cliff "The Horseman in the Sky" plummeted from (Seneca Rocks, West Virginia), or where the notches and bridges are that serve as symbolically laden settings for "An Affair at Coulter's Notch" and "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." (Owens concludes that the notch and the bridge are fictional, but based on topographic prototypes observed by Bierce). While it is important to know how powerfully actual experience determined Bierce's aesthetic practice, Owens finally invests too much in the concept of experience. When Owens suggests that his "personal research retracing Bierce's steps through the war in substantially the same sequence as he took them" (p. 5) can deliver essential critical insight, he reaches for an ideal of experience—as chronologically mappable, as capable of re-creation and communication—that Bierce's fictions explode time and again when they describe the ironic consequences of the fact that experience is as much a function of distorted perception as it is of topography.

JONATHAN ELMER is associate professor of English, Indiana University. He has published on Edgar Allan Poe, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Wright, among others, and his book, *On Lingering and Being Last: Fictions of Race and Sovereignty in the New World*, is forthcoming from Fordham University Press.

By His Own Hand?

The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis

Edited by John D. W. Guice, with contributions by James J. Holmberg, John D. W. Guice, and Jay H. Buckley

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. Pp. xxi, 178. Illustrations, appendix, notes, selected bibliography, index. $24.95.)

In October 1809, just three years after he and William Clark made their triumphant return from their voyage of discovery, thirty-five-year-old Meriwether Lewis perished from gunshot wounds at an obscure Tennessee inn southwest of Nashville. Interest in Lewis's death has hardly subsided in recent years; indeed, the two-hundredth anniversary of the expedition seems to have sparked a new fascination with the famous explorer's sad ending. Fortunately, *By His Own Hand?* offers a highly readable, well-researched account of the controversy surrounding Lewis's death that is valuable to both general readers and scholars alike.

It would have been hard to find three scholars more qualified to discuss this topic than Guice, professor of history emeritus at the University

of Southern Mississippi; Holmberg, curator of special collections at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Kentucky; and Buckley, assistant professor of history at Brigham Young University.

Mirroring a courtroom setting, Holmberg argues the case for suicide, Guice attempts to refute him, and Buckley gives instructions to the jury of readers. This format makes for fascinating reading. Holmberg, for example, offers a systematic review of the ten contemporaneous sources supporting suicide. As he points out, these sources "can be separated into two groups: those who were with Lewis in the days before his death and those who knew Lewis and believed he was capable of suicide" (p. 30). In this careful study of primary documents, Holmberg also deals with questions commonly raised by critics of the suicide theory. In a particularly poignant passage, Holmberg compares Lewis's death to the demise of Peter Grayson, a prominent lawyer and politician who took his own life in 1838—at a Tennessee inn—to save himself "from the horrors of the madhouse" (p. 67).

Defense attorney Guice, by contrast, argues that certain details of the suicide hypothesis are presumed to be solid when they are actually rather shaky. Several accounts, for instance, claim that Lewis cut himself with a razor, but neither of the two most important witnesses said anything of the kind. In addition, "Many writers echo the charge [that Lewis was an alcoholic], but none point to creditable evidence" (p. 78). If one is to present a single, unified theory that Lewis's wounds were self-inflicted, such anomalies must be accounted for. Still, Guice himself maintains that Lewis was "probably" the victim of outlaws without offering a scenario of exactly what happened.

Buckley adds a deft touch when he compares the controversy surrounding Lewis's death to a "defining moment" during the expedition —when Lewis and Clark had to decide whether to take the western or northern branch of the Missouri River (in present-day Montana). Today there are good arguments on each side of the debate. Buckley also offers a thorough review of recent studies of Lewis's death and points out quite perceptively that "murder theories can only do damage to the suicide theory one at a time. They do not accumulate" (p. 133). Buckley also supplies the most comprehensive bibliography ever compiled on this topic.

A valuable documents section includes nine primary documents related to Lewis's death. I wish, however, that photographs of some of the original manuscripts had been supplemented by typed transcriptions. I also believe that the courtroom analogy can be pushed too far. After all, historians are not required to prove their interpretations "beyond reasonable doubt"—they simply have to show that a given theory garners more support from primary sources

than competing theories. Aside from these quibbles, however, I quite enjoyed this book and recommend it to anyone interested in Meriwether Lewis's mysterious last days.

LARRY E. MORRIS is author of *The Fate of the Corps: What Became of the Lewis and Clark Explorers After the Expedition* (2004). (The author of this review read and commented on part of the manuscript before it went to press).

The Cost of Being Poor
By Sandra Barnes

(Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. Pp. xiii, 275. Photographs, maps, charts, notes, references, index. $24.95.)

It is often said that journalism is the first draft of history. For historians concerned with urban poverty in twentieth-century America, sociology has more often and more reliably filled that role, from the Chicago School studies of the 1920s and beyond, to Kenneth Clark's social psychological profile of the urban ghetto in the 1960s, to William Julius Wilson's examination of the ruinous impact of de-industrialization in the 1980s. Aside from the prescriptive role social science can play in understanding contemporary problems, this historical function is also a vital one, because the dearth of conventional primary sources often makes the experiences of the poor particularly fleeting.

Sandra L. Barnes, associate professor of sociology at Purdue University, has produced a compelling study in this same tradition, focusing on one of the most devastated of de-industrialized midwestern cities, Gary, Indiana. From the first, Gary was tied to the economic fortunes of heavy industry, born of U.S. Steel's desire to create a midwestern outpost and named for the corporation's chairman. As historian Jon Teaford has recounted, the city was promoted as the "eighth wonder of the world" and referred to in 1909 by *Putnam's Magazine* as "the magic city." Barnes provides some historical background to the tragedy of Gary's decline, but more historical context, including some discussion of whether the urban renewal programs of the post-World War II era had any impact on the then-youthful city, would be helpful.

Barnes, herself a Gary native, focuses primarily on the unique challenges facing impoverished Gary residents today as manufacturing jobs and retail and other service outlets have left the city, often having relocated to the suburban centers of Merrillville and Portage. Her analysis revolves around the relative impact of these structural shifts and the individual agency maintained by Gary