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walkways, the example of Hong Kong shows that vertical density is not only possible, but highly productive.

Elsewhere, a new skyscraper is planned for Detroit, touted as a “vertical statement” tantamount to a city-within-a-city.²² The lessons of urban space valuation and devaluation would imply that such an endeavor be programmed flexibly, allowing the tower to withstand economic vicissitudes, but it is not immediately apparent whether that is the case. With big money behind the initiative—a financial mogul and hedge fund manager—another Torre David may be on the horizon.

Ultimately, there is no singular solution for an urban future of either horizontal or vertical dimensions—only blueprints to refer to. Torre David currently awaits its next cycle, though not passively. In 2015, an investment proposal from a Chinese firm indicated a new direction for the tower and the city. However that path, too, was short-lived; the firm slowly withdrew as volatility in the city grew in recent years.²³ Whenever order (or disorder) does return to Torre David, we must ask: who will be stakeholders? Will its fabric be multipurpose, cosmopolitan? We pose these questions skeptically, with the shadow of the tower still looming precipitously over Caracas.

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Fulcrum, Fallow: Intimating Tempelhofer Feld

KEITH BROWER BROWN

I

Just south of the center of Berlin, the 750 acres of Tempelhofer Feld gape open. Two airstrips lie dormant, and chest-high grasses break through the cement. A few low trees are scattered across the expanse; from their shade, the old terminals on the northwest side lie quiet, the refugee camp in their hold largely out of sight. The city stretches for miles on every side, built high on shattered layers of the past. This field is a void in a major metropole on the continent, and it startles. What cleared this land and kept it open?

In the summer of 2017, I lived by Tempelhofer Feld. I was the first in my family to return to make a life in the city, ending eight decades of collective exile. On long June evenings under the 53rd parallel, I ran, or reclined, or spoke in halting German on the grass. Historical placards around the field pulled me in. I dove into its story, drawn deeper by neighbors’ memories, *Faust’s Metropolis* (1998) by Alexandra Richie, and Benjamin Deboosere and Wouter de Raeve’s *On Tempelhofer Feld* (2016).¹ As I unearthed more, telling the story of Tempelhof became a way to ground the roiling past of this society, and to know myself stuck in it.

That fall I began studying towards a doctorate in geography, and my attention was caught by one long thread found throughout the Western canon: storytelling land to define a people. Herodotus defined Greece by the bounds of a way of life on the land, against its inverse in the surrounding barbarians. Paul Vidal de la Blache wrote romances for the valleys of France and how the lives of the villages suited each perfectly—diary entries for the project of nationalism.²

Carl Sauer wrote on the landscapes and peoples of northern Mexico, mutually culturing one another across centuries.³

In each of these canonical geographies, what matters most is not only principle, but prose. After all, these geographers were not principally working with maps, oratory, or figures, but in writing. Prose was their chosen medium for carrying the sense of landscape.

How does prose turn a landscape into a story of society? The writer makes freighted choices, consciously and not, in the selection of subjects and objects, the cadence of sentences, and the lyrics of evocation. Especially important in writing the land is the chosen scope and scale. Which marks of the past will be described? Which material presences will be taken as static or given, and which will be told in flux?

These are choices both aesthetic and political, at very least. Land can be given voice in words and a tempo following the writer's sensed experience of the place, in pursuit of common understanding. A utopian hope can animate the landscape, finding everywhere its destiny. Or, too often, language can meter the land in the inherited terms of a national myth.

Storytelling through land should not be done recklessly, blind to how often such prose has made a singular claim to land for a single people. The annals of Western geography and politics overflow with stories of land in service of nationalism and colonialism. And what story of land and people has conveyed more horror than one wrought here in Germany, of "blood and soil"?

In Berlin, I pledged to never carry on a nationalist story of land and descent. The country's nationalist project had nearly snuffed my family out of history; I would neither write us back into that story nor try to make it our own. Instead, I wanted to discover a lasting sense of how nations, borders, and other landed projects of race ran against the source of my being, nearly precluding it. I wanted a sense of connection to place without possession, of heritage without hierarchy.

If I found that sense anywhere, it was on Tempelhofer Feld. Learning and telling a story of its landscape became my effort to draw meaning from a nearly overwhelming tangle of self, society, and land. The forces that kept open that plain have also tied knots; this essay is a practice in working them loose.

II

The story begins in the meadow, in the Middle Ages. Two miles below this flat bluff, on a soggy riverine plain, a small town slowly grows; someday it will be Berlin.

Around the 13th century enter the Knights Templar. The mercenary Catholics will later be a mythic archetype for Prussian militarists, but for now they are flush with riches from the Crusades. They buy the land on the bluffs from a local lord, and recruit 20 families of landless farmers to join the settlement as peasant smallholders. The meadow becomes common grazing land, though little record remains of how it was tended and shared.

Wars, remembered by their length in decades, tear Europe to shreds for the next few horrible centuries. The meadow is overrun by invading armies, cleared, then overrun again. The grass grows thickly as livestock are hidden or stolen away, only for the soil to turn to mud in seasons of battle.

New lords take hold of the town downhill. By the early 18th century, Berlin is the seat of a Prussian state coalescing great power. Military discipline as imperial backbone and social order alike is the aim of the autocrats. The meadow on the bluff becomes a principal marching ground for the army, as the capital grows up around much of the clearing. It is a stage where the young men of the state make practice of might; a simulation of the battlefields to come, where they will meet the other armies of Europe. Tempelhofer Feld is a fulcrum of the force that Prussia's rulers hurl across Europe, for nine sanguine generations. It takes the desolate armistice of 1918 to oust the monarchs and quell the army's ambitions, if only briefly.

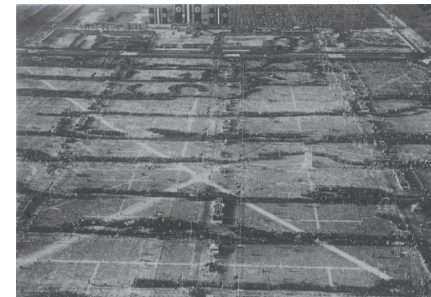
For a few years, the meadow lies fallow to state power, as economic collapse and hunger reign. Neighbors dig potatoes in the tith. Furtive revolutions are put down in the surrounding city. The Weimar government proposes a civilian airport for the field, and eventually opens a small terminal and runway in 1927. Adjacent to the airport, municipal leaders erect a model city, named the Gartenstadt, or Garden City, for its open, verdant plan. The streets are named after drab public functionaries.

In 1933, the National Socialists win control of the government, and within a few months, tens of thousands of party members line Tempelhofer Feld, in tight formation. Military discipline has returned, and now civilians too must drill in the performance of power. The new regime swiftly renames the Gartenstadt avenues after World War I fighter pilots, lettered in old Gothic script. Over the next few years, government crews vastly expand the airport, installing two concrete runways nearly spanning the breadth of the field. Hulking new terminals are the biggest buildings, by volume, in the world. Their spare rooms soon become offices for

Schutzstaffel (SS), or secret police. Daily flights arriving from Madrid and Rome are greeted by severe brown limestone facades, the new gateway of the fascist "world capital."

At this juncture in the story, my family takes off. Two generations prior, they moved from a small city in eastern Prussia to the neighborhoods near Tempelhof. Word had spread among Jewish enclaves that economic and cultural integration was possible in Berlin like nowhere else. And for my family, that did happen for a time. By the eve of the Fascist takeover, my grandmother Kate later told me, they identified as culturally German and only dimly Jewish. The gardens and tennis courts of the neighborhood felt fully hers for play, the salons and cafés hers for reading Rilke. It could have been the rallies on the meadow—their frenzied performance echoing down adjacent streets—that made her realize the family had to get out. In the course of a year, she convinced her sister and father to leave. They packed light bags as if for a vacation and boarded trains to Italy, in various phases of denial as to whether they would return. The rails ran south over the bluff, just blocks from the field.

For the next decade, Tempelhof houses Berlin's sole concentration camp and a military airfield, its structures coldly hewn to the administration of violence.



National Socialist party rally on Tempelhof Air Field in May 1934. Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-2008-0006. CC BY SA 3.0. Courtesy of the German Federal Archives.

Soviet tanks take the field on a January day. The airport is spared bombing during the invasion. Allied generals land on this tarmac, hauling the captured commanders of the German forces into the terminal building to sign their final order of surrender.

The American military wins oversight of this quadrant of the city, moving its officials into the terminal offices that recently housed the SS. After a few years of shaky truce collapse, the Soviet army cuts off land supply routes into West Berlin, and the Tempelhof runways serve as the landing pad for the Berlin Airlift. Where Prussian soldiers once drilled in a show of military discipline, and brown-shirted masses paraded for Leni Riefenstahl's lens, the Allies land hundreds of planes per day in a spectacle of Western logistical might.

Within a year, the airlift and its spectacle break the siege. The Americans keep much of the airport as a military base, with some facilities resuming duty as a civilian air link to the island of West Berlin, encircled by East Germany.

Two larger commercial airports eventually open on either side of Berlin, and following reunification, neighborhood protests mount against the noise and nuisance of the older relic airport. In 2008, the municipal government shuts down air operations at Tempelhof.

Within two years, under the pressure of neighbors eyeing the unused field, the city reopens the airfield as a vast park for the public. It is tremendously popular among human kite-flyers, rare bird and insect species alike. Soon the park agency cordons off much of the field into islands of protected meadow habitat, launching a barely planned venture in grassland rewilding inside the capital city of Europe's most powerful country.

Meanwhile, developers hungrily eye the vast plain, and plans and proposals swirl for housing and commercial development. In 2014, a city referendum to allow partial development of the field is rejected by nearly two-thirds of voters. Berliners resolve to hold Tempelhofer Feld as open and raw, as it has long stood. One year later, as the federal government admits 800,000 refugees from Syria's civil war, the cavernous terminal buildings are transformed into short-term, open-plan shelters. The short-term grows longer, until eventually the residents are afforded more privacy in semi-permanent structures within and alongside the old airport. Today the field is open.

III

I landed a few miles southeast of Tempelhofer Feld some 82 years after my family departed. Having heard about this city and its weight in the family's past all my life, I was returning for the first time since a week-long visit as a teenager. I was now Kate's age when she had fled. I came wanting a fuller sense of history and family culture by learning this place in intimate, everyday terms. I had little idea what I would find, but I planned to start by researching family history and strengthening my grasp of the German language. I had learned a broken German at home as a kid. Now I hoped for a fluency that would allow the sounds of words to fit my sense of place, like onomatopoeia.

Staying with friends in an East Berlin apartment block during my first weeks, I settled into a routine of private research and social hours, stumbling towards passable German. It was June in Berlin; the lightly employed youth of the continent congregated in parks in the shadow of the Wall, over picnics and open radlers.⁴ Lines ran long into nightclubs housed in decommissioned power plants.

¹ Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1999); Benjamin Deboosere and Wouter de Raeye, eds., *On Tempelhofer Feld* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2016).

² Paul Vidal de la Blache, *Tableau de la Géographie de la France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette & Co., 1908).

³ Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Morphology of Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925).

⁴ A radler is a 50-50 mixture of beer and fruit soda.



Opening of Tempelhof Air Field as a public park in May 2010. CC BY SA. Courtesy of Times on Wikimedia Commons.



Flock of birds at the field, 2013, CC BY. Courtesy of flohsriver on Flickr.



Kate. Courtesy of Keith Brower Brown.

The Berlin I knew from family stories was the terminus of upheaval and loss; the Berlin I met then had been, for at least a decade, a famed zone of conspicuous, defiant leisure. The contrast was jarring, and I didn't know how to make sense of it.

History was everywhere but seemed barely relevant, or largely unknown, to those in the city. In other words, it felt hollow; I often felt myself in a landscape of husks. When I asked Berliners about the history of fraught places, they usually knew its broad strokes, if not its specific sites. The scattered shells of history all around were a backdrop, their meanings like half-memories that could not be recalled fully in the present time.

I played a concert on Schleusenufer, a small island between canals at the eastern edge of the city center. Only later did I learn that its industrial yards had been the easternmost shard of West Berlin, the furthest point east in the West. Nobody had mentioned it to me, and even friends raised in both West and East were unaware of the island's history as a borderland. My venue was cobbled together between rusted shipping containers; next door, a louder club played commercial trance. Reunification and the culture that grew in its wake seemed to have wholly submerged the fatal stakes of the old terrain.

I looked for the *Stolpersteine*, or stumbling stones: a widely known project of Holocaust remembrance initiated in 1992 by Gunter Demnig. In walls or sidewalks all across the city, on cement cubes laid flush like cobblestones, brass plates give the name, birth, and death dates of those who lived there and lost their lives. But after several weeks, without having noticed any stumbling stones on my own, I consulted a directory. There were none with my family name, but I found a stone listed for a Käte, her name like my grandmother's, near where I was staying. The *Stolpersteine* website offered a curt biography of Käte, giving the occupation of family members, marriage date, date

of capture, and what became of her children. I kept thinking how precisely her biography rested on data collected by her exterminators.

After a five-minute search, I found the stone in front of an upscale pharmacy. I laid a few flowers, feeling both heavy and arbitrary in the act. The directory showed nearly 8,000 more stones in Berlin, and over 50,000 across Europe. Within a few blocks of my apartment were almost 100 stones. Each could have been its own research project. To acknowledge them all, let alone bring them richly into the present, would be insurmountable for any one person. And what would be the point? The conversion of Nazi records into cobblestone memorials overwhelmed me with sheer numbers, seeming to preclude the possibility of a personal connection with the past as a whole.

On a July day I went to Mohrenstraße, or the "street of Moors," in the commercial heart of Berlin; its name likely an 18th-century reference to the North African slaves then imprisoned in the area. The epithet "Mohr" was considered derogatory, however archaic, by all the Germans I asked. At this street, I joined in Berlin's Black Lives Matter march; walking, along with 1,000 other people, to demand the street and its subway station be renamed, among other goals. A friend remarked that there had been a campaign to rename the street for many years, but it had gained little traction in the halls of power. That was a shame, she said—but weren't there more pressing, present injustices to tackle anyway? This history may matter to us some, but what does it really amount to? If this conspicuous street in the heart of Berlin kept its name despite years of protest, what hope was there for history to matter in the far corners of the city, where it did not blare from street signs? Fraught history was present all around, but any richer sense of it in daily life eluded me and most of the Berliners I came to know.

A few weeks later, I moved into a room in a shared house in Tempelhof's Gartenstadt, four blocks from Tempelhofer Feld. My house stood at the corner of a street still named for the Red Baron, in Gothic script. Soon afterwards, a housemate invited me to her partner's birthday party on the field; a few minutes later I was out on the grass for the first time, lirting to dance music with a half-dozen Ugandan émigrés. The closed airport terminal building hulked across the meadow. Fenced-off, temporary refugee housing sat in its shadow on the tarmac. I grew dizzy in the converging lines of flight: my family's site of exile had become one of fragile refuge.

While I began to learn the history of the field from my perch nearby, I still had little idea how close I was to where my family once lived. I did not think to ask that question until I arrived—testimony to how being in a place, rather than merely reading about it, opens different dimensions of attention. Proximity takes on new meaning when your body has to move across it.

I wrote home to ask my parents where my family had lived. After searching through a small box of old letters, my mother e-mailed the two addresses she could find. One was just eight blocks south of my house, the other less than a mile east. Meanwhile, I searched through federal

archives for a great-uncle who stayed behind when the rest of the family left; that was the last we knew of him. I found one final trace: a 1937 address from a Jewish registry in the state records, about ten blocks north of my rented room.

Unwittingly, I found myself at almost the center of my family's past homes, all within a short walk of the field. The coincidence seemed significant. I searched for the family apartments, hoping for a view of their facades or a glimpse into their courtyards. But at each address, I found only postwar buildings. The number of one old address, written on an envelope from my great-grandfather, was skipped over entirely between newer apartment buildings. Whatever had been there before had likely been turned to rubble, and long cleared away. I tried not to make too much of it, but I couldn't stop sulking, feeling crestfallen. It was as if every trace of my family was gone from Berlin, except one line in the foul archive.

I was right in the neighborhood where it had all happened; it was closer than ever to me. But my sense of the city hollowed of its history was hard to shake. Increasingly I worried I would never find my own sense of history alive in the present.

Then a turn came from an unexpected place. At home alone one night, I watched Christian Petzhold's film *Phoenix* (2014), which tells the story of a survivor of the camps from Berlin who returns to her city in 1946, as so few did, to reckon painfully with the spaces of her past life, her hiding, and her capture. She finds her husband, a gentile, who has also made it through the war alive. Because she has sustained profound facial damage, her husband does not recognize her. She is overcome and does not reveal her identity to him. In a twisted lovesickness fueled by regret, he pays her to live with him and play her former role, in a series of reenactments of their romance before the war. On the park bench they frequented, in the houseboat that was their hideaway, they are reunited—but history has shattered all possibility for the intimacy that once was. These longed-for places have become hollow, trauma and betrayal having rotted their core, an unfeeling new order already springing from the ruin. Watching the film felt close to what Kate might have experienced in Berlin, if she had come back to stay.

The film ended. I felt shaken, without any words. I went out for a walk. The Tempelhof night was cooler than expected, arresting. Breathing in the damp air and shivering, it struck me: this bodily tremor might be some of the feeling of history in the present that I was searching for.

I realized that Kate had felt these same night winds, and she had breathed them on this bluff. One piece of her world was as real and alive in my body as it had been in hers. That meant this history was not an abstraction of entries in an archive—it contained a live, breathing person. Her survival through it allowed me to exist, and to be breathing, here, now. The joy of home and the terror of loss could not be captured in federal records, or readily recalled in everyday life eight decades later. But they had been lived and real, and absolutely *here*.

I could not expect everyone around me to feel the way I felt in contact with history. That would be to claim

a kind of singular, exclusive story for the land. But I could learn to tell *a* story, and in putting it to words, I might carry some of the sense I found to others, seeking resonance.

Finally I reached Tempelhofer Feld, which was closed for the night. I peered through the fence. Unlike my family's cleared homes, the field stood as open now as it had been in their time. Kate had passed fifteen years before, so I had no way to know exactly what she thought of this place. But that need not hold the terrain silent.

The field appeared heavy with boots, the runways cracked from the weight of airplanes. Terrible power had been practiced here, then run fallow by the next generation. Grass stood on end, charged with a new sense of what it meant to see the field for the last time. To intimately learn a story of this land is to know its history had happened in a very specific place, for very real lives—which is to say, to know history had happened at all. It seemed to me that articulating such a meaning, in a place, was exactly what geography can do. And it was exactly what I came here for: to come one shiver closer. The meadow lay at rest, its history present and breathing all along. I watched it grow, for the indefinite moment, toward a wilder kind of commons.

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BENEDIKT BOUCSEIN graduated in architecture from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich in 2005 and received his PhD from its Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) in 2008. He co-founded the magazine *Camenzind* in 2005 and BHSF Architects in 2007. From 2007 to 2017 he was a researcher and lecturer at ETH Zurich. He is the author of *Graue Architektur* (Gray Architecture; Walther Koenig, 2010), and co-author of *The Noise Landscape: A Spatial Exploration of Airports and Cities* (nai010 publishers, 2017). He was appointed Professor for Urban Design at the Technical University Munich in 2018.

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CAITLIN DESILVEY is a geographer whose research explores the cultural significance of material change and transformation, with a particular focus on heritage contexts. She often uses visual imagery and storytelling to stimulate public imaginary of changing environments and places, and studies patterns from the past to understand what the future might bring. Although much of her work concerns how things (and places) fall apart, she is also interested in practices of repair and maintenance that hold things together. She is the author of *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), which received the 2018 Historic Preservation Book Prize (awarded by the Center for Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington).

JILL DESIMINI is a landscape architect and Associate Professor at Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Her work has received a Narendra Juneja Medal and an ASLA certificate from the University of Pennsylvania, a Selected Professions Fellowship from the American Association of University Women, and was shortlisted in the Van Alen Institute competitions Urban Voids (2006) and Future Ground (2014). Her current research investigates design strategies for abandoned landscapes and has been published in the *Journal of Urban History*, *Landscape Journal*, and *JoLA*. She has authored book chapters on urban wilds and is co-author of *Cartographic Grounds: Projecting the Landscape* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2016).

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