Intellectual and Cultural Leaders of Minnesota: Oral History Project 2013-14

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Interviewee: Louis Jenkins
Poet
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Louis Jenkins: I started writing poetry in high school. I was reading poems in the back of the English textbook that we weren’t currently studying – while the teacher was talking about something else, I’d read poetry. The teacher I had at the time I got most interested in poetry wasn’t much interested in poetry, and she kind of skipped over that. I was reading poetry by Blake and Wordsworth and Dylan Thomas – the first modern poet that I read – and I was knocked out. I said, “Boy, that’s what I want to do.” I kept trying it, kept coming back to it, even though I gave it up several times, I kept coming back, and that’s what I’ve done, more or less, since. I studied some, in college, had a very good creative writing teacher and a poet friend. About the time I left school, I discovered the poems of Robert Bly, and I saw he lived in Madison, Minnesota, and I thought, “Well, I can just write to Robert Bly, Madison, Minnesota, because it’s so small,” – and it worked. I sent him a poem, and he sent me a card back, nice, not overly praising. I sent him poems from time to time, and he’d say what he liked and what he didn’t. And then, after I’d met my wife in Denver, and she was from Duluth, and we came back here to visit, and I liked it, and she was offered a job at the library there. I’ve been doing that ever since, living in Duluth and writing poems.

Peter Shea: You mentioned you quit a few times. I get the sense of “Poets Anonymous,” with little red plastic things: “30 days without writing a poem.” Can you say a little about what made you quit?

Louis Jenkins: First of all, growing up in Oklahoma the way I did, you didn’t meet many poets. I don’t think I ever did meet a poet from Oklahoma. I didn’t know where to go, and I thought, “Poetry all happens at Harvard or some place,” and I knew I wasn’t destined for Harvard. I thought, “Well, I have to be something, an engineer or something,” which is absolutely absurd. So I gave it up; I said, “I’m not going to do that anymore.” But, as I say, I couldn’t leave it alone. I kept reading books of poetry, and trying to write it, and luckily found a few poets who were a big help to me, including Robert.

Peter Shea: I first ran into Dylan Thomas at about the age you did, and I know how that stuff hits you. When did you first run into stuff that’s like the stuff you write?

Louis Jenkins: I mostly write prose poems. I tried to write free verse and I wrote some formal verse. It didn’t seem right. Prose poems, when I discovered them, seemed like a really natural form for me. It was less pretentious, I thought. You could write, just in ordinary prose, but yet do some of the things that you do in a poem. It seemed more relaxed, I guess. It seems like a congenial form for me, so that’s what I’ve been doing. Robert Bly published a book of prose poems called Morning Glory that was one big influence. Also, around the same time, I discovered translations of the poems of Baudelaire. He wrote a book of prose poems, which is probably a different thing in French, but still, as translated into English, they’re wonderful. Then there were poets like Russell Edson, writing prose poems, very funny. So, I took it up.

Peter Shea: What are you trying to do, when you write a poem? Is there something you’re trying to do?
Louis Jenkins: I am trying to create or recreate an experience that I can share with someone else – if I have a feeling about a certain thing, then, if I try to express that feeling, if it’s useful, if it’s good, somebody else will hopefully be able to experience the same thing or relate their experience to that. I guess that’s the main goal.

Peter Shea: I had time, for once, to prepare this interview, and so I read a bunch of your poems, one after another. It gets catching. You’re driving down university and something like this begins scrolling out as you look towards Dinkytown. You can make these things come. It must happen to you to, that you begin getting language for things you’re walking through. How do you decide what’s poem-worthy, what’s worth the trouble of turning into a prose poem?

Louis Jenkins: Sometimes, I have an aha moment: this is what this experience is about. Then, maybe you have the words for it and maybe you don’t. You go try to find them, to recreate this emotional experience, I guess you’d call it. I take walks, and that’s always helpful. If I’ve got some kind of beginning, then I can develop it as I walk along. Most of what I do is in my head, and then I come back and start fooling with it. I may scribble down a few notes. I have a lot of little pieces of paper with notes on them. Usually I don’t know what they mean, a day later. Sometimes, you get a hold of the tail and eventually pull in the whole beast.

Peter Shea: And emotion’s the beast.

Louis Jenkins: You have an experience. Like any experience, you don’t always know what it means, but you want the experience to speak for itself. I don’t want to jump to conclusions about what this means. I simply ideally want to present the experience. If it is moving to me in some way – making me laugh or cry or whatever – I’m hoping that, by recreating it in words, someone else can participate in that experience.

Peter Shea: I’m thinking about your early contact with Robert Bly and thinking about Minnesota, where there are a lot of good poets, a lot of plainspoken poets. We also have Garrison Keillor, who sometimes writes things that would be poems if they were published in those anthologies.

Louis Jenkins: We have a lot of terrific writers here, I think.

Peter Shea: The other thing that keeps running in my head is Seamus Heaney’s Beowulf, the same matter-of-fact, flat stuff. Is there a Minnesota poetry, a Minnesota voice?

Louis Jenkins: I think so. I wouldn’t want to say exactly what it is. It’s Midwestern, and we have some good Midwestern poets – Ted Kooser, poet laureate from Nebraska, and we share something, and maybe it’s that flatness of the language, flatness of the landscape. It’s different, but I can’t define its qualities exactly, other than that – plainspokenness, appreciation of the landscape. I think of the poems of Tom Hennen, a very good poet, very much involved in the Minnesota landscape, particularly the plains aspect.
Peter Shea: I remember one of his as the perfect secular sermon, and I think of sermons as part of what gets done in Minnesota.

Louis Jenkins: Yeah, I think that’s true. Robert Bly might be accused of an occasional sermon. There is a certain strain of morality that comes across. I think of Bill Holm’s poems; he tended to preach a bit – but very good poems. That’s probably a part of it. I’m not really from Minnesota; I’m from Oklahoma.

Peter Shea: You’ve been here long enough; we’ll claim you. Do you succumb to the impulse to preach?

Louis Jenkins: I hope not; it’s not part of my idea. I don’t want to moralize about things. One of my heroes is Chekov; he never does that.

Peter Shea: It’s hard to know where the line is. Your poem “Afterlife” seems to me to have the power, the moral power of a first-rate, subtle sermon. You come away saying, “I’ve got to be different.”

Louis Jenkins: I don’t know if I see that in there or not. I started thinking, “We don’t know anything, we never do find out anything, and that’s what happens to the people in the movie: they see life as “they didn’t get it.”

Peter Shea: You mentioned the flatness of the Midwestern landscape. I recently took a pilgrimage to Duluth, to get a little drama into my life. You’re living in Duluth, which is a different kind of landscape.

Louis Jenkins: It’s quite different from Southwestern Minnesota, where Tom Hennen and Robert Bly lived. Yeah, it’s different. Robert came up one time and he said, “I don’t like it up here: too many trees sucking up all the energy.”

Peter Shea: Lake Superior might also have a little problem that way.

Louis Jenkins: Because I’m from the plains, I like that big open space, and in Duluth, Lake Superior is what supplies that – “vista,” I guess you might call it. Lake Superior’s continually fascinating.

Peter Shea: Has Duluth changed your writing?

Louis Jenkins: I suppose. It was not til I came to Duluth that I hit my stride in how I write and what I write about. Before that, I wasn’t really sure where I was going, not that I’m very sure now, but at least I’ve headed off in a direction. Duluth is full of material, if you want to write about cold and snow and trees.

Peter Shea: That’s one of the issues with the Midwest: the colors for your palette are pretty limited. These elements are the ones you have to combine.
**Louis Jenkins:** A lot of green in summer and a lot of white in the winter.

**Peter Shea:** Have you ever considered the idea of going someplace very different, moving to Tuscany for a year?

**Louis Jenkins:** That would be lovely. In 2007, we did spend four months in Europe. I did some readings over there. I could see being there for a while. We also have been spending at least part of the winter in the Southwest – in Tuscon, and this year, we stayed in Santa Fe, which was very lovely. Yeah, after 40 years in Duluth, I figure, a little time off wouldn’t hurt.

**Peter Shea:** Vacation or reprieve or parole…

**Louis Jenkins:** Most recently, I’ve been involved with this play, *Nice Fish*, which ran at the Guthrie last year. We have hopes of that going on, and also to publish it. Mark Rylance, my co-writer and the star of the play and director, loves to make it available to schools for no charge. We want to publish it, but we need to do some work on the second act, so that’s what’s coming up.

**Peter Shea:** How did that come about?

**Louis Jenkins:** That’s very interesting. I saw Mark. He did Robert Bly’s translation of *Peer Gynt* at the Guthrie a few years ago. I saw that, and I said, “He’s really good, he’s a really terrific actor,” and, with Robert’s translation, *Peer Gynt* worked. I was surprised. *Peer Gynt*’s an awkward piece to perform or make into a play. It turned out we had mutual friends – James Hillman and his wife, Margot McClean, but I still didn’t meet him at that time, but then it was the Tony awards, and Margot sent me an email and said, “Mark just read your poem on the Tony awards.” I missed it. I wasn’t watching the Tony awards. I found it on Youtube. He just recites one of my poems, called “The Back Country,” as his acceptance speech. He doesn’t explain it. He just gets up there and says it. And everybody’s going: what the hell is that? It’s funny. People are laughing. Then, afterwards, he told the press people that it was my poem. Subsequently, we met and he said, “I want to do a play using your poems.” I said, “Well ok, I guess. I don’t see how that’s going to work.” We did. We worked on it for a few years, mostly by email correspondence. We met once in New York and put on a little workshop performance of the play in New York. And then he talked to Joe Dowling at the Guthrie and we set up to do it here. I think it was quite successful. We find that there are some places that need work, but we still think that we can go on with it. We’ll try to play it in New York next.

**Peter Shea:** So, what do you think about this delivery vehicle for your poetry?

**Louis Jenkins:** I like it. I mean the poems are still the poems, on their own. They’re still there. But if they are worked into a play, that’s all well and good – especially good because I get help with it. I had no experience with the theater, so it was all learning. It was a lot of fun, because the whole thing changes when you have a group of actors. They
Peter Shea: So you changed the poems from working with the actors?

Louis Jenkins: I did in one case. He added line to a poem. I list things that are in Florida; I say there are alligators and walking catfish and Republicans, and he added in ‘hanging chads’ I thought that was great, so I put that in.

Peter Shea: I don’t know the play; what kind of connecting tissue holds your poems together?

Louis Jenkins: Well, it’s about two ice fishermen, guys that are old buddies from high school or college or something. They get together maybe once a year. Jim’s character, Eric, is an avid fisherman. He really loves to fish. He really wants to catch a big fish. And Ron, Mark’s character, is a goofball; he doesn’t really care that much about fishing, but he likes being out with his buddy. He also has no woman in his life right now. He’s kind of obsessed with women, and he talks about his old girlfriends. Then, in act two, these other characters appear, who are loosely based on the Nordic gods: Freya, this beautiful woman, appears, and of course Mark’s character goes for her in a big way. But she has two giants with her, who are her kidnappers. This is, I think, drawn out of the Ring Cycle. For some reason, they are hiding out in northern Minnesota. It’s funny, and hopefully a little bit scary. There’s a confrontation between our fishermen and the giants, one in particular. In the end, they go away, and the two fishermen are left alone on the ice. The play ends with that poem, “The Afterlife,” in which the two fishermen are transformed into an older couple. It’s very good.

Peter Shea: So, the locus, the sacred temple for poetry in Minnesota, is the fishhouse?

Louis Jenkins: You could say that; it’s a temple for something.

Peter Shea: It's funny. I just saw a play, not more than a year ago, in which a guy changed into a bear, and it had gods appearing in a bar in northern Minnesota. Lisa Channer was directing. Robert Bly was not above bringing in the gods from time to time, and talking about archetypal, primal, chthonic things. How do feel about that kind of stuff?

Louis Jenkins: These are reoccurring ideas that persist, I guess you could say, somewhere deep in our psyche. I think this was largely Mark’s idea, and then James Hillman had some input on it, too: the idea that these mythological beings would appear. It’s a little shaky, the second act, because we haven’t quite gotten it yet. There is quite a bit of action, which is good. They decide to settle the dispute over Freya by a hockey game.

Peter Shea: This is like Fargo, transposed – Minnesota Ring Cycle.
Louis Jenkins: Since the characters are Scandinavian, we figured that the gods might be part of her psychic makeup somehow. They go away – the gods do – on a flying snowmobile.

Peter Shea: Your mention of Hillman makes me want to ask: is there some kind of psychological good you’re out to do people?

Louis Jenkins: I do what I do, and I hope it’s good for somebody. That was my idea. The poetry is a form of communication, so it’s not just introspection. That’s not what I intend. I intend to make it something that is usable for someone else.

Peter Shea: I was wondering how, in your fantasies, for stuff might be used. Do you have an idea of what kind of good you are trying to do for your reader?

Louis Jenkins: No, I don’t think about that. I just figure that, if it does me some good, it might do somebody else some good. I just want to make the writing so that it’s clear enough that it’s understandable by someone else. I don’t want the language to muddy the experience. I want it to be clear.

Peter Shea: I was just in Duluth and was impressed by the age of a lot of the cultural institutions there. There’s been a tradition of support for the arts there for better than a hundred years, and there was some serious money put into it.

Louis Jenkins: There was some serious money there, and there is still some serious money, but not as much as back in the day.

Peter Shea: It got me wondering what the possibilities are for the relationship between a resident artist who is there 30, 40 years, and the community. What sorts of synergies or good things or awful things happen when: you’re the poet, you’re our poet.

Louis Jenkins: It’s been mostly good for me. People have been very supportive, coming out to my poetry readings. The Arrowhead Regional Arts Council has given me grants over the years, and I have people who buy my books. It’s great. I don’t think it’s peculiar to Duluth; I think Minnesota in general is very supportive of the arts, and I don’t think you’d find that in Oklahoma, for instance. I’ll get hate mail from my relatives in Oklahoma.

Peter Shea: Do you think the climate is supportive for the next generation of poets, for the people in high school now?

Louis Jenkins: Well, there’s been, over the last 50 years, so much more emphasis put on it. I had a creative writing class in high school. It was the first year that they had ever offered such thing. It was a big help to me. I got to experiment with my writing, and got praise from my teachers, so it was good for me. It’s not entirely missing in Oklahoma,
but I think it’s much better here. Take small presses: they’ve relocated from other places to here, because they get more support.

Peter Shea: The Legacy Amendment seems to be a huge thing.

Louis Jenkins: Yes, wonderful. I’ve been happy living here and working here. It’s a great place for a writer.

Peter Shea: Do you find yourself following thematic threads, getting on a roll with things, or are the pieces you write sort of one-offs?

Louis Jenkins: I hope that they are a little bit of both. There are certainly – I wouldn’t call them themes but obsessions or neuroses – that appear time and again. I write a lot more now about being old. It didn’t occur to me, 40 years ago, to write about that. It’s a different world.

Peter Shea: Does writing about being old make it easier?

Louis Jenkins: Yeah, I think so. We once had a conversation – Garrison and several other writers and Carol Bly was there – and Garrison said, “What’s good about getting older?” I said, “Well it’s funnier.” Carol Bly took exception to that. But it is funny. It may not be funny to you, if you’re the victim.

Peter Shea: I think Carol Bly had the idea that, as she got older, she knew more and more about what was awful in the world and was more and more responsible for fixing it herself.

Louis Jenkins: Yeah, she was very much the Minnesota moralist.

Peter Shea: But that, I take it, is a role you don’t aspire to?

Louis Jenkins: No, I don’t believe that things can be fixed. You just have to deal with it as it comes. You do whatever it is you feel it’s your responsibility to do, and I suppose Carol felt it was hers to write books about it. That’s not what I envision for my writing.

Peter Shea: She really had the idea that her job was to make people better.

Louis Jenkins: I suppose in a way that’s a noble ambition. I don’t think it works, though.

Peter Shea: So your job is to show people what’s funny?

Louis Jenkins: I don’t know what my job is. I just do what I can, and I enjoy it. I like working with words. If it’s of use to anyone in any way, then – wonderful. It’s a bonus.

Peter Shea: Have you been able to devote most of your time and energy to writing, over this long career?
Louis Jenkins: A good deal of it, yeah. I’ve never had another career; I wasn’t a teacher or anything like that. I’ve done lots of little jobs. So, I’ve had free time, which doesn’t always help to write. I mean, you might have free time, and you sit there with a blank look on your face: “This is a blank page.”

Peter Shea: Has teaching ever attracted you?

Louis Jenkins: Not really. I’ve done workshops, poetry workshops and things like that, and that’s fine. But as day in, day out occupation – no. Most of my friends who did teach are retired now. They say, “Oh, thank God I’m retired.” They liked teaching students, but they didn’t like the added drudgery that a university gives you. Or, God knows, a high school.

Peter Shea: Too many students at once, and any one of them could take all the time you have, if they’re halfway talented. So you’ve been pretty lucky, to be able to concentrate.

Louis Jenkins: My wife bit the bullet and kept the good job, and I did things like – I was a school librarian for a couple of years. I painted houses and did this and that. I was a security guard.

Peter Shea: Some conversations like this wander into the area of publishing: how you keep your work available, how you keep it alive, how you continue to get paid for it – the worry that everything will go out-of-print.

Louis Jenkins: If you are someone who writes poetry, the chances of your being published by a big publisher are slim, unless you have friends – have friends who have friends. It’s a network thing. And then you’re stuck with small press, and that’s pretty iffy, in terms of what rights you have. That would be true with a big publisher too, but a big publisher can at least get your books around better than a small publisher can. I publish my own now, because I had a bad experience with my last publisher. It’s much better. I pay for the printing, and whatever profit there is goes to me.

Peter Shea: Is it a tremendous headache getting the work around to bookstores?

Louis Jenkins: Well, I have a distributor, Partners Distributing out of Michigan, and then, of course, there’s Amazon.com, which is maybe unfortunate. I have lost a lot of my ambition in that direction. I enjoy writing. I’m not going to win the Pulitzer Prize, and I’m probably not going to get any big grants or anything like that. At this point, it doesn’t matter to me. I’m not building a career. I notice a lot of young poets, they have a lot of ambition toward their career, which is fine, if you’re young, but I hate to see that get in the way of the actual writing. That’s what’s got to come first.

Peter Shea: This sort of an embarrassing question, but I feel like, just in case there's something there, I have to ask: do you have any advice for writers starting out – along the lines of, “Here there be tigers,” or “Here their be sea monsters,” or “If you see an old man
by the side of the road, and he asks you for a piece of bread, give it to him” – whatever the fairy tale is to help creative people get home safe?

**Louis Jenkins:** The advice I give is: if you want to write, you have to read, first of all. If you want to write poetry, you’ve got to read poetry. Read everything you can find. How do you gauge your success? I don’t know. You say, “Well, I got a poem in XYZ magazine.” That’s good; it means somebody else thinks it’s good. Mostly, writing poetry in particular is a pretty lonely business. The thing is: you’ve got to really love to do it, or it’s not worth your time. There’s no money in it. If you don’t have to do it, don’t do it. Maybe I thought one time, “Poetry can change the world.” I don’t think so. And I don’t think that poets are the unacknowledged statesmen of the world, as Shelley said, but there is a certain number of people for whom poetry is very important. Every once in a while, I get an email or a letter from someone who says, “Your poem is just great. It made a lot of difference to me.” Aside from the moment when you finish a poem, which is the best moment – when you say, “Ah ha, I got it that time” – the next best feeling is when you have somebody say, “I liked your poem; it meant something to me.”

**Peter Shea:** They mean things in different ways. Some of your things, I can see keeping around, just to remind myself of things I tend to forget. You say read everything. Is there anybody in particular, are there any kinds of things in particular, you’d suggest a young poet spend some time with?

**Louis Jenkins:** Certainly, those books that have persisted for fifty, a hundred, two hundred years. They did so for a reason, so they’re worth looking into. I think it’s important to read your contemporaries, or the generation just previous to yours, to see what they were doing. You’ll find things you can steal, and also, it just gives you a direction. When you read it and you feel that certain something – it’s important. A poem moves you in a certain way. It’s like those early Dylan Thomas poems I read, terrific, that rhetorical language. It was very important at the moment, not so important to me now. At that moment, it was important.

**Peter Shea:** You can’t believe that language could do that. My son’s a poet, and, for him, poetry is all tied up with performance.

**Louis Jenkins:** That is a very big thing now, among the younger groups – performance poetry. And I think that’s fine, unless it becomes simply performance and not really poetry anymore, which in some cases I think happens. It loses some of the nuance and subtlety of poetry.

**Peter Shea:** So, for you, poetry is a written down, study-able kind of thing?

**Louis Jenkins:** Well, it’s a voice thing. The poetry I write is meant to be spoken. The performance poetry seems to me a lot about how you deliver it. It’s some kind of performance, I guess. It’s a show.
Peter Shea: My son keeps losing backpacks full of stuff, and I think, “Tragedy.” I don’t think that’s how he sees it. He’s distressed by it, but I don’t think he quite thinks, “Tragedy!” because this is stuff that emerged at any number of poetry slams. They emerged in certain forms, got written down in those forms, and then they go on be performed more.

(Interruption for phone call)

Peter Shea: How does poetry play into marriage? Is it a danger? Should poets stay isolated?

Louis Jenkins: In my case, it’s been all good. My wife is a painter; they are two kinds of art that work together well, I think. I don’t know how it would be if you had two poets married to each other. That would be difficult. Or if you were married to someone who didn’t care anything about your poetry. That could be difficult. So, you know, it could go any way. I would say: there’s nothing wrong with being married, but be careful who you marry.

Peter Shea: Meryl Streep was once asked about that; she has about the happiest marriage in the movie business. And she said, “Well, my husband’s a sculptor, so he’s not a civilian.” Maybe marrying a civilian is the thing to worry about – somebody who doesn’t understand your drive.

Louis Jenkins: You need somebody who is sympathetic to what you do, and my wife has certainly been that, and I as well to her painting. Particularly when you are young, there are a lot more factors that enter into a relationship, that might not be so important later on.

Peter Shea: You don’t think, when you’re young, what’s going to wear 50 years? You luck into things that wear 50 years, sometimes. I noticed that you have done one collaborative book with a visual artist.

Louis Jenkins: Yeah, Richard Johnson. That was a lot of fun, because the way we worked was independently. We agree on a subject or object or something. I go write something, and he’d put together one of the digital collages that he does. So that was a lot of fun. I think we worked on it for a year or more, and then did them as prints. This was long enough ago that it was very expensive to do it. We had a set of prints. We sold a few of them. There’s the sister city museum in Växjö, Sweden, bought a couple of them, and some individual collectors bought some. We made it into a little book through blurb.com, which is one of those online deals. You don’t have to put any money into the production of them; simply buy them copy-by-copy. They are available there, if anybody wants one. The trouble is, with all the color reproduction, it’s expensive. Right now, I’m working with a musician named Wendy Olson; she’s doing some stuff with my poems. Another visual artist, Rick Allen, who does block prints – he and I are doing a kind of bestiary using animal poems, and he does a picture of them. I like to do that.
**Peter Shea:** You told before how the theater collaboration came about. Is there a sort of Ok Cupid match service for getting artists and musicians and poets together? How does it all happen?

**Louis Jenkins:** Well, in the case of Richard, we were both on the ARAC arts board, so that’s how we got to know each other. I’d seen some of his work and said, “Maybe we ought to do something together.” In the case of Rick Allen, I approached him because I’d seen his work, and I had this idea about doing a little book of animal poems. And he said, “Why don’t we do broadsides, because I don’t really do books.” He runs a press called Kenspeckle press. They do hand graphics, hand set type, the old printing. He said, “We could do these broadsides,” and I said, “Sure, fine.” We’ve got two of them done, and more to come.

**Peter Shea:** One of the biggest pieces of luck I had as a video producer was getting talk to Eugene McCarthy a few years before he died. The occasion was: he was coming up to introduce his bestiary to the world. They weren’t exactly animals; they were fabulous animals that represented political realities he thought were worth talking about. Is this bestiary project a sort of late-in-the-poet’s-career kind of thing? What does it mean, to start doing a series of animal poems?

**Louis Jenkins:** These are just poems I’ve done over the years; I’m not writing new works for this. It turned out I had a lot of animal poems, and my friend Marly Rusoff said, “Next time you do a book, you should do the animals.” She said, “I think it’ll sell.” So I said, “That’s a good idea.” I didn’t exactly end up doing a book.

**Peter Shea:** It’s a matter of packaging. Do you have a trove of unpublished stuff lying around, or has most of it been published somewhere?

**Louis Jenkins:** Most of it that’s passable is published. I keep writing, so I have a pile.

**Peter Shea:** You’re not like Salinger, with a safe full of stuff. Most of what you doing, say with the animal series, is repackaging stuff that’s already been published?

**Louis Jenkins:** It’s culled from all of my books, and of course, it has Rick’s wonderful illustrations. That makes it new.

**Peter Shea:** Do you have the temptation to do a definitive anthology at some point?

**Louis Jenkins:** My next to most recent book is a collection of poems from 1970 to 2005. I suppose, at some point, I’ll do another one, depending on how many poems I get written before I’m gone.

**Peter Shea:** Is it a traumatic thing to select?

**Louis Jenkins:** Not really. I felt like I could have included more than I did. At some point it would be nice just to put everything in one book.
Peter Shea: Do you have any temptation to put out yourself reading your own stuff?

Louis Jenkins: I did a CD called *Any Way in the World*; we did it through Robert Bly’s press. But those aren’t very popular. I guess CDs are on their way out.

Peter Shea: Audible.com, audio files, are still popular. Let me register a vote for that. It would be great to have some kind of audio record of how you hear these things.