

Peace by Richard Bausch.

Tuskar Rock Press 2009.

Some stories, no matter how short, pack an enormous amount in and leave the reader immensely satisfied, and Peace is one such story.

Set in the winter of 1944, as Allied forces make their way perilously up the Italian peninsular, five American soldiers, one a sergeant, have an encounter with a fleeing German which results in the death of two of them and the shooting of the German and his woman companion, the latter shot in cold blood by the sergeant.

The impact of this act on the three surviving GIs is damaging, and rifts open up between them that are as much to do with issues from back home as with the shooting of the woman and how best to respond to it. Later, their number is ameliorated, and they then encounter a strange and enigmatic guide who may or may not be working with the Germans.

The weather is foul and the atmosphere between the GIs not much better, but through this powerful and combustible mix the individual strengths and weaknesses of the protagonists and the unremitting brutality of their circumstances, are brought home to the reader in an unforgettable manner.

Peace is a memorable tale.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh