

ter of the sectional crisis, Silber believes that gender ideologies were also critical factors in creating sectionalism and in facilitating reconciliation. Silber discusses a wide range of subjects concisely, but her book's brevity leaves unanswered questions regarding topics like Confederate nationalism. Silber's informative footnotes, however, point the reader to key works for further perusal. This slim, readable volume is an excellent introduction to gender and the Civil War for scholars, students, and general readers.

*Temple University*

SUSAN HANKET BRANDT

*Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905–1929.* By MICHAEL ARONSON. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. 320 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$35.95.)

It has been a long time since I have so thoroughly enjoyed a work of film history. Film historians have a knack for either overtheorizing or overdetailing their books so as to render them virtually unreadable. Michael Aronson, who did his graduate work at the University of Pittsburgh and is currently an assistant professor of English at the University of Oregon, is intent on reaching a larger audience than the professoriate. That is not to say that there isn't a whole lot here for the scholar, but rather that the specialists aren't the only audience for whom this book is intended.

*Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905–1929* works on several levels at once. It is one of the best local histories of Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania. But it is also a history of early twentieth-century urbanization and commercial amusements. By placing the nickelodeon in the larger context of accessible, affordable entertainments, Aronson enriches film history by extending its boundaries. We learn a great deal about the connections between nickel film theaters and dime museums, penny arcades, live theater, and vaudeville. We meet the entrepreneurs and the audiences. We see how films were advertised and stars were made. We are witnesses to the long, complicated battle between censors and exhibitors. We understand the critical interconnections between real estate transactions and the expansion of popular entertainments. And, through it all, we watch as a city—and its commercial amusements—grow together in the first decades of the last century.

Aronson is that rare creature: a prodigious researcher who knows how to write. There is neither an undocumented assertion nor a dull sentence in the entire book. Time and again, Aronson makes connections: between the local and the national, between exhibitors and distributors, between the entrepreneurs and their audiences. Each connection deepens and complicates our understanding of city life and of the history of film exhibition. The illustrations and graphics only

add to the reader's enjoyment. Aronson includes period photographs of the city, its streets, and its theaters, reproductions of posters, newspaper and magazine advertisements, wonderful cartoons and caricatures, and some superb maps.

The unsung heroes of this study may be the archivists, librarians, and institutions of Pittsburgh who have catalogued, preserved, and made accessible the treasure trove of primary source materials, newspapers, photos, and ephemera without which such a study could not have been written.

*Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh at the Movies, 1905–1929* is a special book that should attract a wide audience. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the history of Pittsburgh and/or of film. It should appeal to specialists, students, and general readers alike.

*Graduate Center,  
City University of New York*

DAVID NASAW