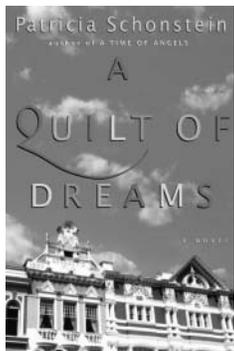


tance, the army—in Israeli life. Amidst a complicated tapestry of subplots and social intrigue, the heart of the novel focuses on the power of youthful bonds and how a secret that reinforces these bonds can also be the very device that destroys them.

Gur also endeavors to infuse the plot with some native literary flavor by lacing the storyline with repeated references to the esoteric, somewhat Gothic play, *Iddo and Eynam*, by the doyen of Israeli writers, S.Y. Agnon. The inter-textual repartée is well done, but probably a bit too heavily symbolic for those uninitiated in Israeli letters. Nevertheless, Gur has added enough snippets of Israeli life to give the book a local tone and also presents an old-fashioned “who done it” that is easily accessible to readers on both sides of the Atlantic. SRM



A QUILT OF DREAMS

Patricia Schonstein
HarperCollins, 2006. 320 pp. \$24.95
ISBN-13: 978-0-06-056244-1

A *Quilt of Dreams* is stitched together with memories of the past and dreams for the future. With fine style and craft the author uses the folk motif of quilts and the great oral tradition of African folklore to weave together, in a timely novel, the lives of Jews, Africans, and Afrikaans in South Africa. It is based on the actual series of events between 1985 and 1990 that led to the freeing of Nelson Mandela, thousands of others, and the end of the era of apartheid.

As we know, it was a long and rocky journey. Each character’s story is compelling. For the older Jews, ghosts of Kristallnacht hover everywhere. It is an

enormous challenge to live in yet another country with an unconscionable racial policy. Life is often filled with sadness and remorse. For the new generation, life is a quest for identity and meaning. It is fraught with the whole range of contemporary issues, political and personal. The Africans are determined and brave. The tension is everywhere, but like the quilt, the pieces hold fast and we are able, thankfully, to look forward with hope. Glossary, notes. PGM



SECOND LANGUAGE

Ronna Wineberg
New Rivers Press, 2005. 175 pp. \$14.95 (pbk.)
ISBN: 0-89823-224-4 (pbk.)

In this collection of beautifully crafted short stories, Ronna Wineberg deals with unfulfilled longings, deeply-held secrets, the effects on aging on the mind and the body. For example, in “The Coin Collector,” a widow, whose husband hid the coins he collected in a hamper, encounters a coin dealer who had a similar fate of hiding from the Nazis inside a hamper during the war. In “The Lapse,” a religious Jew who is married to a “cultural” Jew tries to come to terms with the deep, unbridgeable gap between them. In “The Search,” a woman seeks out her real father, only to find that he is a complete disappointment. And in “The Visitor,” a woman who must face her own children as she ages realizes that by watching her body age, she is only a visitor to this world, that “there are no easy ways to go through tough parts of life.”

Each of Wineberg’s stories sparkles, with some thought, conclusion, or moral

about life and its meaning. In one story, a character remarks, “the way to understand life is to keep moving forward.” This is a beautiful collection, with characters who do not necessarily experience fairy tale endings. BSC



THREE PLAYS: DARK RIVER, ARTHUR ARONYMUS AND HIS ANCETONS, AND I AND I

Else Lasker-Schüler; Jane Curtis, trans.; Inca Molina Rumold, ed.
Northwestern University Press, 2005. 312 pp. \$24.95
ISBN: 0-8101-2198-0

Else Lasker-Schüler (1869–1945) might have completed a life of ease and renown in Germany as one of her native land’s greatest poets and notorious eccentrics—had the Nazis not driven her into exile for being a Jew, to spend her remaining years in Jerusalem in obscurity and poverty.

Interest in her career in recent years has produced new editions of her poetry, and much publication exploring her life and art. Israeli playwright Motti Lerner, in his play *Exile in Jerusalem*, dramatizes the pitiful condition of her final days. Lasker-Schüler was also a playwright in the avant-garde genre of Expressionism; and her writing for the stage has been favorably compared with the early work of Bertolt Brecht.

In her introduction to her anthology of the writer’s three plays, well translated by Jane Curtis, Inca Molina Rumold explicates Lasker-Schüler’s career as a dramatist. The plays not only reflect this free thinking bohemian’s involvement, advanced for her time, with issues of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, but also her absorption, later in