

communities of the 1960s and 70s, Ralf Rothmann returns, in *Feuer brennt nicht* ("Fire Doesn't Burn"), to that other location he knows well: an ever-changing Berlin. For the first time, he turns his attention to Berlin's leafy, lakeside suburbs where the East-West divide is still tangible.

Wolf, a writer, and his younger partner Alina, have grown tired of the more down-at-heel aspects of their Berlin neighbourhood. One winter's night they open a map and, at random, eyes shut, choose a new haven. Friedrichshagen, a lakeside town a short train-ride from the city, is where their fingers land: its tranquillity and nature, the change of pace and "twosome-ness" seem promising. In Kreuzberg they had "intimacy at a distance", perfect in Wolf's eyes – two flats separated by a hallway. Now they share a front door, and the entire palette of everyday existence. Wolf hopes the happiness he perceives in Alina – his "art-nouveau beauty", who shelters him so his writing may flourish, with a "Madonna-like grace" and the fragility and strength of an innocent Juliet – will still his restlessness. One day, however, Charlotte, a lover from the past, re-enters. The love triangle exposes uncomfortable truths.

Rothmann's trademark earnestness and honesty are in evidence, as is his pinpointing the fundamental role sex plays in our lives, demystifying it through graphic detail. There are passages, too, of lyrical beauty, when Wolf looks outside his self-absorption to the lakescape beyond. A story of a changing Berlin, and of encounters with the denizens of East and West, it also ponders growing older, the increasing presence of illness and death, and how this impacts on a sense of virility or femininity. Most of all it is a love story, touched by darkness, yet told with a compelling urgency.

For a reader new to Rothmann's work, an earlier novel such as *Milch und Kohle* ("Milk and Coal") or *Hitze* ("Heat") might serve better as an introduction; for connoisseurs, however, *Feuer brennt nicht* may surprise, but it will not disappoint.

REBECCA K. MORRISON

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## Archaeology

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**Richard Hoggett**

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EAST ANGLIAN CONVERSION

207pp. Boydell. £50.

978 1 843 83595 0

**R**ichard Hoggett's *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion* asks what the archaeology of death can say about how, and how quickly, Christian faith spread through that region. It is a question worth asking – but a tricky one. The great medieval archaeologist Philip Barker once memorably remarked that the Crucifixion itself would only appear archaeologically as three post-holes, while John Blair, a leading Anglo-Saxonist, has called the archaeology of cemeteries "a small and murky window" – although the only one available for us to look through – for evidence of "the responses of the laity at large" to the Christian mission.

Hoggett lays out the evidence for the re-use of Roman sites in East Anglia, such as Walton Castle, Burgh Castle and Caister-on-Sea, and other enclosed areas such as Iken

and Brandon, often royal gifts from local kings to founding bishops, as locations for what he calls missionary stations. He gives weight (as most now do) to the importance of their *romanitas* for the emerging alliance between royalty and the Church. He sees the abrupt abandonment of cremation and change in grave-offering practice in the early seventh century as part of this new cultural and religious development, and suggests that the uniformity of that development across the diversity of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is best explained by the commonality of their conversion. As Christian practice and its impact were less than uniform, it may be best to note the clear link but not claim causality.

His argument is building up to a conversion that was "quick and widespread at grass-roots level", but Hoggett now needs to address the mystery of the missing Middle Saxons. He notes that as burial practices change, so old boundary cemeteries are closed and give way to new ones nearer to settlements (themselves increasingly nucleated). But these are too few in number, even with missionary station cemeteries added, to account for the numbers of burials that there must have been. So where are the bodies?

The second part of Hoggett's study takes us on an adventure of speculation that perhaps provides the answer. First, a tally is taken of inhumations within settlements but not next to churches: we are told that for each one found, many others must be sealed under subsequent development. Then the surviving Middle Saxon pottery found in church environs is evaluated, and seen as evidence for Middle Saxon church foundations – perhaps wooden buildings lost, with associated burials now too disturbed to identify. Third, the evidence of extensive field walking is drawn together to chart surviving Middle Saxon potsherds in areas outside churches and churchyards as indirect evidence that they date from that period, and could have had now-lost burials. Cumulatively, "if each of the church sites associated with a Middle Saxon scatter possessed a Christian churchyard-type cemetery, this would suggest that much of the population had become wholly and actively Christian during the seventh century".

There is an obvious danger here that speculation is being piled upon conjecture. A good start, though, has been made, but in a direction that leaves me with a taste for the ongoing adventure.

DAVID THOMSON

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## Journalism

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**Susan Hill, editor**

THE BEST OF BOOKS AND COMPANY

198pp. Long Barn Books. Paperback, £8.99.

978 1 902421 42 1

**B**ooks and Company, the literary magazine started by the novelist Susan Hill, ran from 1997 to 2001. Hill has said of running it "never again", but she is rightly proud of this collection of articles, proud enough to publish them under her own imprint, Long Barn Books. "Books are company", as Inga-Stina Ewbank says in the final article here, and this is the case for all the writers represented. Many of the articles hark back to