

## Time, Power and War: the Politics of Modern Experience

*Temps, pouvoir et guerre : la politique de l'expérience moderne*

**Julian Wright**

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# Time, Power and War: the Politics of Modern Experience

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- 1 When I began reading fiction from the 1940s, searching for reflections on the meaning of experiences of time in the Second World War, I was bowled over by the 1947 novella by Heinrich Böll, *The Train was on Time*. Böll tells a story about a young soldier, Andreas, who is returning to the Eastern front after a period of leave. He travels through Germany into Poland. The year is 1943, and the certainty of death is refracted into the little word 'soon' [*bald*]. 'Soon' encapsulates that meaning of time compressed before a destructive battle, the time of fighting and death becoming present already in the single syllable. I count eighty-six instances of the word in the novella; some fifty of them come in the opening seventeen pages.

Soon. Soon. Soon. Soon. When is Soon ? What a terrible word : Soon. Soon can mean in one second, Soon can mean in one year. Soon is a terrible word. This Soon compresses the future, shrinks it, offers no certainty, no certainty whatever, it stands for absolute uncertainty. Soon is nothing and Soon is a lot. Soon is everything. Soon is death...

This Soon is like a thunderclap. This little word is like the spark that sets off the thunderstorm, and suddenly, for the thousandth part of a second, the whole world is bright beneath this word.<sup>1</sup>

- 2 In this powerful story, Böll explores the meaning of the wartime present as a time in which the expected arrival of death is already present in the mind of the ordinary soldier.
- 3 But aside from the astonishing force of this writing about time, the meditation on 'soon' put me in mind of something completely different: a moment in one of the children's stories about Narnia, by the great literary scholar and Christian apologist C. S. Lewis. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, which charts a sea journey through fantastical archipelagos (the book meditates subtly on the moral journey of the Christian soul through temptations and virtues), the young girl Lucy meets Aslan, the

great Lion and embodiment of God in the story. She has been looking into a magician's book, tempted to try and cast a spell to foresee the future. Aslan has deflected her from the temptation. When he prepares to depart, he cajoles Lucy:

'Do not look so sad. We shall meet soon again.'

'Please, Aslan', said Lucy, 'what do you call soon?'

'I call all times soon', said Aslan; and instantly he was vanished away.<sup>2</sup>

- 4 Lewis was deeply interested in time and this short but profound exchange, as well as echoing Biblical accounts of the Ascension of Christ, is also a morality tale for the modern child, who will encounter the temptations of aspiration and the shallow future of commercialism all too quickly. In the setting of this brief conversation, indeed, considerations of when something *could* happen, when someone should prepare to embrace a hoped for outcome, are constantly invoked. 'All in good time' is like a theme running through the tightly-composed lines of this chapter in the story.
- 5 During the Second World War, C. S. Lewis published a funny but profound series of 'letters from a senior to a junior devil', *The Screwtape Letters*, a kind of inverted morality tale in which Screwtape tries to give his nephew tips on how to tempt a modern human. The text includes a discussion of the times in which human beings live, and the ideal temporality for their temptation. Screwtape writes:
 

'He [God] does not want men to give the Future their hearts, to place their treasure in it. We do... we want a man hag-ridden by the Future — haunted by visions of an imminent heaven or hell upon earth... We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy *now*, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap the altar of the future every real gift which is offered them in the Present.'<sup>3</sup>
- 6 Though Böll and Lewis come from very different political and theological worlds, both have spotted the importance of thinking more deeply about the present and the different paths that connect it to the future, in anticipation, soothsaying, aspiration, or fear. The enormous social upheavals of the Second World War, perhaps inevitably, draw the consideration of novelists, philosophers, critics and poets, who want to think more deeply about.
- 7 The experience of the present, and the nature of its connections to past and future, is the focus of historian Nicolas Beaupré, whose *En Temps de Guerre* has just appeared<sup>4</sup>; and it sits behind an impressive collection of essays published in 2020, under the leadership of Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos and Natasha Wheatley: sixteen essays under the title *Power and Time. Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*.<sup>5</sup> My own interest in the idea and experience of the 'present', in modern culture, led me and Allegra Fryxell to work with Beaupré and others for a volume of essays that appeared in 2021. To French colleagues there is an obvious reference in the title to our volume – Léon Blum was indeed on my mind: *Time on a Human Scale. Experiencing the Present in Europe, 1860-1930*.<sup>6</sup>
- 8 These and other recent studies of temporal experience deepen the conversation about 'regimes of historicity' that many have pursued in the twenty years since François Hartog's *Régimes d'historicité* appeared (and which continues to be a reference point for critical discussions).<sup>7</sup> In the rest of this short essay, I draw out some of the themes of the present and human experience in these recent studies; I then consider what effect they might have if we allow them to make deeper impressions on our own work as historians. It was the English poet W. H. Auden who once remarked that history is more like music than poetry, in that history, like music, draws you forward in time, whereas

poetry asks you to stop and attend to what is at stake. While I am not sure that all music works in that way, it is certainly helpful to pause and think more about how a concern with the human present might make us pay greater attention to the flow of history (or lack of it), its rhythm (or lack of it) and its movement, to considering the impact of time-fulness on the work of history, as an art and as a practice. On this point, recent books on French wartime diaries by Anne Freadman and on childhood in Second World War France, by the British oral historian Lindsey Dodd, makes some striking interventions.<sup>8</sup>

- 9 Edelstein, Geroulanos and Wheatley argue for a new mission for historians, to accept the multiplicity of times as a starting point for our study of the experience of time. They go further than Fryxell and I in the Introduction and Afterword to *Time on a Human Scale* though we concurred broadly with the main point about multiple temporalities. Edelstein *et al.* argue that historians should ‘tackle the fragility of historical givens such as “past,” “present,” and “future,” as well as the modernist “acceleration” narrative and the presumed singularity of historicity’.<sup>9</sup> The essays they have brought together take a sharp focus on the connections between time and power, and they thus range across diverse accounts of historical times as they have been woven into the imaginary of different regimes or different struggles for identity. This allows them to move forward significantly from the focus of a Reinhart Koselleck<sup>10</sup> on the revolutionary changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They show that working with a much more complicated set of ‘time regimes’ allows for a rich deepening of the history of many different parts of the world and many different eras. ‘Different claimants and groups experience time their own way,’ argue the editors, sometimes in sharp contrast to the dynamics officially on offer. Each relies on different formulations : on historicities, celebrations, narratives of past and future, accelerations and delays, durations and pulses, gaps, maps, economies and crises, tempos, resolutions, prefigurations. Each appeals to and mythologizes its own understanding of past, present, and future.<sup>11</sup>
- 10 They advance ‘Chronococnosis’ as a term which expresses the complex interrelationship of different time regimes, and the way that they might influence, struggle with, feed off or cohere to one another. It is a difficult term but certainly something needs to be offered that allows us to go beyond simpler concepts of time regimes like ‘co-evalness’ or acceleration.
- 11 Among the volume’s central essays, chapters by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, on the historical fascination with the supposed ‘circularity’ of Chinese history, and by Stefanos Geroulanos on the complex of temporal metaphors that collide in the concept of the Nazi ‘New Man’, stand out in particular as rich examples of how this work might be done in practice. Reminding us that the ‘circular’ view of Chinese history has of course got its own history, from Hegel if not before, Benite examines what function that ‘circular’ view had in helping Chinese historians imagine and retell stories about the dynasties that ruled China, the way people should try to understand them, and how they might position themselves in relation to them. In the first Chinese *imperium*, one politician, Li Si, proclaimed that the regime should be envisaged as installing a united China for 10,000 generations. But scholars challenged this eternal present. The cycle of change allowed the past to be analysed and the future of change to be understood; and the great histories of China returned to this theme regularly. But, as Benite remarks at the end of this virtuosic essay, it was Mao who insisted in 1963, that ‘the world rolls on and time presses’. ‘Ten thousand years are too long. Seize the day, seize the hour!’ Like

Li Si over two millennia earlier, there was a radicality in this proclamation of an urgent present that does not just challenge society, but challenges history's place in political culture.<sup>12</sup>

- 12 The radicality of the challenge to history is much greater in the Nazi imaginary. The project to build a New Man who must urgently advance to the future, and urgently prevent the rising up of a supposedly annihilating force from the East, involved multiple temporal metaphors and concepts. Starting from a view of the present as empty, hollowed out by corruption and defeat, this project drew on overlapping ideas about the path to the future and the role of the Nazi regime within it. I see Geroulanos' essay as building in helpful ways on Alon Confino's 2014 study *A World Without Jews*, which explained the imaginary time-regimes that framed the importance of the Holocaust within the Nazi account of history.<sup>13</sup> Geroulanos examines Nazism in its broader cultural manifestations. 'Nazi thinkers... bifurcated the present to supplant its supposed desiccation with a countertime of their New Man surging into the future, awakening, maturing, building, racially cleansing, then militarizing.' But the 'New Man', while marching into the future, was also haunted by the threat it contained, of possible Bolshevik triumph or Jewish victory; and the possibility of the great buildings of the Nazi city turning to ruin (which Albert Speer controversially depicted in one tense meeting with Hitler) remained part of this future as well. 'The New Man bore within, and had to slaughter, over and over, this other who committed and conditioned "his" ruin.'<sup>14</sup>
- 13 In her remarkable contribution to this collection, Claudia Verhoeven explores the case of Charles Manson, the instigator of the famous Tate-LaBianca murders in California in 1969. Her analysis of interviews or interrogations of Manson draws out previously little-noticed issues to do with temporality and Manson's experience as a former prisoner who had already had several significant periods behind bars before 1969. Reconsidering Manson's strange 'Family', whom he led in communes where calendars and clocks were forbidden, it emerges that the absence of structured time is deeply embedded in him, or at least in the way he has chosen to present himself. He would often comment that he 'had already died', and baffled interviewers and prosecutors with his meditations on timelessness. Manson tried to put across the idea that his life in prison had unmoored him from regular frameworks of time. 'I just live in one day', he says in a 1989 talk show interview.<sup>15</sup>
- 14 Though the rambling and consciously disruptive statements of Manson may seem uniquely strange, in recent work on war and temporality these feelings of being cut off from calendars and diaries, of being remote from time and its normal patterns, have been shown to be remarkably common. In turning from the power of time to the experience of time in the lives of those who do not 'wield' power, the essays by Nicolas Beaupré and Sonia Wilson in *Time on a Human Scale* both shine the spotlight on what people during the First World War felt about the changing nature of time in war. Both emphasize the practice of writing as a way of locating one's self in wartime. For soldiers, the work undertaken to map out correspondence, leave allocations, and the rhythm of days at the front, was considerable, and bore deep psychological importance as they attempted to rebuild a temporal sense of focus. At home in Paris, a teenage girl wrote in her diary, an *agenda* bought from the Printemps store, a daily account of war life at home. She, too, as Wilson shows, would do work in writing to pin down the

location of her family and their wellbeing. The way her organisation of this diary writing shifted would reflect shifts in her experience of the war as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

- 15 These writing actions are actions that make time come alive once more, at least in a fragmentary way, to people who have lost time or whose time is stretched beyond their understanding. With this focus on individuals in war, the political issue of time and experience in modern life takes on a different dimension. Where we may search for the clash of regimes of time, we may also now bear in mind the human costs of those clashes, and the human responses and acts of courage or endurance that they entail. Anne Freadman's stunning linguistic analysis of diaries by French Jewish prisoners in the Second World War takes us to the heart of how such writings, *the writings that put people back into time*, take form syntactically. The writing of the self, says Freadman, is a way of relocating the writer in the present. In these extreme conditions of wartime, this is an act that takes on something almost heroic. Diaries become a present action of giving witness; they assert *I live; I will have lived*. The present, Freadman writes, 'is the time of survival, the assertion of the writer's continuing presence in the uncertainty of what comes next: "*I am here now*".'<sup>17</sup>
- 16 We are urged to see diary as a deepening of the present within each individual's lived experience. Diaries in war enrich the present even as the material conditions of that present are drawn thinner through fear, hunger or loss. Freadman points out that this sense of 'living' in the present is not like trying to pin down the split second of a flash of time. It is deeper and multi-textural. She sees the present of the person who is writing 'within time' as 'the present of preoccupation, which is a making-present, inseparable from awaiting and retaining.'<sup>18</sup> These diaries somehow rebuild a person in time, even though (as another scholar of Holocaust diaries, Amos Goldberg emphasizes), trauma dislocates the present, and even though, as the famous Jewish scholar and diarist, Victor Klemperer, said in 1944, 'One is overwhelmed by the present... there is not yesterday, no tomorrow, only an eternity... the sense of time has been abolished; one is at once too blunted and too overexcited, one is crammed full of the present.'<sup>19</sup>
- 17 There is, then, something to do with 'feeling' the present that needs to be woven back into historical practice, if we are interested in pushing forward with this project to study people's experiences of the present in past decades or centuries. This is the most remarkable aspect of Lindsey Dodd's recent study of oral testimonies from French children who lived through the Second World War. Building on her long disciplinary commitment to the subtle and humane art of conducting oral history, she offers a conclusion that should make historians of many different kinds sit up and take note.
- 18 Dodd has realised that she has to leave behind the influential and deeply discussed historiography of 'collective memory', in order to give better voice to the individuals she worked with or those whose voices she heard in sound archives. Her book is, she says 'made of memories' –but not memories that are transparently available for interrogation by social historians who try to bring synthesis and order to the archive. The memories she encounters are 'flowing and agential, suggestive of many things...'<sup>20</sup> Not unlike the person suffering in war, whose past and future have receded from view, and who finds themselves adrift in a shapeless present that seems to spread about them like the sea, the oral historian of children finds there is no real directional flow to their reading and hearing of testimony. 'There is no end and no beginning... We will always be in the middle of it,' argues Dodd.<sup>21</sup> Oral interviews are unstable and tricky. All sorts

of detours and unexpected emotional or intellectual pathways open up, and the idea of a structured interview which has a beginning, middle and end is quite inappropriate to the work being undertaken. This sounds disorganised; but actually, Dodd argues, it is a better way of understanding the time of the interviewee. It allows the complex, overlapping, conflicting times of their different experiences to emerge in an order that is far from linear. ‘Then and now collapse as distinct entities inside the assemblage [of the oral interview],’ she explains. And although the ‘past’ being recalled, the story that memory has created to recall that past, and the encounter with the historian and all that happens within that, might appear to be three discrete phases in time, in fact they overlap and mingle. ‘The present always contains within it various pasts and various futures... stories shuttle or leap between narrated pasts, more distant pasts, past presents, and possible futures; all of this happens from the point of an unfolding present, which may be at the moment the story is told (which itself can be articulated multitemporally) or the point at which that story is listened to later on (likewise).’<sup>22</sup>

- 19 ‘I call all times soon’... well, indeed: the time of our lives is always layering around and within us; and historians, too, need to accept and work with this. Dodd, who has drawn extensively on affect theory in preparing her book, concludes that it is the *feeling* of doing history that emerges as a key to recognising the multitemporal world.

Feeling when remembering, feeling when listening, feeling when writing, feeling when recounting, feeling when doing, feeling about people, feeling about the past, feeling emotions, feeling about emotions, feeling about objects, feeling about places, feeling about events, about people, feeling during events, feeling in places, feeling at times, feeling for others, feeling space, feeling objects, feeling angry, feeling scared, feeling shocked, feeling ashamed – feeling was inescapable. It was ubiquitous, intense, concerning, and surprising.<sup>23</sup>

- 20 And as I turn to my own work on the experience of the present in the Second World War, that litany of a historian’s feelings, a litany that not many of us are trained or encouraged to enunciate as we develop our practice, comes as a sequence of hammer blows. If you’re studying the present of our fellow human beings, study it in your present. The richness of their present will not be apprehended if you limit the richness of your present. That means the feelings of the historian’s own time are on the table too.
- 21 But this is uncomfortable, perhaps, and challenges our commitment to ‘the truth’, layered and complicated though that always is. So in the book I am currently developing about the experience of the present in the Second World War, the challenge I have, the hammer blow of ‘feeling’ that drives me every day I sit at this desk, comes from the archive I have in a box just to the right of my right leg. This is a small family archive that contains letters from a POW camp in Germany, sent home to the North East of England by my late grandfather, letters written in a hand that I know very well and that I couldn’t pretend to have objective, ‘scientific’ detachment from for one minute. (Stéphane Gerson has recently written with enormous courage about family and the historian and has been going even deeper into the difficult commitments that this family subjectivity makes on historical work).<sup>24</sup>
- 22 In my archive, there are letters of gentle flirtation to a young woman whom grandfather had thought pretty when they were teenagers before the war, in neighbouring villages. The young woman will be courted in 1946 and they will marry in 1947: my dear grandmother. How, in reading grandfather attempting to put order into the chaotic and haphazard rhythm of POW correspondence would I not allow all

that I know about him to come to mind as I touch those letters? (Like Léon Blum writing to his son when both were in captivity, the obsession with chronology is very apparent!)<sup>25</sup>

- 23 But then I read Angela Findlay's memoir of tracking down the story of her grandfather, who was a general in the Wehrmacht, leading attacks in Russia in 1941.<sup>26</sup> Findlay is an artist who has struggled for years to overcome deeply-hidden feelings of shame and loss, which she thinks connect to her family's quietness and shame about her grandfather's past. And, overwhelmed, almost embarrassed by the feeling of privilege that Findlay has inspired in me, I am obliged to ask how to accept the privilege of my own family archive, how to write about it as a historian who, trained more or less as I am, knows how to hold up a critical mirror to the papers on my desk, to see them in another's eyes. Knowing that I loved my grandfather, knowing he'd never fired a shot in anger and led a good life, I wonder whether I dare just tell a simple story of filial love when writing about the Second World War.
- 24 I agree with Dodd that to embrace the present times of earlier generations we have to let the feeling of the present flow through us. But others, when they approach an archive with this intense awareness of subjectivity, will feel that love in different ways; and they may not love at all, but want to push out, to reject, to punch or to scream. I try to think through the feeling I have of my grandfather –his warm handshake, perhaps, and his cheery smile; these cannot but be with me as I write about the Second World War.
- 25 To understand what 'soon' means, we need to be aware of what it means in our work and our writing. To think of the present in this rich and humane way, to let the chaotic and unpredictable subjective human back into time and into history, is to write of time-paths that may yet lead, like the soldier in *The Train was on Time*, to death in the East, or they may lead, as Aslan intends, to freedom in eternity. But while we may be uncertain of which path we are writing, as we work on the messy lives of those whose time experiences in war were so shaken up by chaos and violence, I don't think that we can avoid the task.

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## NOTES

1. Heinrich Böll, *The Train was on Time*, trans. Leila Vennewitz, London, Penguin, 2019, pp. 3-4.
2. C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, London, Collins, 2001, p. 181.
3. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, London, Collins, 2012, pp. 77-8. I discussed this passage as part of my presentation of early twentieth-century reflections on the idea of 'the present', in the introduction to Julian Wright and Allegra Fryxell (eds.), *Time on Human Scale. Experiencing the Present in Europe, 1860-1930*, Oxford, Proceedings of the British Academy, 2021
4. Nicolas Beaupré, *En Temps de Guerre. 1914-1918*, Paris, PUF, 2023.
5. Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos and Natasha Wheatley (eds.), *Power and Time. Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2020.



6. Julian Wright and Allegra Fryxell (eds.), *Time on a Human Scale...*, *op. cit.* I wrote about Léon Blum and ideas of the present and social change, in the final chapter of *Socialism and the Experience of Time. Idealism and the Present in Modern France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017.
7. François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps*, Paris, Seuil, 2003.
8. Lindsey Dodd, *Feeling Memory. Remembering Wartime Childhoods in France*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2023.
9. Dan Edelstein *et al.*, *Power and Time...*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
10. Reinhardt Koselleck, *Futures Past*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
12. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, 'Long divided must unite, long united must divide: dynasty, histories, and the orders of time in China', in Dan Edelstein *et al.*, *Power and Time*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161, 167.
13. Alon Confino, *A World Without Jews*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014.
14. Stefanos Geroulanos, 'The temporal assemblage of the Nazi New Man: the "empty" present, the incipient ruin, and the apocalyptic time of *Lebensraum*', in Dan Edelstein *et al.*, *Power and time...*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
15. Claudia Verhoeven, '“Now is the time for Helter Skelter”: terror, temporality and the Manson family', in Dan Edelstein *et al.*, *Power and Time...*, *op. cit.*, p. 280.
16. Nicolas Beaupré, '“Time and the soldier”: experiences of time in the Great War', in Julian Wright and Allegra Fryxell, *Time on a Human Scale...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-76; Sonia Wilson, 'Dates and days: the Printemps Agenda, temporality and gender in the First World War', in *ibid.*, pp. 277-298.
17. Anne Freadman, *Holding On and Holding Out. Jewish Diaries from Wartime France*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2020, p. x. I reviewed Freadman's book in *University of Toronto Quarterly* 91 3 (August, 2022), pp. 292-4. The material I present here expands on that review and draws out a theme that I did not have the space to consider in depth at the time.
18. Anne Freadman, *Holding On and Holding Out...*, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
19. Amos Goldberg, *Trauma in the First Person. Diary Writing during the Holocaust*, trans. Shmuel Sermoneta-Gertel and Avner Greenberg, Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2017; Victor Klemperer, *To the Bitter End: Diaries 1942-1945*, abridged and trans Martin Chalmers, London, The Folio Society, 2006, p. 413, entry of 14 Sept 1944.
20. Lindsay Dodd, *Feeling Memory...*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
24. Stéphane Gerson, 'A history from within: when historians write about their own kin', *Journal of Modern History* 94 4 (2022), pp. 898-937.
25. The correspondence of Robert and Léon Blum during the Second World War is mentioned in chapter 8 of my *Socialism and the Experience of Time. Idealism and the Present in Modern France*, Oxford, OUP, 2017.
26. Angela Findlay, *In My Grandfather's Shadow. A Story of War, Trauma, and the Legacy of Silence*, London, Penguin, 2022.

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## ABSTRACTS

Reading recent work on temporality, on power and on war, this article considers in particular some important new reflections on time in modern historical experience. It draws out themes to do with the politics and management of time in modern societies and discusses some of the more important new insights on how history as a discipline might better engage with the emotional and subjective force of temporal experience. The experience of time is often difficult to capture in traditional historiographies, but, from war fiction to oral testimonies of war experiences, to novel reflections on time and power in the language of revolutionary movements, new ground is being opened up that promises to make historians themselves think more deeply about their own subjective relationship to the times of which they write.

À la lecture de travaux récents sur la temporalité, sur le pouvoir et sur la guerre, cet article examine en particulier des réflexions importantes sur le temps dans l'expérience historique contemporaine. Il présente des thèmes liés à la politique et à la gestion du temps dans les sociétés modernes en discutant quelques-unes des démarches historiographiques les plus importantes sur la manière dont l'histoire, en tant que discipline, pourrait mieux s'engager dans des questions de subjectivité de l'expérience temporelle. Des fictions de guerre aux témoignages oraux d'expériences de guerre, en passant par les réflexions inédites sur le temps et le pouvoir dans le langage des mouvements révolutionnaires, de nouveaux terrains s'ouvrent qui promettent de faire réfléchir les historiens eux-mêmes plus profondément à leur propre relation subjective avec l'époque sur laquelle ils écrivent.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** temporality, time war, time and power, World War II, oral testimonies

**Mots-clés:** temporalité, temps de guerre, temps et pouvoir, Seconde Guerre mondiale, témoignages oraux

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Julian Wright is Professor of History at Northumbria University. He has published widely on modern European ideas, politics, and culture. Recent books include *Socialism and the Experience of Time: Idealism and the Present in Modern France* (Oxford: OUP, 2017) and *Time on a Human Scale: Experiencing the Present in Europe, 1860-1930*, an interdisciplinary collection of essays co-edited with Allegra Fryxell and published by the Proceedings of the British Academy (2021). Prior to moving to Northumbria as Head of Humanities, he taught in the History Department at Durham University, after earlier studies at Oxford University.