

develops a clear-sightedness that contrasts sharply with his earlier confusions, even as he displays an alienation from his traditional roots that might never be bridged.

These gentle stories, profoundly rooted as they are in the Canadian experience, indicate our own national coming of age.

Olive Patricia Dickason teaches in the Department of History at the University of Alberta.

A HOPE FOR CHANGE



Zanu, Carol Matas. Fifth House, 1986. 116 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-920079-27-X; **The Fusion Factor**, Carol Matas. Fifth House, 1986. 117 pp. \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-920079-25-3; **Lisa**, Carol Matas. Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987. 122 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88619-167-7.

A group known as “Manitoba Educators for Social Responsibility” endorses the second of these adventure stories as a vehicle for promoting classroom discussion of the nuclear threat and for stimulating and encouraging its readers. While the subject matter of the other two stories is not the nuclear threat, clearly

in all three Carol Matas is interested in promoting the idea in her young readers that they do have a responsibility to other people, at family, community, national and world levels, and in encouraging them to believe that they have the power to make significant changes. The adolescent protagonists are placed in circumstances where their present way of life is threatened, and they bravely, in the face of death, struggle against powerful regimes and succeed in changing the course of history. Each story centres on a spirited girl with a quick temper and a willingness to enter into physical combat, who at considerable risk to herself, engages in a mission of rescue — thus breaking across the old stereotype of the male as rescuer.

In *Zanu* and *The Fusion Factor*, the same protagonist, Rebecca, a 12-year-old Winnipeg girl, by actively following up on her concern for another person — one a stranger, the other her school enemy — is accidentally propelled into the future through a time machine. The two books present a future world of sterility, computerized surveillance, and pollution.

Matas emphasizes that the future scenarios she depicts are not unalterable. At the conclusion of each of these two books, Rebecca returns to the

present time firmly resolved to do all she can to change the way things are. In *Zanu*, before she leaves, she is involved in establishing an underground network of people determined to overthrow the totalitarian regime. In *The Fusion Factor*, on her return from the underground city of the future she helps set up a peace group aimed at preventing nuclear holocaust. These children, and Matas's readers, learn that they are not powerless and that they can alter their own world; indeed, that their world is in its present shape because of decisions made by individuals and because of the passivity of the majority of people. These stories warn young readers about the possible results of a consumer-oriented society dominated by the ethics of profit-making, or of the build-up of nuclear weapons. Matas suggests that challenging the established power structure of any society calls upon physical, as well as moral, courage.

Lisa is historical, rather than speculative, fiction. This story from the past upholds the vision of *Zanu* and *The Nuclear Factor*. The "Afterword" of the book tells how in Denmark approximately 6,500 Jews were saved from the Nazis because of the courage of a Nazi informant and the daring and compassion of some Danish people who sheltered their Jewish neighbours and helped them to escape to Sweden. The heroine of the story, a young Jewish girl living in Copenhagen when Denmark fell to the Germans, becomes involved in the underground resistance movement. She is 12 in 1940, when the story begins, and 15 at its conclusion, and like anybody of her age, she is concerned about school assignments and dances, her relationship with her friend, Suzanne, and her romantic feelings for her co-conspirator, Jesper. She is no larger-than-life hero, but an ordinary girl who bravely determines to fight for the freedom of her country and to help others.

In all three of these stories, the family, community and country are shown as being the potential sources of strength and safety, rather than as centres of exclusivity. Since *Lisa* is based on history, Matas demonstrates here that the ideals she encourages not only can, but do, change the course of events at personal and political levels.

Sandra Odegard teaches Canadian and Commonwealth literature at the University of Guelph.

VOYAGE AU PAYS DU SILENCE

Atterrissage forcé, Joceline Sanschagrin. Illus. Pierre Pratt. Collection Romans-jeunesse. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1987. 94 pp. 5.95\$ broché. ISBN 2-89021-064-2.