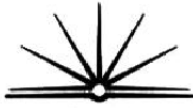


History is epitomised as the ambiguous interpretations of past events. The purpose of history is to inform and create a sense ~~of~~ of nationalism amongst the public. The two historians I will be discussing in relation to Munslow's interpretations are ancient historian Thucydides and modern ~~historian~~ Edward Gibbon.

Professor Alun Munslow's ~~book~~ <sup>extract from</sup> "A History in focus" published 2001 poses many ideas and issues faced by and caused from historians. Munslow accepts this post-modernistic view that history and the way we interpret it ~~is~~ has "many shifts and turns" but he also discusses that the basic foundation of how we "know things about the past" is ~~static~~ "unchallenged". ~~But~~ Accordingly, there are two "static" aspects ~~that~~ that will be evident in every historians' work: the theory of knowledge being gained from experience and rational analysis. So basically, no matter what period they write in or their personal bias and conflicting ideologies and concepts they will



not be able to dismiss the 'facts' of the past.

In relation to the two historians I have studied this is also evident.

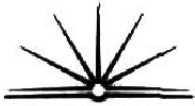
Thucydides was an ancient historian whose main achievements were his ~~own~~ accounts of the Peloponnesian wars. His way of writing was as Munslow suggest in the first paragraph a "view of history as a narrative" his talents including the ability to write a chronological "narrative" history of these wars. His exile to Sparta advantaged his writings greatly, as there he studied a Spartan and an Athenian warrior. This also supports Munslow's ~~idea~~ concepts as Thucydides would have not have been advantaged without the personal experience of being exiled to Sparta. Ultimately, in truth we must ~~study~~ actually experience history before we are able to write it effectively.

This was also evident in Edward Gibbon's writings of ~~the~~ 'The decline and fall of the Roman empire', ~~published~~ <sup>the first</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>volume</sup> published in 1777 and then ~~several~~ simultaneously



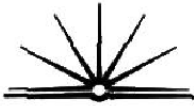
in 1787. In this, Gibbon constructs a controversial  
opposition to religious beliefs. As a young man he  
was forced into Catholicism by his father, after  
his five year trip to Lausanne he ~~dismissed~~ <sup>dismissed</sup> this  
religion and though he treated Jews with  
respect he found the hypocrisy of monks  
and priests overwhelming. This again supports Munster's  
idea as Gibbon ~~was not~~ <sup>was not</sup> probably  
would not have opposed monks and  
priests if he was not forced into Catholicism.  
Again relying on experience to construct his historical  
interpretations.

The role in which both these historians played  
was significant in its own aspects. Thucydides  
was, apart from Herodotus, one of the ~~first~~ first  
historians to create a chronological "narrative"  
account of the past. In the case of Gibbon,  
he ~~was~~ was most influential to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> prospering  
~~the~~ ambiguous interpretations of religion in  
modern day society. He wrote during a time of  
great political and religious change, this was



known as the 'Enlightenment period' ~~is~~, the 'Age of Reason' or 'Age of Enlightenment'. <sup>Religion</sup> ~~is~~ was ~~becoming~~ becoming more critical to everyday life and most events were centred around some sort of religious basis. Gibbon's <sup>non-didactic writings</sup> ~~gave~~ gave rise to a sense of ambiguity pertaining to the church and, while evoking consequential criticism and controversy, gave people an alternative history to believe in. His opinions did not alter the hard 'facts' but it was a new era of history for many.

In conclusion, ~~the issues raised by Munslow~~ <sup>the issues raised by Munslow</sup> ~~and the~~ ~~issues~~ such as consequences, credibility and reliability of historian's interpretations of the past are reflected in the works of the two historians I have studied; Edward Gibbon and Thucydides. Evident in both is the "static" theory that facts must not be ignored and that the 'true' writing\* of history must be done with support from background experience. Thucydides had experience from his exile to Sparta and Gibbon had experience from his involuntary conversion to Catholicism. Both forced into this experience but



with the most beneficial outcomes for their perspectives and the influential interpretations passed to others in the past and for many more years to come. In this itself their specific role in the "construction" of history has altered future concepts. Ultimately, ~~there~~ <sup>as</sup> Munslow states there could be "several" true meanings of the past and as in the case of this source and the two I have studied, the search for the truth can never be fully assured as pure fact. It is advantageous to ~~obtain~~ <sup>utilise</sup> empiricism when ~~we~~ writing history but how do we know that even this is accurate? In reality we don't but that is half the point of history, to keep considering other historians' ~~is~~ interpretations and eventually constructing our own to have faith in. ~~This~~ <sup>This</sup> is the only ~~is~~ way to effectively portray history.