



# Political Romanticism

*Carl Schmitt*

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## **Political Romanticism** Carl Schmitt

Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), the author of such books as *Political Theology* and *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (both published in English by The MIT Press), was one of the leading political and legal theorists of the twentieth century. His critical discussions of liberal democratic ideals and institutions continue to arouse controversy, but even his opponents concede his uncanny sense for the basic problems of modern politics. *Political Romanticism* is a historical study that, like all of Schmitt's major works, offers a fundamental political critique. In it, he defends a concept of political action based on notions of good and evil, justice and injustice, and attacks the political passivity entailed by the romanticization of experience. The book has three strands. The first is an attack on received notions of the origins of the Romantic Movement. Schmitt argues that this movement represents a secularization, subjectification, and privatization in which God is replaced by the emancipated, private individual of the bourgeois social order. The second is an assault on political romanticism that includes a broader attack on the new European bourgeoisie, which Schmitt characterizes as the historical bearer of the movement. The third strand is a defense of political conservatism and a refutation of the view that political romanticism is intrinsically linked with romanticism. Here Schmitt argues that the political romantic is tied not to positions but to aesthetics, and can therefore as easily become a Danton as a Frederick the Great. Guy Oakes's introduction places the book in historical context and also suggests its continuing relevance through his discussion of the latest outcropping of political romanticism in the late 1960s, intriguingly brought out in his example of Norman Mailer as a political romantic. *Political Romanticism* is included in the series *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, edited by Thomas McCarthy.

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