

Review: Talking Points Memo

Reviewed Work(s): *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* by Robert M. Collins; *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* by Gil Troy; *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* by John Ehrman

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Talking Points Memo

Doug Rossinow

Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years. By Robert M. Collins. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. 310 pages. \$29.50 (cloth).

Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s. By Gil Troy. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005. 417 pages. \$32.95 (cloth). \$19.95 (paper).

The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan. By John Ehrman. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. 296 pages. \$27.50 (cloth). \$18.00 (paper).

“Be afraid. Be very afraid.”

Reagan revisionism is hard upon us, and nothing says “Reagan” more than a line of movie dialogue from the 1980s. Ronald Reagan was the aged leader who signaled his cultural relevance and spoke to a youthful public by dropping bits of film dialogue—“Go ahead, make my day”—and slogans that sounded as if they came straight from an advertising agency—“Let’s go for the gold!”—into serious public events and debates.¹

Fifteen years ago, when Bill Clinton ran for the presidency and lamented the 1980s as a “decade of greed,” few would have predicted that historians of the future would be kind to Reagan and the society of the 1980s. *Reckoning with Reagan: America and Its President in the 1980s*, by Michael Schaller, published in 1992, echoed the “decade of greed” interpretation, but it was not followed by similar works from other historians.² Now, after a hiatus of scholarly production on this topic lasting approximately a decade, an outpouring of books has reversed the direction of scholarly assessment. As of this writing, among academic historians, the Reagan revisionists—who view the 1980s as an era of mixed blessings at worst, and of great forward strides in some renditions—hold the field. After evaluating recent studies by Gil Troy, John Ehrman, and Robert Collins on the 1980s, I will suggest possible explanations for this interpretive turn.

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Fundamentally, these books replicate what Troy, author of *Morning in America*, correctly calls “the Reagan storyline.” Troy conveys an acute understanding of the ways in which the history of the 1980s has gotten locked into rigid, endlessly repeated narratives. While critics tell a tale of greed and social injustice, he recognizes that the celebratory “Reagan storyline” has become more powerful. “It is a simple story, told repeatedly, divided into three parts. The first part tells the sad tale of America in the 1960s and 1970s, a country demoralized. . . . Part two has Ronald Reagan riding in to save the day, with a mandate for change. . . . The result, part three, was *Morning in America*—the great party known as the 1980s, when the stock market soared, patriotism surged, the Soviet Union crumbled, and America thrived” (12). Troy continues, “This Reagan storyline of decay and renaissance was all the more remarkable given its tenuous relationship to the truth” (13).

Because Troy announces his critical distance from this triumphal narrative, his inability to extricate himself from it is particularly notable. Tellingly, Troy’s iterations of fragments of the “Reagan storyline” tend to lack substantiation. At times it is hard to know whether he is offering his own judgments or merely seeking to summarize the Reaganite view. He writes that, in 1980, “a great pall, a spectre of failure, a fear of disaster haunted American society. Civil rights had degenerated from seemingly clear black and white issues to a morass of competing choices. . . . The Great Society was bogged down in bureaucracy, generating taxes and regulations rather than guaranteeing social justice” (28). In truth, the biggest surviving Great Society program was Medicare, which delivered a substantial dose of social equity with rather little bureaucracy. Reagan was a “charming optimist,” he states, in contrast to both Barry Goldwater and Jimmy Carter. As evidence, Troy quotes Reagan’s joke from the 1960s “that student radicals ‘act like Tarzan, look like Jane, and smell like Cheetah’” (36), a standard laugh line for Reagan at that time. Even if you think this is funny, it is not an example of charming optimism. On Reagan’s serial fabrications on the campaign trail in 1980 and the resulting shock expressed by reporters covering the candidate, Troy comments: “In this culture clash with reporters, the populist commitment to the essential truth trumped the elitist obsession with individual facts” (44). A conflict between truth and lies is really a “culture clash” (one in which mendacity holds the moral high ground); this puts many a postmodernist to shame. “Indictments of government officials at all levels spiked from less than 50 in 1970, to approximately 400 in 1980, to over 1,000 in 1988—and most were convicted,” Troy relates, giving some sense of the debauch into which public service fell during this era. Yet, he continues, unconvincingly, “there was neither a precipitating rise in corruption nor a rash

of malicious prosecutions. Rather, these new forms of ‘institutional combat’ . . . ‘politics by other means,’ injected new dimensions of drama and dysfunction into America . . . all too often criminalizing politics” (252). This first became a Republican talking point during the Iran-contra scandal. Troy offers not one example of a public servant during the 1980s unfairly (if without malice) prosecuted for having the wrong politics. It is enough, apparently, that this same thing has been said by many others.

For all these missteps, *Morning in America* is a book whose ambition, embodied in its effort to address cultural as well as political history, merits recognition. Troy possesses a wide knowledge of U.S. popular culture in the 1980s. He is interested in the most widely disseminated artifacts of the mass media. His most informative comments come from juxtapositions of culture with politics, as when he notes that “sixty million people watched the Reagans’ appearance on Barbara Walters’ 1986 pre-Academy Awards show, while barely a million people read the *New York Times* daily” (296), to indicate the Reagan White House’s mastery of image projection. Moreover, Troy writes persuasively about the way that television fictions reinforced the Reagan storyline. “The success of the fictional Huxtables”—the affluent African American family featured on *The Cosby Show* (1984–1992)—“proved Ronald Reagan was right, and was more influential than any journalists’ sniping. Even sleazy hits like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* helped perpetuate the illusion of prosperity so central to Reagan’s success” (296). I read him to mean that *The Cosby Show* bolstered many whites’ insistence that, contrary to what civil rights advocates and assorted social critics said, racism and unequal opportunity were ebbing in U.S. life; opinion surveys in the late 1980s verified this effect.

One appealing aspect of Troy’s book is its determination to trace the 1980s year by year—one chapter per year—rather than treating the period as a block and eliding the fluidity and struggles that marked this era. Unfortunately, his discussion of popular culture sometimes takes on the breezy feeling of a catalog of greatest hits. As well, a colloquial tone and form frequently surface in his writing, as when Troy states that “the [baby] boomers’ brashness and ‘let-it-all-hang-out-edness’ transformed attitudes toward money in America” (80). He is onto something here; he argues that the 1980s witnessed a marriage of grasping materialism with the liberalized culture born of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet Troy’s tone of forced informality, even jokiness, detracts from the seriousness of his point.

Whereas Troy focuses on popular culture, Collins, in *Transforming America*, addresses both elite and popular culture, relying on James Hunter’s frame of “culture wars” between orthodox and progressive moralities.³ His tone is serious,

but his analysis of cultural matters is less than convincing. He associates a “progressivist ethic on the rise” (189) with the usual targets of cultural conservative ire from the 1980s: Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, Karen Finley, and the misogynistic rap performers 2 Live Crew. Yet he does not cite any political or cultural liberals who defended 2 Live Crew’s recordings or anything similar. This is characteristic of Collins’s casual smears of liberals and leftists, as when he writes that the nuclear freeze movement of the early 1980s “worked both sides of the Atlantic” (198), language that implies the movement was either duplicitous or similar to a prostitute or both.

Collins’s attitude toward antinuclear activism touches on the general area of foreign policy, which is crucial in considering the upward revision of Ronald Reagan’s reputation by historians. In these books, foreign policy is treated somewhat narrowly, with an emphasis on Reagan’s responsibility for ending the cold war. Reagan does, indeed, deserve credit for reversing his initial belligerent stance toward the Soviet Union and for his enthusiasm for negotiations with Mikhail Gorbachev. However, this issue has to be analyzed carefully, as Beth Fischer has explained, if one wishes to avoid oft-intoned but unsustainable ideas.⁴ Among these is the notion that Reagan, who was shocked to learn the rudiments of nuclear deterrence theory when he became president, was a “pacifist.” The authors of these books show more sympathy than is warranted for the rightist argument that Reagan’s initial weapons build-up including his technically implausible missile defense shield proposal, nicknamed “Star Wars”—spurred the Soviet leadership to seek nuclear arms reductions.

Reagan’s determination to wage proxy wars in Central America, which was crucial in his early foreign policy, has almost vanished from the history of this period now being written. Collins summarizes Reagan’s policies toward El Salvador and Nicaragua as a venture “into uncomfortably murky moral waters where the choices were often between a highly imperfect anticommunist status quo or change in the direction of a predictably worse revolutionary and communist alternative, between, as it were, bad thugs and worse thugs” (231–32). Aside from the cartoonish inaccuracy of this portrait—which should be clear to anyone who has read, for example, *Weakness and Deceit*, the account by the *New York Times* correspondent Raymond Bonner—this statement ignores the terrible callousness of Reagan and his subordinates toward the lives of people in Central America, many of whom died and suffered because of his needless policies.⁵

None of these authors gives an adequate account of the Iran-contra affair. Generally, they depict Reagan’s sins in this scandal as ones of omission, not commission. John Ehrman, identified on the cover of *The Eighties* as “a for-

eign affairs analyst for the federal government,” largely eschews discussion of U.S. foreign relations, ostensibly because he covered that ground in an earlier work, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*.⁶ Ehrman cannot resist, however, making some brief comments on Iran-contra. He concedes that “Reagan gave false and contradictory accounts” of his administration’s policies to the public and investigators (140). But he writes that Attorney General Edwin Meese’s initial probe into the matter got off to “a slow, fumbling start that gave [Oliver] North time to destroy crucial documents” (140). Yet the investigation led by Lawrence E. Walsh, the independent counsel for Iran-contra, revealed that Meese initiated a cover-up intended to protect Reagan. Meese’s inept internal inquiries seemed designed to buy time for all the principal players, tipping them off that the lights were coming on. The authors adopt the Republican talking point that Walsh was a “politicized,” out-of-control Torquemada. None of the authors seems to realize how crucial it was to all Republicans, who hoped to burnish Reagan’s reputation and build on his political success, to discredit Walsh. With so many people in the political and media environment saying that Walsh performed irresponsibly, there must be something to it. Once this idea is accepted, it becomes nearly impossible to concede the seriousness of the offenses involved in Iran-contra.

Donald Regan, Reagan’s second-term chief of staff, joins Walsh as a figure who pulled aside the curtain and revealed the workings of Oz to the public, and whose reputation has taken much abuse as a result. To one degree or another, these books compliantly relay those negative judgments. Regan’s 1988 book, *For the Record*, proved embarrassing to Reagan. Ehrman parrots the assertion by Reagan loyalists that Regan was responsible for much of what went wrong in Reagan’s White House.⁷ Absurdly, Ehrman blames Iran-contra on Regan. “Regan had been present for the early discussion of the arms sales to Iran but lacked the political sense to tell the president to quash the idea” (141). More generally, Troy writes that Regan found it hard to work for Reagan because Regan came “from the rigid, performance-based hierarchies of the marine corps and Merrill Lynch” (237). Ehrman opines that “by ensuring that Reagan’s orders were carried out without discussion, Regan abandoned a primary responsibility of the chief of staff—to tell his boss when he was making a mistake and try to steer him in another direction” (129). It is not clear that these authors grasp what they reveal with these remarks. By implication they describe Regan as an incompetent, reckless old man who needed a keeper.

Turning away from foreign policy, the economic record of the 1980s is one of the paramount areas of interpretation in the history of the era, and Ehrman and Collins seem to view economics as Reagan’s strong suit. Yet Ehrman

deserves praise for acknowledging the bad faith involved in Reagan's budget proposal. His 1981 budget, which slashed relief for the poor and income tax rates, Ehrman writes, was marred by "flawed assumptions, inaccurate data, wishful thinking, and outright manipulation" (54). Collins writes of "Reaganomics"—which he summarizes as "tax cuts and spending constraints [*sic*], tight money, and deregulation"—that, in 1981, "there was much more agreement on *what* things the administration should do than on *why* it should do them" (68), a highly ingenuous comment. This was a traditional conservative economic program. For the rentiers and businessmen who formed the traditional constituency of the right, there was no mystery about why it should be implemented. Conservatives had a political problem, however, in convincing anyone else to support it. Their search was for a saleable *public* justification.

Ehrman also acknowledges the unfulfilled promises of the "supply-side" doctrines that were used to justify Reagan's special pleading for the wealthy. The recession of the early 1980s, the worst since the 1930s, gave way to a recovery by 1984, which allowed Reagan and his supporters to campaign in that year claiming that their policies had led to sunny prospects for the nation. In a crucial passage, Ehrman writes that Martin Feldstein, a leading Reagan administration economist, "more sympathetic to the supply side than most,"

noted in 1986 that supply-siders had "conveniently forgotten" that actual growth had fallen well below their forecasts. Others, both Keynesians and non-Keynesians, pointed out that the recovery was largely in line with Keynesian predictions, as it was fueled by tax cuts, military spending, and falling interest rates. . . . anyone looking in economic literature for an independent confirmation that supply-side policies caused the recovery and boom of the 1980s will find little to support that view (63).

While Ehrman tosses cold water on supply-side pretensions, he and Collins nonetheless assert that the income tax-cutting, deregulatory, anti-union policy environment of the 1980s, combined with the new financial instruments of the era—such as the rise in "junk bond" capitalization and leveraged buyouts—renewed U.S. capitalism and benefited Americans in general. Ehrman states, "The increased competition of the 1980s brought renewed innovation, rising productivity, and, most important, an adjustment in how people were rewarded for their labors. That some benefited more than others should not obscure the major result, which for most people was greater fairness, more choices, and an improved standard of living" (127). Collins says there was a "shift away from conglomeration in the organizing of corporate activity" in the 1980s, which is true. But he is on shakier ground in asserting that this shift "was an important part of a more general change in the 1980s from an emphasis on security and

equality to an emphasis on innovation and efficiency” (111). The only illustration Collins furnishes in support is the Ford Motor Company. But according to his portrait, Ford’s improved performance stemmed from the adoption of “quality” practices associated with the business thinker Edward Deming; Ford was not an example of business disaggregation.

Both Collins and Ehrman make highly general, quite rosy assertions concerning economic change and performance without proof. In the story they tell, because of policy changes and cultural changes, weak companies died and strong ones thrived, making the United States stronger; wealth creation became the prime basis for individual compensation in a more meritocratic society. When the character Gordon Gekko voiced an identical perspective in his famous “Greed is good” speech in the movie *Wall Street*, at least it was satirical. One might expect more from scholars than this kind of pop-economics social Darwinism, especially from Collins, the author of a fine study of economic policymaking, *More*.⁸ Neither Collins nor Ehrman really even tries to prove his case about how bounteous and fair the economy of the 1980s was. One searches all three books under review in vain for any mention of the fact that overall economic growth in the troubled decade of the 1970s was as high as it was in the supposedly more robust 1980s. Collins makes but two brief mentions of the 1981–1982 recession. These authors need not dwell on the bad in the Reagan economy if that is not their wont. But they damage their credibility by all but ignoring the experience of the many who fared poorly in the 1980s. Compare that avoidance with this forthright statement in *The Seventies*, by Bruce Schulman: “The Reagan recovery did little for working people. Real earnings of production workers actually fell between 1980 and 1987.”⁹ One would never know this from reading *Transforming America* or *The Eighties*.

Collins identifies two major economic accomplishments of Reagan’s. First, he writes that the Federal Reserve, with Reagan’s support, curbed inflation enduringly by raising interest rates. This was the oldest anti-inflationary medicine in the book, inducing a recession, throwing people out of work, and reducing the price of goods and services in general, including that of labor. Second, he contends that Reagan’s policies “set in motion . . . what economists label ‘the Great Expansion,’ an unparalleled twenty-year burst of prosperity at century’s end” (88). The first point is descriptively sound, although in order to explain the lasting weakness of inflation, one probably has to account for the rise of international price competition and the shift of U.S. workers, following the Reagan recession, into low-wage, non-union jobs where they had little bargaining power—matters in which Collins shows little interest. Collins’s second point—that Reagan deserves the credit for the economic expansion of

the 1990s, notwithstanding the “minor recession in 1990–1991” (88)—is a Republican talking point that arose in the late 1990s, clearly out of concern that Bill Clinton and, by association, Al Gore would gain political credit for the general prosperity of that time. But “economists” do not call the whole period between 1983 and 2000 “the Great Expansion.” The only support Collins adduces for this remark comes from Lawrence Lindsay, one of the discredited supply-side advocates whose views are repudiated by Ehrman, and from a tendentious congressional committee report produced in 2000. Why not go all the way and argue that Eisenhower caused the boom of the 1990s? Perhaps Calvin Coolidge ended the Great Depression. We are in never-never land now; “elitist” concern with “individual facts” need not deter us from our chosen destination.

Various other issues in the social history of the 1980s and their treatment by these authors could be addressed here—for example, the related issues of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the expansion of the gay/lesbian movement in the 1980s, which get at least some coverage in these books, or the experience of U.S. women, which gets virtually none but one last issue must be addressed, and that is the treatment of race relations in the 1980s. Race is dealt with very briefly, but tellingly. Reagan generally is presented as a bystander in race matters. But, in fact, race was very important in Reagan’s rise to power. No mention is made by any of these authors that Reagan began his 1980 campaign, in incendiary fashion, with an appearance near Philadelphia, Mississippi—tragically, a town most famous as the site of the murders of three civil-rights activists in 1964—where he announced his support for the principle of “states’ rights,” a pro-segregation slogan that had been banished from presidential politics since 1964. Ehrman reduces questions of race in the 1980s to a policy debate over affirmative action. Nancy MacLean, in her recent book *Freedom Is Not Enough*, argues with great specificity that the Reagan administration’s initial attacks on affirmative action—which encountered fierce resistance and were abandoned by Reagan’s second term—stemmed directly from the historic hostility of movement conservatives, from the 1950s on, toward the cause of greater racial and gender equality.¹⁰

There is simply no place in these books for a discussion of long-term conflict in U.S. politics and society over racial advantage and disadvantage. Collins places a three-page discussion of race, which feels tacked on, near his book’s end. He, like Troy, insists that Reagan was not personally racist, which—putting aside the 1950s-vintage conception of racism and antiracism at work here—is hardly the important point. Collins laments Reagan’s “failure to make progress in healing the nation’s longstanding racial wounds” (239), a comment that

seems quite detached from historical realities. Reagan, as an individual politician and as the leader of his party, consciously exploited and exacerbated those “wounds.” Troy gets a nod for at least noting, in passing, that “Reagan and his allies happily exploited white anger for political gain” (90). Troy insists, however, that this “white anger” resulted solely from concerns over violent crime, which white Americans associated closely with African Americans. Troy treads carefully here. He is vaguely critical, but not very critical, of this racially tinged anticrime frenzy, which underwrote the potency of George H. W. Bush’s “demagoguery” (307) in his 1988 presidential campaign over the Willie Horton matter. Troy makes no such harsh judgment of Reagan’s racial politics.

Overall, these books are marred by unreflective, often unsubstantiated repetition of catchphrases and interpretations whose origins lie in the impressive Republican-conservative propaganda apparatus of the past quarter-century. At times the authors appear to strive sincerely for interpretive “balance.” Yet the concept of balance at work here is not that of synthesizing alternative interpretations, each of which has an established integrity and plausibility. Instead it is a crude partisan concept of balance. The authors import into historical writing the intellectual procedures and standards of today’s cable television news coverage. Yet sometimes they throw such caution to the wind. *The Eighties* and *Transforming America* in particular are suffused with an aura of complacency, although Ehrman’s book contains occasional passages that undermine key elements in his encomium to Reagan and the social changes of the 1980s. Overall, I cannot recommend either of these or *Morning in America* as an improvement over Schaller’s *Reckoning with Reagan*—a concise and plainly written account that I have assigned to students, who have responded enthusiastically—as an introduction to the period.

What explains the limits, and the sometimes embarrassing flaws, of these books? Some may think it is simply impossible to write high-quality history about the recent past, but I do not agree. The high feelings of these times will linger in the minds of scholars. But even partisan loyalty, in itself, is no bar to excellent scholarship. Consistent seriousness of purpose, adherence to rigorous standards of evidence and logic, honest attempts to address relevant issues that are known to all, effective presentation, and the occasional original insight are what are required. None of these is incompatible with strong political views. The recentness of the 1980s is no excuse for low intellectual standards in writing the period’s history.

In recent years, Internet-based liberal journalists have remarked on the phenomenon they call “working the refs”—a sports metaphor—to explain how Republicans have succeeded in influencing the coverage of political news

by journalists. They assert that a constant drumbeat of rightist complaints about “liberal bias” in the news media, heard throughout the land since the days when Richard Nixon was president and Spiro Agnew vice president, has led reporters to “balance” every liberal or Democratic remark on public affairs with a conservative or Republican rebuttal, has produced a preponderance of conservative over liberal voices in news stories and interviews, and has trained journalists to accord undue respect to conservative assertions and concepts that, on their merits, deserve critical scrutiny. Journalists who are Democrats or liberals wish to protect themselves against charges of bias; those who are Republicans or conservatives harbor little such fear.¹¹

Similarly, the constant flow of books praising Ronald Reagan as an impressive leader and thinker and a moral exemplar, typically subverted by rightist foundations and “think tanks,” may represent a wise investment of time, energy, and money.¹² These ceaseless love letters to Reagan are echoed in partisan radio, television, and Internet venues; the general public is influenced, and Republican and rightist students may come to history classrooms armed with talking points, ready to do battle when the 1980s is the topic. In this environment, historians of this period may feel compelled to credit views and interpretations solely for their popular resonance, not for their proven validity, or else lose a big chunk of their potential audience.

On the other hand, perhaps scholars who view Reagan’s presidency and the 1980s favorably are simply more likely to wish to devote years to writing books on the subject. For liberal and leftist scholars there is a powerful “Reagan ‘yuck factor,’” as Troy aptly notes (349), that turns them to other topics.

I hasten to add that I do not think that the only good history of the 1980s is a negative history, a train of lamentations. There was much exhilaration and excitement in the United States during the 1980s—in the rather hedonistic lives of the rich and the young, in the conservative movement at its moment of triumph, in the realms of business and technology, and elsewhere. Little of this sense of giddiness makes its way into these books. Troy continually refers to the runaway hedonism of the 1980s in strongly disapproving terms—a sharp contrast to his studied efforts at “balance” when discussing matters of partisan political debate—but this finger wagging produces a rather two-dimensional picture. It is customary, in political accounts of Reagan’s rise to the White House, to cite James Fallows’s 1979 article on Jimmy Carter’s “passionless presidency.”¹³ Ironically, these chronicles of the 1980s, generally favorable toward Ronald Reagan and the regime he inaugurated, are themselves rather passionless accounts. A section in *Transforming America* on the computer revolution is one of the few places where any of the ferment experienced by those who

were “making it” during this era is conveyed. A survey that captured this side of the 1980s would be a valuable contribution to historical understanding. A new history of the 1980s that, either in this way or in some other, raises the analysis of that era to a new level of intelligence and perceptiveness has not yet arrived. We remain mired in an interpretive phase shaped by some of the more inane features of contemporary political debate.

Notes

1. “Be afraid. Be very afraid” comes from *The Fly* (1986; dir. David Cronenberg). “Go ahead, make my day” is from *Sudden Impact* (1983; dir. Clint Eastwood); Reagan used it in 1985 to threaten a veto of tax legislation. In his fall 1984 reelection campaign, Reagan repeatedly told audiences that Americans should strive to repeat the achievements of U.S. athletes, who had done very well at the recent summer Olympics (boycotted by the Soviet Union), and “go for the gold” in national endeavors.
2. Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press); Schaller has written a new book, *Right Turn: American Life in the Reagan-Bush Era, 1980–1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), which appeared too late to be discussed in this essay.
3. James D. Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
4. See Beth A. Fischer, “Reagan and the Soviets: Winning the Cold War?” in *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies*, ed. W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 113–32.
5. Raymond Bonner, *Weakness and Deceit: U.S. Policy and El Salvador* (New York: Times Books, 1984).
6. John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1994* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995).
7. Donald T. Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to the White House* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).
8. *Wall Street* (1987; dir. Oliver Stone); Robert M. Collins, *More: The Politics of Economic Growth in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
9. Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 234.
10. Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, Mass./New York: Harvard University Press and Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), chaps. 7, 9.
11. Eric Alterman’s *What Liberal Media? The Truth About BIAS and the News* (New York: Basic Books, 2003) is an extended critique of the “liberal bias” charge, exemplified in Bernard Goldberg, *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News* (New York: Regnery Publishing, 2001).
12. Examples include Dinesh D’Souza, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* (New York: Free Press, 1997); Peggy Noonan, *When Character Was King: A Story of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Viking Adult, 2001); Peter Robinson, *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life* (New York: Regan Books, 2003); Steven F. Hayward, *Greatness: Reagan, Churchill, and the Making of Extraordinary Leaders* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005); and Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America* (New York: Free Press, 2001). *Reagan, In His Own Hand* is an important and valuable source; containing the text of radio addresses Reagan delivered during the 1970s, most of which he wrote himself, it is cited prominently in all the books reviewed here, and clearly has made a big impact on scholarship in a short time.
13. James Fallows, “The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter’s Administration,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979 (vol. 243), 33–48.