One is tempted to address the issue of nuclear weapons directly through one's (in my case) fiction. I find that hard. What I find easier and more possible is to address the issue in writing articles, talks, lectures, and so on. In that way I can address the issue directly. Artists cannot really write didactic prose in novels. I cannot write novels that preach, but what I can do is to affirm my whole life-view through the characters in my books. I think that in all my writing, a very strong kind of celebration of life itself comes through.

And so it did. Margaret Laurence's celebration of life was an instruction in the ways of peace.

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MIRIAM WADDINGTON
A Fable For Everywoman

When she was a child she killed her mother and married her father; later as a young woman she poisoned her lovers; was it her fault they died?

Disillusioned with men she entered a university and gave herself to books; gradually the books piled up and grew tall against the windows, they begot children upon her dwarfs and hunchbacks and a single willowy girl with blue eyes.

When she was middle-aged her waist thickened and her behind flattened from sitting so much in libraries, she began not to sleep well and to have recurrent nightmares, she dreamed the willowy one was poisoning the sherry or lurking on the balcony among the disused summer furniture and dying aloe plants or else she was waiting to meet her on the stairs so she could push her headlong down.

One day she went downtown secretly to buy a bus ticket to Vancouver but when she got to the bus station all the good seats were taken; most of the time she sat beside bushy-haired seventeen year old girls and their pate babies or else men in big black hats who smelled under the armpits squeezed in beside her while lady policeman types overflowed from their seats in flowered pants which they washed out every night in hotel rooms.

The journey to the coast took longer than she expected she bought a lot of sandwiches in Winnipeg and they lasted most of the way to Regina, somewhere in Roger's Pass they sold 7 cents coffee (10 cents if you took sugar) then the bus went through Crow's Nest Pass where all the farmers were picketing for lower freight rates.

Finally she got to Vancouver; Gas Town was empty and rainy and she hadn't really had any adventures; what can you expect with Jacques Cartier dead in France and Captain Vancouver busy charting Nootka Sound (not that he was her type anyway).

She took the ferry to Victoria and found Emily Carr's boarding house was under new management and all her friends were dead or living in retirement homes, what was she to do? The best thing was to go back to her own city and make guarded peace with the willowy daughter.

Then she would do her best to become invisible for the years that remained to her; she would haunt the libraries and read all their books, she would take notes and do a lot of zeroxing, she would eat her lunches on benches downtown or at McDonald's where they gave old women free coffee.

After all her travels she would end up with this small wisdom: how to find warm places and free coffee.