from dubious collecting practices was the publication of Goebbels's extensive diaries, although the combination of stories and vague recollections on how they were acquired never established a clear chain of custody. Some figures instrumental in the successful acquisition of invaluable materials also benefited financially through their connections, such as Max Loeb's sale of looted items through his bookshop in New York. Thinkers who helped the world make sense of the rise of fascism and genocide such as Hannah Arendt, through emerging organizations such as Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, advised on the fate of the remnants of cultural genocide, finalizing the work of MFAA and LCM. Ultimately hundreds of thousands of items of Judaica were distributed to American libraries, while many of the most important and precious were removed by scholars and complicit administrators before official channels could decide appropriate policies.

Peiss attempts to untangle the historical morass of how the Allies, from the West and the Soviet Union, dealt with the millions of volumes of Nazi propaganda, fascist-era popular literature, and usable scholarly and scientific publications. Small-town libraries and military officials alike had to navigate a shifting minefield of regulations for segregating, destroying, and censoring materials, while the American public back across the Atlantic had moments of horror in reaction to infamous "Order No. 4" and news of "book burning, American style." Approaches to keeping books varied greatly between the allied zones of occupation, as well as considerations for ensuring that learning and reading material were available while stamping out the Nazi influence.

With *Information Hunters,* Peiss weaves librarians and information science back into the complex, alternatingly tragic and heroic telling of the great battles of the first half of the twentieth century: between authoritarianism and personal liberty, racial nationalism and democratic multiculturalism, freedom of expression and centralized power and total war. Information was key to the technological advances and innovation that allowed the modern age to survive World War II and the Cold War. Although most returned to library jobs after the war, the information hunters and their technological innovations and dedication were key to victory, despite how tenuous the survival of manuscripts, books, and the freedoms that allow them to exist can still seem to be.—*Joshua C. Youngblood, University of Arkansas*

Michael Vinson. *Bluffing Texas Style: The Arsons, Forgeries, and High-Stakes Poker Capers of Rare Book Dealer Johnny Jenkins*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020. Paperback, 250p. $21.95 (ISBN 978-0-8061-6542-4).

The story of Johnny Jenkins, rare book dealer, forger, gambler, and misterioso, has haunted me since my days in library school nearly a decade ago. I first encountered Jenkins through his publication *Rare Books and Manuscript Thefts: A Security System*

for Librarians, Booksellers, and Collectors, which was printed in 1982 while Jenkins served as president of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA). I was doing research related to the history of book theft in the United States and found Jenkins's short text (only 27 pages) to be a helpful insight into how the ABAA viewed book theft and security. Pursuing Jenkins a bit further, I quickly came upon Calvin Trillin's fascinating 1989 *New Yorker* article that chronicled Jenkins's demise. The details of Jenkins's secret life of forgeries, gambling, and arson were fascinating; the details of his death (shot in the back of the head, no weapon found, ruled a suicide?) were macabre and confounding. A few years later, while on break at a conference in Austin, TX, I walked into a used bookstore and found a copy of Jenkins's *Audubon and Other Capers* (1976), which told the tale of his exploits in helping the FBI track down book thieves in the early 1970s. The completely contradictory life that Jenkins led, coupled with his untimely and odd death, stuck in my brain in the form of unanswered questions, unclear details, and an unresolved murder or suicide. While it was not up to me to put the pieces together and offer a clear picture of Johnny Jenkins's life, career, and death, it had to be done by someone. That someone, it turns out, was another rare book dealer specializing in Texas and the West, Michael Vinson.

In Vinson's fast-paced, engrossing, and ultimately satisfying study of Johnny Jenkins, the mysteries and uncertainties that plagued me since graduate school (and have plagued others far longer) are resolved. Vinson delivers both a captivating narrative and an historically grounded character study, beginning with Jenkins's young days as a "born trader" raised by two devoted and highly encouraging parents. Jenkins began his trading career at an early age as a numismatist, reporting his local club's coin-collecting stories to the national journal, *Numismatist*, at age 14. Jenkins moved from coins to books when he became obsessed with Texas history and the history of the Confederacy in high school. This fascination culminated in the publication of his first book, *Recollections of Early Texas*, in 1958—on the day he graduated from high school at age 18.

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Vinson explores how these early connections and successes fed Jenkins's lust for fame and fortune, not only through academic publications but through the buying and trading of materials (first coins and then rare books). Through the success of his first book, Jenkins gained entrance into the world of rare books and archival material by working as a college freshman at the Texas State Archives in Austin. Almost immediately, Jenkins started working on ways to exploit this access to his own benefit. Vinson describes incidents of "archive work and deal making" that Jenkins participated in during his undergraduate days. These incidents later developed into thefts from various archives throughout the state that Vinson connects to Jenkins and his friend and business partner C. Dorman David.

Jenkins's firsthand experience in the archives, including seeing and participating in the behind-the-scenes deals that are made between private collectors and sellers and institutional purchasers, gave Johnny the knowledge and connections to go into business for himself. He was a friendly, well-liked, and affable fellow who could talk a seller down on their prices just as easily as he could talk a buyer up on theirs. He became quite adept at flipping material from one person or collector to another with a nice profit for himself at the end. His success, which Vinson details as being buoyed by thefts and forgeries from the mid-1960s onward, was on display in as public and visible a manner as possible. Jenkins loved to show off his success, whether in the form of the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud he drove around in 1966 or proudly crowing about his company's more than half a million dollars in book sales in 1968. The reality, that the Rolls was continuously in need of repair or that the Jenkins Company had a silent partner that helped financially float its expansion, was never of concern. Jenkins was more concerned with his image and how he was perceived; the look of things mattered more than the reality. This aspect of Jenkins's personality is woven throughout Vinson's biographical study, influencing the rest of his life, and ultimately damns him in the end.

Vinson paints a picture of Johnny Jenkins as a man of excess. He would acquire items and try to sell them at a ridiculous profit, often improperly grading and misdescribing items to overvalue them. While some buyers would call Jenkins out for his blatant inaccuracies and demand a refund, there were more who did not question what they bought, and early on his profits far outweighed his refunds. In 1970, Jenkins applied for membership in the ABAA but was rejected because of his shady dealings and overgrading of materials. He was deeply hurt by this rejection, but soon got his revenge. In 1971, Jenkins was approached by noted mobster Kenneth Paull, who had possession of 100 plates from Audubon's *Birds of America* that had been stolen from Union College. Jenkins agreed to purchase the stolen plates, alerting the FBI to Paull's whereabouts and working with them on a sting operation. Paull was caught, the stolen items recovered, and Jenkins lauded as a hero. This led to him not only becoming

an ABAA member in 1972, but president of the organization from 1980 to 1982 and (ironically) the security officer of the organization and liaison to the FBI.

Even with acceptance into the fellowship of booksellers, Jenkins continued the behavior that had gotten him rejected in the first place. This included not only inaccurately describing items for sale but also the creation and sale of forgeries. Vinson describes in detail a series of incidents in which Jenkins "substituted forgeries and inferior copies to sophisticated collections and scholars just as readily as he did to a beginning collector…the risk of a daring and unethical impulse seemed to drive him more than anything else" (129). This is where the book is at its most fascinating and entertaining. The details of Jenkins's trickery that Vinson has been able to uncover are hair-raising, eye-opening, and nearly unbelievable. I could not help but admire Jenkins for his creativity and sheer gumption.

At the heart of this book is Vinson's research material: Jenkins's own letters and personal papers, housed at Southern Methodist University. The details Vinson has pulled together through what is clearly a close scouring of the collection serve to bring not only concrete evidence but Jenkins's personality to the forefront of the book. Vinson supplements these archival sources with personal stories, anecdotes, and testimonies from those who knew Jenkins best: his fellow poker players, Texas historians, and (most significantly) colleagues in the rare book industry. The raw and honest nature of these testimonies leads me to think that this book could only have been written by someone like Michael Vinson. His personal dealings with all of the booksellers, including Jenkins himself, leads to an air of authenticity and clarity that would have been difficult to achieve by an outside historian, journalist, or investigator. What Vinson is able to piece together comes not only from his fastidious research but from his personal experiences and reflections as well. This includes conversations with anonymous informants within the book trade that only someone like Vinson would have been able to obtain.

Together with Vinson's approachable and captivating writing style, these testimonies and Jenkins's own papers combine to deliver as complete and satisfying a narrative of Johnny Jenkins life as I have read to date. Vinson's book answers the questions about Jenkins that have been left so long unanswered and provide closure on a life that he describes as dominated by "bluff, bluster, and self-deception" (183). For the reader, it is a thrilling tale told well and a story of both caution and concern. The book not only provides details about Jenkins and his exploits, it also offers valuable insights into the book trade that may not be widely known. For librarians, archivists, book historians, and rare book enthusiasts, Vinson's swift-moving and rewarding portrayal is a glimpse into the dark underbelly of a world in which we all reside. And it proves that the tale of Johnny Jenkins is one that still haunts even after all this time.—*Brian Shetler, Drew University*