

touches of mysticism that echo the writing of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

In the opening story, "The Disappearance of Zalman," set in Connecticut, Mark Kagan, a sometimes-brooding Jewish graduate student, ponders whether to break off his long-term, long-distance relationship with Sarah, a Catholic woman he met at a poetry reading. "The Jew in him—the Russian Jew—rejected that which the lover in him still ached for." A conversation with the university rabbi leaves Kagan flat and unmoved. Yet, when Kagan connects with Zalman, a yeshiva student, he begins weekly Hebrew lessons with him.

Readers are offered a glimpse into Kagan's inner struggle: "He didn't think of himself as 'Russian,' although he still spoke some Russian with his parents and poured white vinegar over the meat dumplings he bought frozen at the Russian store when he visited his parents in Boston—and cooked for himself at home."

The title story also explores the vexing question of intermarriage.

Jake Glaz, a successful young Russian émigré, is distraught because his Catholic girlfriend will not convert. Alone, on his way home from a vacation on the Riviera, he stops in Amsterdam during Yom Kippur, "a beautiful place for a Jew to atone." There is a palpable love of the city in richly detailed descriptions of Glaz's misty walks along the canals, meals of herring that remind him of his Soviet childhood, and Glaz's observance of Yom Kippur in the centuries-old Portuguese synagogue in the old Jewish quarter. Faith and hope trump despair.

Slowly, organically, other realities emerge in Shrayer's stories, shedding light on the hidden hardships that come with the immigrant experience.

—Penny Schwartz

Yom Kippur in Amsterdam

by Maxim D. Shrayer. (Syracuse University Press, 152 pp. \$24.95, paper)

Maxim D. Shrayer first wrote short stories in his native Russian and, later, in English after immigrating to America. *Yom Kippur in Amsterdam* is his first collection of short stories, tales of love, friendship, estrangement and the search for self as a stranger in a strange land.

In eight stories, Shrayer presents smart, sophisticated, modern-day Russian Jewish immigrant characters who confront age-old questions of belonging, loss for a life left behind and religious identity. He captures these experiences with imagination, clarity, tenderness, humor and

