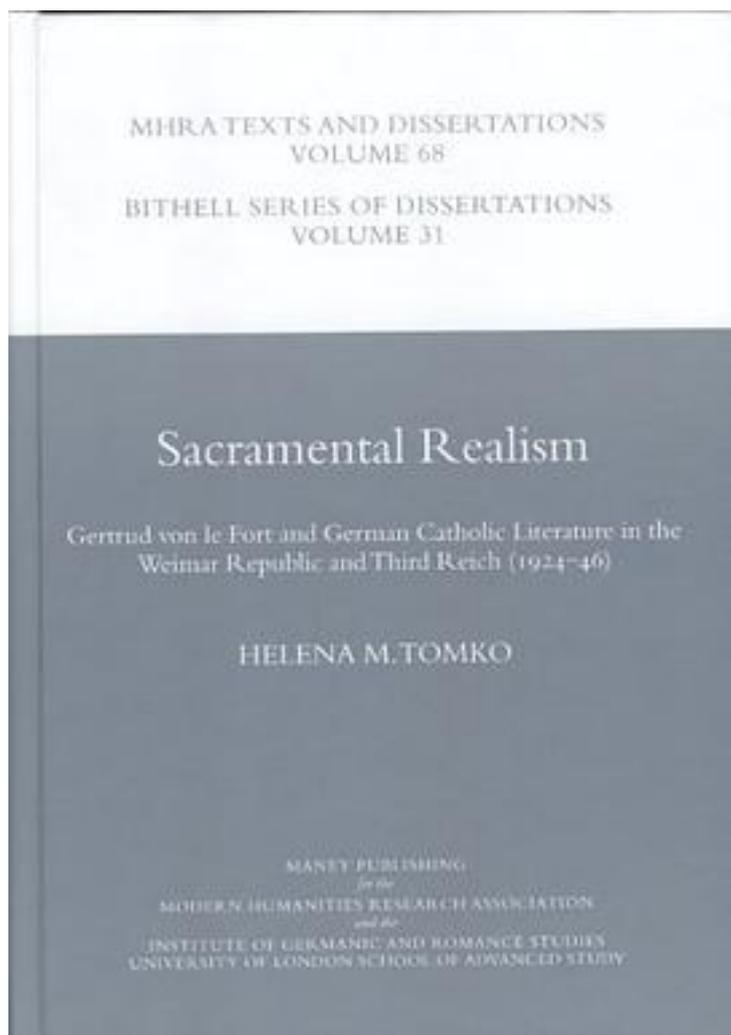


Sacramental Realism



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Following her conversion to Catholicism in 1926, Gertrud von le Fort (1876-1971)

developed literary forms in her fiction and verse that sought to allow readers imaginative access to her sacramental vision of reality. Le Fort's contribution to German literature has often been identified narrowly with the Christian inner emigration during the Third Reich. This study's concentration on the period 1924-46 extends the critical perspective towards a more nuanced assessment of her work that pays appropriate attention to the literary, theological, and socio-cultural context of German Catholicism in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich. Scholars have considered, but by no means discussed exhaustively, whether a German literary *renouveau catholique* emerged in the first half of the twentieth century akin to that witnessed slightly earlier in France. This study demonstrates that le Fort's work does indeed belong to a flourishing period of Catholic culture in Germany, but one fraught with the complexities of the national culture out of which it emerged. The three main thematic and chronologically arranged parts of the study address, respectively, the importance of religious conversion in le Fort's work; her problematic sense of German and Catholic identity in the years immediately before the establishing of the Third Reich; and, lastly, her literary inner emigration and response to National Socialism. Throughout the study, the term 'sacramental realism' is used to aid a new evaluation of the interdependence of theology and aesthetics that underlies le Fort's literary work. This study presents a revised approach to a significant, but often misconstrued, area of Catholic literature during the Weimar Republic and Third Reich.

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