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Ronald Gray

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IN LITERATURE
1871-1945

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PREFACE

I have tried to keep in mind the words of Dr F. R. Leavis that ‘no “sociology of literature” and no attempt to relate literary studies with sociological will yield much profit unless informed and controlled by a real and intelligent interest—a first-hand critical interest—in literature’, and that ‘a real literary interest is an interest in man, society and civilization, and its boundaries cannot be drawn...’. This accounts for the structure of the present book, which begins with a broad survey of German literature against the political background of the twentieth century, and goes on to close analysis of ‘words on the page’, to turn in the final chapter to the inquiry: what course is best suited to German literature now, to what extent can it rely on the tradition to which most of its renowned achievements belong, and to what extent must that tradition be reshaped or reformulated?

Some of the ideas in this book were suggested by Professor E. M. Butler’s inaugural lecture, referred to on p. 369; others developed in parallel with the investigations by Professor W. H. Bruford, mentioned on the same page. However, the particular formulations I have reached are my own, and I would not wish to imply that either of these former occupants of Cambridge chairs necessarily shared any of my views. Humphry Trevelyan read the manuscript and gave me comments which I was glad to have; as did the staff of the Cambridge University Press, to whom I should like to offer my thanks. I would also thank the many friends and pupils who have by discussion helped me to see more clearly what it was that I wanted to say.

R. D. G.

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NOTE ON THE PAPERBACK EDITION

Although after the space of twelve years since this book first appeared I would modify slightly a few of the statements in it, my essential arguments are still ones I maintain, and this paperback edition appears without alteration.

R.D.G.