histories. When *We Were, Orphans* blends Christopher Banks' imagined and real history of the Second Sino-Japanese War with the popular history of the period. "I began to use history [...] I would look for historical situations that would best fit my purposes or what I wanted to write about," he says of his decision to draw on public records (Ishiguro, 1991, p. 115). As a result of fusing dramatized, romanticized, and fictitious aspects of his experience with actual historical events, he "denaturalizes" the latter. The protagonist's memories are more crucial than official records and accounts. The protagonist's private history reshapes public history to accommodate the changes made to the protagonist's past.

"The past is not an it" in the sense of an objective item that may be depicted neutrally in and for itself or projectively reprocessed in terms of our narrowly 'present' concerns, as stated by Linda Hutcheon (1989). (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 57). Hutcheon claims that reporting and dealing with the past is necessarily subjective due to the narrator's present-day perspective. Similarly, prominent New Historicist Louis Montrose defines the subjectivity of history as "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history," highlighting the blurry boundaries between the two. In an article he wrote back in 1989, he defines "historicity of the texts" and "the textuality of history"; [b].

I refer to this idea as "the textuality of history," and by it, I mean to suggest, first, that we cannot have access to a complete and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question — traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent, but rather must assume to be at least partially the result of complex and subtle social processes of preservation and erasure. Second, when considering the "documents" upon which historians base their writings, termed "histories," these textual traces are then subject to later textual mediations (Montrose, 1989, p. 20).

In his view, these books and materials, which are not untouched by their authors, can only serve as a window into the past if evidence of the complex social processes involved in processing them can be uncovered. Though you believe Montrose, the meaning of a text might change with each new reading, even if it refers to a definite time and place. According to Montrose, there are different historical perspectives because there is no universally accepted historical narrative throughout time and space (Montrose, 1989, p.20).

Similarly, Banks reasserts the denaturalization and, by extension, the subjectivity of history by

recreating the past based on his childhood memories. For Hutcheon (1989), "[b]oth history and fiction are discourses; human creations, signifying systems, and both derive their basic claim to truth from that identity," which is also the interplay between public reality and personal history as one impacts the other (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 93). To do this, Ishiguro draws on real-world history to illustrate his fictional characters, including Christopher Banks' life. The reader is left wondering if Ishiguro fictionalizes other aspects of public fact besides his protagonist's personal history. The war between China and Japan and the situation in Shanghai are also seen through the eyes of a made-up person. This is especially important when presenting historical events, as Ishiguro gives his protagonist the freedom to do so from multiple vantage points, including that of a detective and a guy with fond recollections of his youth.

In this way, the work depicts both private (Banks' search for his parents) and public (the public reality) histories. As a historian and novelist, Ishiguro chronicles Banks' personal and public history and investigates Banks' past/private history through the dynamics of the detective fiction genre and parodying them. On the hunt for his biological parents, Banks becomes a hybrid historian/detective to investigate events as diverse as the opium trade and Japan's involvement in the Asia-Pacific War. In this way, public and personal histories are displayed together, highlighting their connections. The novel's made-up setting and protagonist detective presented a romanticized version of Chinese (public) history. By incorporating public events that have an impact on the fictional characters' lives and placing greater emphasis on universal meanings that can be derived from historical contexts, this new subgenre of historical (detective) fiction demonstrates the validity, necessity, and difficulty of acknowledging, confronting, and dealing with the past, both private and public, as defined by Fleishman (Janik, 1989, p. 162). Transitions between the present and the past occur, as noted by Finney (2006), because "the past is alive in the present," and Ishiguro employs his fictional characters to highlight the effects of public history on individuals' lives (Finney, 2006, p. 148). To Ishiguro, what matters is not what happened in the past but what people remember and how they tell stories about it. Therefore, he says, understanding the present and keeping the past in mind is more crucial. Although Christopher Banks's personal history and the public history of the Sino-Japanese war are intertwined in the novel, what matters to the readers and the author is Banks' his-story and the truth he is searching for amid the actual public history of the war. This is especially true in the novel's final sections when Banks tries to locate the house where his parents were held captive. As a result, Ishiguro uses the protagonist's recollections to show how he struggles to maintain his identity in the face of public and private history. Banks shows the struggle between the past and the present, but he also shows how the two interact. Therefore, public history shapes individual memories, and individual memories shape public history. For Louise Montrose, "Professing the Renaissance" is a reminder that "our analyses and understandings necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially, and institutionally shaped vantage points; that the histories we reconstruct are the textual constructions of critics who are, themselves, historical subjects" (Montrose, 1989, p. 23). Because of their inherent interconnectedness, private, public, and municipal histories cannot be distinguished from one another, in Montrose's view. Montrose highlights the relationship between the text and history by focusing on the text's historical and literary aspects using the phrases "historicity of texts" and "textuality of history," respectively.

He argues that there is no separation between text (quality) and context by discussing many historical examples (quality). Ultimately, Montrose stresses multiple explanations for historical events over a single, unified one.

Similarly, Christopher Banks rewrites his private and public pasts throughout the story. As a result, the boundaries between public and private history and memory and history are constantly blurred throughout the novel. Readers of *When We Were Orphans* would also witness Banks' internal struggle to reconcile his recollections with his past to recreate his

identity after realising that his long-held beliefs do not square with the facts. By having his protagonist's memories alter public history in this way, Ishiguro demonstrates his unique perspective on the subject. Ultimately, what Ishiguro's protagonist Christopher Banks learns about public history as he searches for his personal history/truth is not the objective public history of that time, such as the opium trade in Japan or the Sino-Japanese War, but rather how he, himself, and his truth are affected, shaped, and reshaped during and after that period. Ironically, Christopher Banks' quest to discover the identity of the mansion that has fascinated his parents for years occurs within the larger backdrop of his search for his history and the truth. Banks learns that his identity and existence are interwoven with Japan's public history despite a 30-year gap in time and geography. To that end, he is trying to live in the past in the present by placing himself within a frame made from his past.

Christopher Banks spends years looking for reality, but his dedication to his memories keeps him from finding it. Disheartened after learning that his memories do not match reality, he returns to square one. As such, it is evident that Banks is not looking for the absolute truth but rather the truth as it appears in his memories. He is told he has an aunt he is never met in England and lived with her for years before meeting his "uncle," who he thinks is his real uncle. Banks, convinced by the account, stay in Shanghai long enough to try to put together the pieces using his memories and, in the process, comes face to face with the events described. After being away from Shanghai for so long, Banks forms another image of the city in his mind based on his boyhood memories; upon learning the truth, he becomes disillusioned with history on all levels. When Banks faces his purported uncle Philip, a man he does not know, his disillusionment grows. Banks' mental image of Uncle Philip and the real Uncle Philip could not be more dissimilar. What this so-called "Uncle Philip" says about Banks' parents is even more upsetting; he tells a very different story about Banks' parents than the truth, which completely alters Banks' history and way of life. Christopher's uncle Philip asks him, "Tell me," knowing that Banks has a different perspective, so Christopher tells him what he thinks happened to his father.

Can you care less about my opinions? Because I wanted to hear from you, I travelled here. Fantastic job. However, I was curious as to your conclusions. As a result of your actions, you have gained quite a reputation. Orphans number 336 in the population.

He tells the story he has always believed because he is angry, hateful, and desperate to know the truth about his life and, by extension, the meaning of his existence. Christopher Banks has had a specific mental image of his parents since he was a child, but Uncle Philip tells him a different story. His uncle Philip tells him that his father left him for his mistress. Consequently, he would prefer not to look at this picture. For a year, Elizabeth Cornwallis called Hong Kong home.

On the contrary, Hong Kong is incredibly stuffy and British. Because of the uproar they caused, they were exiled to Malacca or somewhere like that. Soon after, he became ill with typhoid and passed away.

They passed away in Singapore. Two years after he had left you, this happened. I know it must be tough to hear all this, especially as an older man, and I apologize (Orphans, 336).

Banks' alleged uncle Philip claims that Banks' mom has read the letter in which dad spills the beans about the family's history. Banks, unable to accept the idea that his father fled with his lover, wants to know if detectives were called in, if any evidence was found, and if the case was solved. Given that Banks is a famous detective who thinks anything can be found by a detective (like himself), this is an extremely important and pressing topic (Orphans, 337). However, once again, it is him—the brilliant detective who can crack anyone else's case but

cannot crack his own. Banks is worried about what Uncle Philip says about the detectives, but he cannot focus on that since he is too obsessed with the weight of his failure.

Whom are these people looking into things? Those plantar fasciae who work tirelessly for little pay. There has yet to be a case of a lost elephant on Nanking Road. [...] Banks' mom would have tracked you down at some point and told you. Nonetheless, your safety is a priority for us. Because of this, we forced you to reflect on your actions (Orphans, 337).

Banks is frustrated not only by the information his uncle Philip is disclosing but also by the fact that the authorities have been unable to track down his father. When Uncle Philip becomes agitated, he lashes out at the detectives with insults. He could not find his dad, just like these bungling detectives. A key hint of the information Uncle Philip will give found in his question, "How much do you already know about her [his mother]?" (338 orphans). Banks has spent years looking for answers, but he needs assistance to analyse the clues and find them. Banks learns through his mother's story that his mother is still alive, and he accepts this information without question. Everything Banks has ever known to be true about his parents, and himself turns out to be wrong. The person for whom he has been looking his entire life, his mother, created the world in which he has grown up. Uncle Philip then explains why he has lied to him, "Because I want you to know the truth!". You have probably had a very negative impression of me through the years. Maybe I am being dramatic, but that is how the outside world makes you feel. [...] Look at me now. So, I feel despised.

Even though you are the most son-like thing I have ever had, Puffin, you have always hated me. Now, though, do you see things for how they are? [...] How could you climb the ranks to become such a famous detective? One who investigates! In what way is that helpful? Jewellery robberies and assassinations of wealthy heirs are commonplace. [...] You were always supposed to stay in this perfect little bubble created by your mother. However, that can never happen. The only option is for it to break apart over time. The fact that you have made it this far is miraculous (Orphans, 346).

Uncle Philip's confession is intended for both Banks and himself. He has kept his feelings for Banks' mother bottled up for years because he was powerless to save her, but now he confides in Banks, who has also been living a false history/past. Furthermore, just like Banks, who has believed his reality for years, it needs to be made clear whether Uncle Philip is speaking the truth or his truth. In "Invisible Bullets" (1985), Stephen Greenblatt argues that people will lie about their deepest beliefs even when they are not under pressure from others. They must have lied even more brazenly in that atmosphere of totalitarian oppression (Greenblatt, 1985, p. 474). Uncle Philip may tell Banks his life narrative to comfort himself or provide an excuse for his acts. Banks looks for his mom because he feels compelled to. Christopher Banks, a famous and successful detective, goes to see his mom in the nursing home without double-checking the facts his uncle Philip gives him. Diana Roberts, whom he believes to be his mother, "had been resident in a mental institution in Chunking since the conclusion of World War II" (Orphans, 354). Banks' mother has remained in the same place for two years and has no recollection of him or their past together.

Ironically, the mother of Banks cannot remember her son after thirty years have passed. Banks tries his best to get his mother to remember who he is, but she fails to recognize her son. And then Christopher said to his mom, "It is Puffin," the name she had given him when he was a kid. Christopher notices that his mother's face has a few remnants of memory as she says, "Puffin," and for a moment, seems to be lost in joy. And then, shaking her head, she said, "That boy." I have some serious worries about him (Orphans, 358). She pleads, "Forgive Puffin?" when Christopher's need for forgiveness for Puffin for his inability to find her approaches a breaking point. Do you mean to imply that Puffin should be pardoned? With



what aim? That youngster. They say he is doing OK now. There is no way to know for sure about this one. Oh my goodness, he gives me much cause for alarm. You have no idea (Orphans, 358–59).

Christopher Banks tells this story to his daughter Jennifer and expresses his gratitude for learning the truth about his parents and background. Neither the woman nor the Japanese soldier could be his mother or his friend Akira for all he knows. He may be shaping his memories and the truth he wants to believe by remembering and forgetting what he wants, but that has yet to be established.

The importance of the historical setting, both in terms of individual and collective history, will expand after the completion of the work. The novel opens in the colonial era, during the time of the Sino-Japanese War, depicting the past of the tale, as was previously said. Reflecting the present storyline, the novel ends in the post-colonial age, after China has won its freedom. However, for Christopher, the historical contexts are as entangled as the conflicts between real and imagined time, past and present, now and then, here and there, as he tends to rely on his memory rather than the records, artefacts, locations, and dates that make up the bare bones of his fictitious personal history.

## Conclusion

The claim made by the New Historicists that it is problematic to describe the course of human events in terms of a grand narrative and a single, universal truth is without dispute. Despite this, New Historicists consider every part of literature a grand narrative. Hence they do not reject the idea of grand narratives altogether. The blurred line between private and public histories is another theme central to New Historicism, which emphasizes the idea that public events can be imprinted on personal narratives and vice versa. Thus, the disparity between official and personal accounts highlights how memory and timeline perception shape people's interpretations of the past.

History is shown to be a human construction through the protagonist's personal history, which is intertwined with public history, and the novel reflects the problematic nature of representation(s) of history by challenging the grandiosity of history by providing multiple versions of past events based on the narrator's perspective and understanding of the past. The idea of history as a great narrative is called into question because the same event may be remembered differently depending on the opinions and understanding of the narrators. Memories build and reframed Christopher Banks' history, and what he has believed for thirty years is dismantled and rebuilt in the face of an alternative interpretation of history. Christopher Banks is devoted to his memories, the only evidence of his history; thus, he still needs to solve the puzzle of his existence as well as his parents have.

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