

country houses. During the First World War Robins continued to walk on the peripheries of several circles. She lectured on behalf of the Ministry of Food and helped with the new Women's Institutes, but in time became more critical of the war and its consequences. She saw more clearly than some later historians that the contribution of women to the war effort was *not* responsible for getting them the vote in 1918. After 1918 she continued her semi-detached strategy. Lady Rhondda involved her as a director of *Time and Tide* and a Vice-President of the Six Point Group. But her novels and essays had enabled her to become an independent figure, and by the time she left *Time and Tide* in 1923 Robins found herself increasingly drawn into the cause of disarmament and the League of Nations Union with her old friend, Grey. By writing an account of Elizabeth Robins' career Angela John has given us a fascinating biography of a talented woman who acted her roles as convincingly off the stage as on; but she has also helped to further our understanding of the evolution of the women's movement in this country.

*University of Newcastle upon Tyne*

MARTIN PUGH

***Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution.*** By Albert Boime. Princeton University Press. 1995. xiv + 234pp. \$39.50/£33.50.

This is an extremely suggestive book which offers many insights into the relationship of artists with the society of their time. Boime's essential thesis is that one of the most important features of the Impressionist movement was its effort to overcome the terrible memories of the bloodshed and destruction of the Paris Commune. As the physical rebuilding of central Paris took shape in the 1870s, so the Impressionists – themselves largely moderate republicans – tried to hide the 'guilty secret' of the Commune by new images of harmony. And so the street scenes, the sunlit parks and gardens, the depiction of the leisure activities of Parisians of all classes gathered together, were all designed to celebrate the reassertion of bourgeois order. This is a more 'political' view of Impressionism than has hitherto been accepted, and Professor Boime marshals some impressive arguments. Although Impressionism started in the 1860s, he maintains, many of its innovating techniques were not developed until the following decade. Boime documents the horror that was felt by many within the movement at the devastation and slaughter of the civil war in France. At the same time he quotes with ample detail from the opposition to the movement in right-wing circles. He demonstrates that the Impressionists were hostile to the violence of the right as well as to that of the Communards, and shows the degree to which the Impressionists hoped to offer a new synthesis to give the illusion that the utopia envisioned by the Communards was now being realized within bourgeois society. All this is persuasively argued. Where Professor Boime is perhaps less convincing is in his treatment of neo-Impressionist utopianism as represented by men like Seurat. In his examination of the latter's celebrated 'Un dimanche à la Grande Jatte', Boime stresses that Seurat's aim was to depict an Icarian ideal of social harmony. Boime, however, does not deal satisfactorily with those critics who have emphasized Seurat's anarchism and his subversive intent. Is his masterpiece really a picture of tranquillity and reconciliation? Does it not show the atomized society that lurks behind the stiff hieratic figures, each of them isolated from the others? Is the large woman on the right with a pet

monkey a pillar of the bourgeoisie or a prostitute? These are questions that one would like to see addressed.

Keele University

FRANK FIELD

***German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914.* By Helmut Walser Smith. Princeton University Press. 1995. xiii + 271pp. £33.50.**

This ambitious published Yale dissertation compares for the first time the divided cultures and divisive politics of official and popular Protestantism and Catholicism in Bismarckian and Wilhelmine Germany. Separation became more rather than less pronounced in a new nation-state which, notably after the abeyance of the *Kulturkampf*, appealed to national unity. Walser Smith argues convincingly (see his excellent introductory map showing Protestant and Catholic distribution in 1890), given the German Reformation, that religion, like class, continued to be a central defining category for German nationals (p. 79). He is especially good on the rhetoric of a new national Protestant canon which bracketed Luther and the Reformation with national unity and liberal progress, and the Catholic response to it as an alternative Catholic German history and popular literature. But Walser Smith gives us a far less convincing portrait of its place in the new embattled German and European cultural climate following a mid-century Catholic revival, the papal Syllabus and papal Infallibility. Döllinger and Acton and their arguments are passed over; modernism, Catholic and Protestant, goes unnoticed. However, there is much of interest in his account of a new middle-class Protestant confessional politics summoned into being by the new Catholic parliamentary Centre Party and Catholic lay organizations. It was represented by a defensive nationalist Protestant League (*Evangelischer Bund zur Wahrung deutsch-protestantischer Interessen*, 1887), which aimed to 'break the power of Rome on German soil', and blackened France and Spain as its cancerous monastic and clerical national victims. It became the 'largest Protestant lay organization in the empire' by 1914 (with about 500,000 members). The author's final part has much to say about the religious complexion of the nationalist conflict in the German borderlands between Protestant Germans and Catholic Poles in western and eastern Prussia, and the Protestant German *Los von Rom* movement (1898), loosely affiliated to the Protestant League, which tried misguidedly (and, it seems, unsuccessfully, with only some 70,000 members by 1913), to convert Catholic Austrians in Cisleithania. Such conflict was also a peculiarly Prussian problem, since it was rooted in that state's topographic and cultural connection with pre- and post-partition Poland – the 1910 census gave a 25 per cent Catholic (often Polish-speaking) population in West Prussia, 15 per cent Catholics in Posen, and a picture of coexistence, with notably 32 per cent Catholics in Allenstein, in East Prussia – and in impoverished Protestant churches and poor Protestant pastoral provision which had followed a haphazard Reformation in these sparsely settled lands: a woeful 1889 report by the West Prussian consistory spoke of a Protestant church comparable to one in 'the American wilderness' (p. 176). Given a new mobility resulting from legislation freeing labour from the restrictive hand of the home parish at the end of the 1860s, such antagonism surfaced not only on the old *Junker* estates, but also