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Andreas W. Daum. *Kennedy in Berlin.* Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2008. xxii + 294 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-85824-3; $23.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-67497-3.

Reviewed by Diethelm Prowe (Department of History, Carleton College)

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Commissioned by Susan R. Boettcher

History as Drama

This richly illustrated little book is a splendid tour de force. Its nearly two hundred pages of fluently written (and well translated) text unfold for the reader a fascinating, refreshingly original view of one of the best-known and admired events in American diplomacy and international relations generally in the last half century: John F. Kennedy's heady visit to Germany in 1963 and his inspired "ich bin ein Berliner" speech before the roaring crowds in Berlin. It is a wonder that no opera like *Nixon in China* (1985-87), with its decidedly uncharismatic U.S. president and an Alberich-like Henry Kissinger, has been written to commemorate this event. Andreas W. Daum evokes the myth of the Nibelungs in his analysis of political myth-making, but the suggestive parallel of his title to John Adams and Alice Goodman's opera is left to his readers' imaginations. For while Daum challenges his readers with a playful imagination, *Kennedy in Berlin* is a serious, highly sophisticated argument "that the use of symbolic politics was a decisive factor at critical moments in German-American relations in overcoming crises and maintaining the transatlantic bond between the United States and the Federal Republic" (p. 9).

Daum builds his case with a toolbox drawn from a variety of disciplines. He proves himself a fine diplomatic historian. His fifty-page digest on German-American relations in the wider European context and his references to the major diplomatic issues in later chapters are based on the full range of the U.S. and German archival sources and scholarship. But he also draws widely on insights from drama theory, public relations analysis, the role of *lieux de mÃ©moire* in history and memory, and even Alf LÃ¼dtke's ever- so-popular concept, *Eigen-Sinn.* The richness of its interdisciplinary reflections allows the book to dazzle readers with Daum's sheer mastery of disciplinary theories and epistemologies. They make for stimulating reading and challenge readers to engage with the author's arguments, as the best books do. Of course, not all readers may be convinced that LÃ¼dtke's theory really helps to explain that crowds are not only influenced by charismatic leaders, but in turn take on their own will and drive events in different, "own" directions beyond anyone's control. Is a discussion of Max

Weber's theory of charismatic rule really necessary to explain that Kennedy was a charismatic speaker? Do analogies to "street theater" sharpen our understanding of the special atmosphere in the cooped-up political island of West Berlin, which was nursed along by subsidies and spoiled as an especially favored "American" city? Were the outbursts of enthusiasm for Kennedy among Berliners–with the Kennedy myth built into the somber celebration of their fallen hero on the night of his death in the Berlin square that would come to bear his name–and the crescendos of anti-Americanism in the following decades not twin phenomena of that same special West Berlin political culture?

Above all, Daum argues that the political theater staged in Berlin was consciously planned and carefully orchestrated, primarily by American foreign-policy planners, but ultimately also by other "members of the cast" of political actors. The drama reached its brilliant climax with the actual appearance of "Kennedy in Berlin," but Daum explains how "the show goes on" in the cases of Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton in a brief concluding chapter.

No one may claim that "politics as theater" was a singular phenomenon in Berlin during the Cold War. Clearly, this link goes back to the beginnings of history and diplomacy. Politics lies at the heart of classical Greek drama, as it does in the works of William Shakespeare, Friedrich Schiller, and Leo Tolstoy. The princely courts of the Baroque staged their power games as skillfully as the French revolutionaries and Napoleon did. But did the total confrontation between ideologies with their Manichaean worldviews that characterized the twentieth century change the nature of "politics as theater"? Daum convincingly highlights how the intricately planned control of modern public relations that permitted the ultimately triumphant spectacle of the Kennedy visit carefully built on techniques used in the Lyndon Johnson mission of 1961, which spectacularly turned anger over America's passivity after the building of the Wall into enthusiastic celebration of the U.S. vice president. Yet the greatest political and dramatic triumph of an American statesman–greater in long-term historical judgment than even Woodrow Wilson's jubilant Paris entry in 1919–also demonstrated the striking impotence of "symbolic politics." In the climactic speech delivered in the later John-F.-Kennedy-Platz, the "leader of the free world" had to disown the core principles of his policy, which he had laid out in his famous dÃ©tente speech at American University only two weeks earlier. To gain the irresistible roaring applause of the mass audience in this theatrical spectacle, he abandoned the text of his carefully crafted policy address and contradicted his admonition to Washington to that a re-examination of the American attitude toward the Cold War would be necessary with his famed denial: "And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere we can work with the Communists. Let them come to Berlin!" (cited on p. 142).

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