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Preface

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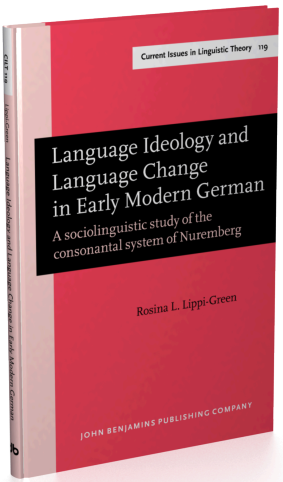

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PREFACE

In the three years since I began this project I have become endebted to many persons for support of all kinds. Robert Peter Ebert first warned me away from this topic (and in restrospect, I understand why), but then provided a great deal of encouragement and support, in his usual unadorned but infinitely helpful style. I have had careful readers; those persons who were kind enough to dive into this manuscript in its early and most chaotic stages and point out to me my most obvious and grevious sins have my deep gratitude, but of course I retain full responsibility for unresolved infelicities. They include Robert Kyes, Deborah Keller-Cohen, Joe Salmons, William Moulton, Patricia Moss, Rob Howell, Jim Milroy and anonymous reviewers. I would also like to thank Konrad Koerner for his support, good advice, and patience. Finally, I am sincerely grateful to Marilyn Fries, my colleague and mentor, for her friendship, her faith in me and her efforts on my behalf.

I am especially endebted to my graduate student and research assistant, David Fertig, who did all of the computer programming and saved my sanity many times. I thank him for his steadiness in the face of threatened technical disaster, his meticulous work and not least for the substantive contributions which often made me stop and reconsider a line of argument.

In the earliest stages of planning this project, I began to read all the sixteenth century documents I could find. I was particularly interested in the personal correspondence of the working class, and of women, because everything about them interested me: not only their language, but also the lives they led in a patriarchal community with so many resources but so little available to them, as women. I reluctantly put aside my original goal of studying the socially conditioned language variation in texts written by women for technical reasons, but in the long road to that decision a very different flame was ignited, which has been productive to this work in subtle but important ways. Further inquiry into the social identities of sixteenth century Nuremberg working class artisans and women has helped me formulate a picture of the greater social structure, which was a first and crucial step in this study. It has also given me tremendously rich material for other pursuits. So I am grateful to my informants, writers who long ago put down their thoughts in writing, and to the people who preserved those papers, for me to find.

Finally, I thank my husband and daughter for their love, understanding and good faith in the face of my distractedness and crankiness in the final stages of preparation of the manuscript.

Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 1994
RLG

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