The Louis L'Amour syndrome?

Yeah, the people who buy those books know exactly what they're getting. *The Second Season of Jonas MacPherson* just got published, and it is a serious book. It followed *An Avalanche of Ocean*, which was short-listed for the Leacock Award (for humour). You get classed as a "funny writer" and then come out with a serious book. They say that's all wrong. Maybe you should ask me what I'm working on now.

What are you working on now?

This summer I've been writing a fantasy reincarnation novel. It takes place over the space of 25 centuries. The whole idea of reincarnation in fiction . . . to play with it in fiction opens all kinds of doors. To play with the idea that time, that a series of lives is not linear. You go backwards and forwards in time, according to what you need. My character begins at the beginning of the earth and ends at the end of the earth, and most of the action takes place in 25 centuries in the middle. At one point, it's the 1890s, on a whaling ship from the Aleutian Islands to Maui, you know that Stan Rogers song, *(sings, not badly)* "Rollin' down to old Maui, me boys, rollin' down to old Maui . . .", then it leaps to the near future and then back to the Crusades. The literary agent told me that was "the worst possible thing I could do. A funny novel, then a serious novel, and then jump into a whole new genre."

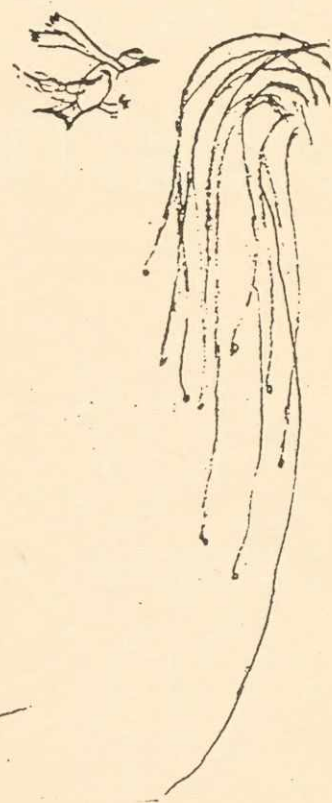What the hell, everything will work out, if not in this life then in the next one.

What's the writer's role in this society?

To always be out front and pushing for change, to be very public. We have a tremendous amount of power, and it may come down to the media people, the writers, the movie stars and the rock stars who can get ideas across to big numbers of people. To beat out the sluggish roll of the mill of old ideas. The public acknowledges that these people work with their minds, and when someone like Margaret Atwood or Robertson Davies says something, it does mean something and a lot of people listen, because they know that these writers' investment with the world is in their minds.

At the Writer's Federation annual general meeting, a resolution was passed urging the government to declare Canada a Nuclear Free Zone. This means something, because this isn't a peace group, but a professional group following up on their work. Politicians hear when 600 writers like Farley Mowat and Pierre Burton say, "This is an important issue." Work at the whole hierarchy by getting the professional group to back the special interest group.

Do you skate?

Yes, but not very well, I used to jump barrels back in New Jersey, but not very well. I used to land on my ass all the time.

Staff elections (COMING SOON!)