

A Prose Kinema: Kenneth Slessor's Film Writing

PHILIP MEAD

The question of Kenneth Slessor's literary modernism, *vis-à-vis* the Euro-American modernist scenario, has been of continuing interest to literary critics. The influence of Slessor's poetry and his contribution to the artistic and intellectual ethos of the *Vision* group in the 1920s have given this question a broader significance: what are the peculiar characteristics of Australian artistic modernism? The question less often asked is about the relations between poetic writing, like Slessor's, its incarnation within the institutions of literature and the cultural history of modernity in Australia. What are the relations between artistic modernism, that is to say, and modernity (national and global)? Slessor's (later) poetic practice was in crucial ways a response to, and enabled by, the popular cultural form of cinema. His modernism, at its most intense, drew very specifically, and partly unconsciously, on his experience of the popular entertainment industry. The structures of feeling and the phenomenology of perception in 'Five Bells,' for example, are correlative to the experience of movie-going and modern spectatorship. This should come as no surprise once we realise how deeply Slessor was involved in the experience of cinema in Australia in the 1920s and 30s, even though the conjunction of subjective changes and the broadly 'social, economic, and cultural transformations of modernity' are complexly figured in specific instances of poetic discourse (Charney and Schwartz 1).

Various collections of Slessor's (post-war) critical and essayistic prose, and extracts from his war diaries and war despatches from his time as Australia's Official War Correspondent, have been published, as well as anthologies and selections of his works, such as Dennis Haskell's of 1991, that reprint his poetry (including some of the light verse) together with extracts from his extra-poetic writing. None of these publications, however, represents or extracts or mentions the large body of Slessor's writing about film. Even Geoffrey Dutton, who gives a relatively detailed account of Slessor's journalistic career in his biography, makes no mention of the fact that up until the war, it is film writing that is Slessor's dominant journalistic mode. As it turns out, Slessor was as much a film critic as he was a war correspondent, diarist or literary essayist. Recently, as we know, the occasional and light verse that Slessor published in newspapers, particularly *Smith's Weekly*, but kept quarantined during his lifetime from the official, Angus & Robertson corpus of his poetry, has been incorporated into his collected poems. Putting the serious and light (or high and low) Slessor together was relatively

simple; they belong to the same broad generic category. His life and productions as a journalist, though, remain almost entirely split off from, or left out of, critical discussion of his poetry. Which is certainly the way he seemed to want it. In a way, the classically modernist image of the engraver Dürer, from the poem 'Nuremberg' (1922), that stands at the beginning of Slessor's *oeuvre* has extended its assumptions throughout his critical reception: the solitary craftsman working at his pictorial art, remote from the noisy marketplace of everyday life.

This may have been a cherished image of the artist for Slessor in the early 1920s but it was to lose its relevance (Moore 56). If we look at Slessor's work through the lens of his film writing for the popular press then what comes into focus is a very different modernist writer from the one usually portrayed. Rather than poetic art providing for Slessor a solitary escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday Sydney life – high art as distinct from ephemeral journalism; *atelier* as opposed to newspaper office; isolated practitioner of linguistic craft as remote from mass consumer of popular entertainment; authentic feeling in contrast to shared experience – it may be said more accurately to embody in its structuration and themes, a characteristic experience of collective modernity. Critical reception of Slessor's more highly regarded poems has been marked by a preoccupation with the discernment of Anglo-American modernist filiations and their native inflections, but the ready communicativeness which Australian readers recognise in Slessor's poetry may have more to do with its sensuous figuration of specifically Australian modernity. His serious and light verse, according to their conventions, celebrate the emblematic experiences of modern city life: commuting, driving, train-travelling, inner-city flat-living, office-working, department-store shopping, motor-bike riding, telephoning and, perhaps most seductively, movie-going. Indeed, if we take Slessor's most famous poem, 'Five Bells', as summary of Slessor's major poetic work in the 1930s at the opposite end of his poetic *oeuvre* from 'Nuremberg,' the change in props and aesthetic ideology couldn't be more plain. At the beginning of Slessor's poetic career, then, a silent tableau of engraving; at the other end, a set of moving frames. One with its roots in Slessor's formative encounter with the Lindsays (Lionel and Norman) and their obsession with that most static of pictorial forms, etching; the other with its origins in the dark spectatorship of moving pictures.

Slessor started work as a journalist on the Sydney *Sun* in 1919. When he joined the paper it was already covering the Sydney entertainment scene with columns like 'Crotchets & Quavers,' 'Notes from the Picture Shows' and 'In the Theatres.' In the light of the 'orientalism' of the 'Arabian tale' narrative frame of 'Five Bells' that Slessor later provided, it is worth noting that, while there is no evidence that Slessor was put to work as a cadet journalist at eighteen years of age on film reviewing, the *Sun* ran extensive coverage of film releases under the page-heading 'The Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes' – Omar Khayyam'. This quotation from one of the later versions of Edward Fitzgerald's 'Rubāiyāt' is an allusion to the cinematism of the modern life:

We are no more than a moving row
 Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with this Sun-illuminated Lantern held
 In Midnight by the Master of the Show (Ferguson *et al* 874)

Presumably the editor of the paper enjoyed the pun on 'Sun-illuminated.' The origin of this heading may lie in the popularity of the 'Rubāiyāt,' or the cinematic connection, not necessarily obvious to a reader of Fitzgerald's poem, may just as likely have been suggested by the American poet Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), the first work of film theory, which printed exactly these four lines as an epigraph on its title page. All the contributions to the 'Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes' columns are unattributed but given the resemblance of his later *Smith's Weekly* 'Projector' page to the *Sun* film columns, Slessor may very well have learnt his reporting, reviewing and editorial and lay-out skills from his experience of writing about film for the *Sun*.

Slessor moved to Melbourne in the second half of 1924 and by December of that year was working on the national weekly, *Punch* (*Melbourne Herald*, 18 December 1924, 10). *Punch* ran a regular page usually headed 'The Playgoer' which included a section 'In Movieland.' (During 1924 *Punch* also sometimes ran an additional entertainment page headed 'In Theatreland, Principally Pictures'.) As a star recruit on the revamped *Punch*, Slessor is likely to have contributed some of the copy for these pages, although the paragraphs are either unattributed or infrequently initialled, and not by 'K.S.' 'The Playgoer' page included reviews and notices of Australian, British and US films, classical and popular theatre productions (Shakespeare and the Royal Show), musical attractions and theatre gossip, etc (see 7 Feb, 1924, 15 for example). In 1925, *Punch* ran articles on the movies and censorship ('The Censor and the Movies' by 'Our Special Investigator', 1 Jan, 6), and on 'Australia and the Films' by C.J. Dennis (21 May, 14-15, 38) which included an account of the unwelcome Americanisation of movies, the history of Australian film production and an industry blueprint for a national cinema. Dennis's long article was illustrated, incidentally, by Joseph Lynch. For July, August, September and October of 1925, on the 'Plays, Music and Art' page, Slessor reviewed 'Melbourne Shows' (23 July, 16; 30 July, 16; 6 Aug, 16; 3 Sept, 16).

Slessor also worked on the Melbourne *Herald* in 1925, after *Punch* folded and was incorporated into *Table Talk* in December 1925, but was back in Sydney at the *Sun* in the early part of 1926. By April 1926, the black-and-white graphic accompanying the *Sun's* still-running 'Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes' heading had acquired a more detailed 'East of Suez' appearance, with palm trees, onion domes, minarets and desert sands. From 1927, until his appointment as Official War Correspondent in April 1940, Slessor worked on *Smith's Weekly*, the 'Diggers' paper' as it styled itself, eventually as editor, then as editor-in-chief.

From the late 1920s, and possibly earlier, through to the early 40s, Slessor was a prolific writer about, and commentator on, cinema. In fact, for the thirteen years Slessor spent working on *Smith's*, his film journalism was his main published

contribution to that paper. *Smith's*, in turn, promoted Slessor as Australia's most respected film critic. Although Slessor had little scope for theoretical writing about popular culture, nor any training as an intellectual, in some ways his position at *Smith's* was similar to Siegfried Kracauer's who wrote voluminous journalism about popular culture, especially film, in papers like the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, over a nearly contemporaneous period (the inter-war years) (Hansen 366 ff.). Not only was Slessor recording, in his film reviews, his responses to what Kracauer called the cinema's desire 'to picture transient life, life at its most ephemeral,' he was doing that within the equally ephemeral forum of the weekly newspaper (Kracauer ix). Slessor reviewed and noticed films as they were released but also wrote articles about issues of film culture such as the economics of production and distribution, the experience of movie-going, censorship, *auteur*-ship, film technologies, government film policy, the development of a national cinema, commercial aspects of theatre use, etc. Slessor's time as a newspaper film critic coincides with some of the most significant developments in cinema in Australia, the advent of sound in 1929 and of colour, five years after that. In terms of Slessor's career as a writer, his work as film critic predates his war journalism and diaries, as well as the literary criticism, essays and reviews collected in *Bread and Wine* (1970). Significantly for my analysis here, his film journalism is coincident with the most productive period of his poetic writing, the late 1920s and the 1930s.

Slessor takes a leading role in film writing for *Smith's* with the 'Through *Smith's* Private Projector' page, 'conducted by Ken Slessor' (or sometimes 'Kenneth Slessor') from the 28 March issue of 1931. Slessor edited and wrote for the 'Private Projector' page until 1940, although the page dropped back in size and also dropped his by-line in July 1938 when he became editor of the paper. The page ran 'Current Reviews' of films, including release date, screening and other production and direction information. It printed anywhere between four and twelve reviews in each edition, some only short paragraphs, some longer reviews of 5–600 words and the occasional lead review of up to 1,000 words, and even brief rhymed reviews (11 Apr, 1931, 6 by 'K.S.', of the western 'Cimarron'). In the early years of Slessor's editing of the film page, most of these reviews are unattributed, although occasionally they are initialled. From the beginning of 1936, though, Slessor's longer reviews are regularly initialled 'K.S.' (other reviewers included Kenneth Mackenzie, Ernestine Hill, Elizabeth Riddell and Bartlett Adamson). The page nearly always ran a leading news article, no doubt usually by Slessor, which could be about anything from industry news to local production issues, to celebrity gossip or pre-release information. Sometimes there were 'technical' columns about aspects of film-making, but there were always black-and-white illustrations of stars, stills and celebrity shots, and cartoons, including the regular 'Highspots in the Shows', all about the films of the week. In addition to increasingly effective advertisements for current showings, the page also ran theatre management news, articles about censorship – *Smith's*, like Slessor, was a relentless crusader against censorship – answers to correspondents, reports on Hollywood visitors, studio news ('News From Headquarters'), etc. Slessor seems also

to have invented *Smith's* 'Barometer'; this allowed every film reviewed to receive an accompanying rating symbol:

Look at the sign which accompanies every film-review in 'Smith's Weekly,' and you will find an instant classification of the picture according to the scale of merit below: –

AAA: The Gold Cup, 'Smith's' highest award.

AA: The Bouquet. For outstanding excellence.

A: Hand-claps. Good.

B: The Bee. Average.

BB: The Raspberry. Inferior.

BBB: The Fair Cow. Don't say we didn't warn you.

Ratings were collated and sometimes graphed at the end, or sometimes the beginning, of a year. The 'Private Projector' page appeared alongside other regular *Smith's* pages such as 'Sport and Sportsmen,' 'Unofficial History of the A.I.F.,' 'Forum & Aginun,' 'Cookery Nook,' 'Catty Communication' and 'Gossip from Everywhere.' Even though Slessor's film writing occurs within this mélange of popular press forms and genres, his consideration of weekly releases and individual directors' work (like Chaplin, Capra and Hitchcock, for example) is knowledgeable and un-sensational. Of Hollywood directors, the films of Frank Capra receive special praise and detailed analysis from Slessor (see for example 'K.S.'s review of *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, 25 July, 1936, 22 and 'Frank Capra, Columbia's No. 1 director, who gave the world 'Mr Deeds', a film about a poet, Longfellow Deeds, 1 Aug, 1936, 22). There is no dumbing-down or cultural snobbery in Slessor's writing about film. Indeed, as the deep cinematism at work in his 'serious' poetic work suggests, film discourse wasn't just a professional commitment for Slessor, it was a way of experiencing and negotiating his way through modernity.⁵ Unlike the early Ezra Pound who, in 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,' contrasted the 'Attic grace' of classical rhyme with the 'accelerated [cinematic] grimace' of the modern age's image of itself, Slessor is an active participant in the nascent culture of film.

Slessor's role as film editor and critic at *Smith's* coincided with the talkie revolution in Australia, probably the most important technological advance in cinema before the television era. This revolution took place throughout 1929 and by 1930 the talkie had replaced both silent films and live theatre as the most popular form of entertainment, at least in the major cities. This rapid shift in the form and experience of one of the most popular genres of entertainment is simultaneously debated and celebrated, week by week, in the pages of *Smith's*: 'Can Talkies Be Censored?' (9 Feb, 1929, 9), 'The First of the All-Talkies Comes to Town,' 'with accompanying noises by Vitaphone' (2 Mar, 1929, 11), 'Must Talkies Take the Place of Political Rostrum?' (9 Mar, 1929, 9), 'How Red Tape Strangled Australian Talkie Industry' (30 Mar, 1929, 10), 'The Box Office Answers the Talkie Question' (6 Apr, 1929, 20), and perhaps most sensationally, 'Town & Country Loneli-

ness: Problem to be Faced, Whither are the Talkies Leading? Hidden Dangers in Staggering Movie Development' (17 Aug, 1929, 1-2) – these were included under the heading 'flicks of the tongue'.

In his first attributed article about film for *Smith's*, 'That Movie Kiss,' from 4 January, 1930, Slessor celebrated the advent of the talkies:

Thus ends the first year of the revolution.

Twelve months of tidal-wave, twelve months of sweeping away, of miracles and tragedies, of money lost and won, of lives made and broken. Never before in the whole history of Australian entertainment has there been such a significant and shattering year as 1929. A dynasty has fallen, a kingdom has been conquered. The revolution has come, with no smoke of cannon, with no field of blood. Its trumpets are electric trumpets, its army shadows on a screen. But, none the less certainly, it is a Revolution, bearing away on its stormy currents the old aristocracy, foisting usurpers on the throne, changing the lives of countless thousands. [. . .]

Look back to that remote Christmas of the year before talkies. Christmas 1928 B.C. (Before Cinesound). [. . .]

In twelve months we have seen the stage crushed at a blow. Whether there can be a resurrection, whether the decay of speaking theatres will continue through 1930 as it continued through 1929, is still unknown. One thing only is evident – that the theatre must be modernised and improved as fast as the talkie-house. (4 January 1930, 17)

A year later, in January 1931, Slessor revisits the same topic, and with similar hyperbole, on what is now headed the 'Screen'ry' page. A year on, the technological revolution of the talkies has been matched by a quantum advance in film art. His metaphors here also happen to be strangely prescient of the 'orientalist' narrative and temporal frame of 'Five Bells', in Slessor's own commentary on the poem:

Another reel has gone into the darkness. We sit in the theatre and look back. By the magic of that little bit of crystal in the camera's eye, the modern Roc's egg, we have gone flying into gulfs and valleys, into tenements and opera-houses, over the spires of cities and the sand of deserts.

This is the most charming of all pastimes – looking back. The pleasure is added to, when we survey 1930, by the significance of something in the film-world which can only be compared to a sort of French Revolution – the upsetting of accepted standards, and the enthronement of strange gods. [. . .]

By this time last year, the changes of sheer mechanism had been more or less perfected. What followed in 1930 were the changes of thought and style, the gradual concessions of an antique dumb-show to

the demands of a new and organic art. [...]

We are in the Elizabethan age of entertainment, and vague, golden isles in the mists are floating on the edges of our maps. This year may see still more incredible magic worked. (3 January 1931, 21)

As well as covering the 'talkies revolution,' Slessor's popular film writing contributed in other ways to the discourse on cinema's social and cultural evolution. My survey of the non-review film material in *Smith's* indicates Slessor's particular interest in the growth of a national cinema ('Success of Australian Film Industry,' 31 Dec, 1932, 8), including the economics of Australian production, the struggle between British and US film interests for control of the Australian movie-going market and theatre infrastructure, which included reporting on the growth of production companies in the US and their possible local operations in Australia ('Famous Chirside Home to be Film Colony Centre: Ghosts of Millionaire Squatters Routed by Hollywood Stars', 3 Oct, 1936, 23), as well as local distribution chain wars (and the 1933 New South Wales Government inquiry into the film industry), censorship issues (as previously mentioned), the technology of screening and reports on overseas reviews of Australian films ('More American Reviews of Australian Films,' 29 May, 1937, 23). Slessor also writes about issues such as the advent of colour (RKO Radio's *Becky Sharp* is the first full-colour film to be shown in Australia, in 1935), the experience of movie-going (the cinema lighting controversy of 29 February, 1936 for instance), the adaptations of the 'flesh and blood theatre' to the competition of the movies (silent and talkie), other national cinemas, like the New Zealand one (12 Feb, 1938, 23), the cross-industry support for a national cinema represented by growing independence in the Australian publishing industry, news-gazette and documentary film, and the need for a national film archive, or historical film section of the Commonwealth National library (5 Feb, 1938, 23).

Slessor's support for the development of a national cinema emerges strongly in the pages of *Smith's* in 1932, the year of Leslie Haylen's *Two Minutes' Silence*. And throughout the thirties he is particularly supportive of the work of Charles Chauvel, Ken Hall and Stuart Doyle. He regularly provides pre- and post-production information about Chauvel's projects. He reviews extensively Chauvel productions like *In the Wake of the Bounty* (1933), *Heritage* (1935) and *Uncivilised* (1936). In his signed lead review of *Uncivilised*, a film he has serious criticisms of, he nevertheless describes Chauvel as a film producer and director 'of the most brilliant promise' (3 Oct, 1936, 22). Three years earlier he had expressed outrage over the threatened censorship of the Polynesian dance scene in *Bounty* (11 Mar, 1933, 10). Reviewing Ken Hall's work at this time, he gives a AAA rating to his *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (28 Apr, 1934, 19) although he is critical of Doyle's *The Squatter's Daughter* of 1933 – good scenery but 'wretchedly tawdry' narrative (7 Oct, 1933, 6). In remarking on Ken Hall's 'skilful direction' of *On Our Selection* in his year's review for 1932, 'Smith's Sums Up the Offerings of 1932: Bird's Eye View of Film History in Australia' (31 Dec, 1932, 8), Slessor is pleased to note that 'four

Australian companies are now in active production of talking-pictures, and several more are about to enter the field.' In 1935, Doyle writes in *Smith's* on the topic of 'Making Films in Australia' (12 Oct, 22); in the following year, Slessor invites both Chauvel and Hall to contribute to the 'Private Projector' page. Chauvel writes about 'Choosing Australia's Screen Stars' (29 Aug, 1936, 21), while Hall writes an article about 'Australia's Chance with Films: Can We Have a Second Hollywood?' (5 Sept, 1936, 22). Interestingly, the most common film topic on the 'Private Projector' page and elsewhere in *Smith's* pages from the 1920s to the 40s, apart from news of recent releases, is Australian film production, its achievements, problems and future.

In this context of public support for a national cinema it is worth noting that Slessor was also involved in a scriptwriting and film-making project. Adrian Caesar has uncovered that Slessor and Norman Lindsay planned to collaborate on making a film of Lindsay's novel *Redheap* (48). This project was referred to in an 'interview' with Norman Lindsay that Slessor published in *Art in Australia* in 1930, the same year as his first signed article about Australian film for *Smith's*. In this deliberately shaped piece of cultural commentary, Slessor ('Z' in the interview) prompts Lindsay into talking about *Redheap* and its banning. Lindsay goes on to argue for a national cinema as a cultural vanguard, not least for its potential to provide patronage for artists, including writers:

I have analysed the apparent impulse towards me over the 'Redheap' censorship, and find it is based in satisfaction because an act of mine was publicly frustrated. As I am beaten, the mob can afford to be magnanimous. They will reverse this the first time there is any indication of my being successful.

Y.: You mean when 'Redheap' is produced here as a film?

N.L.: No. That, after all, will be merely a tail-piece to the battle. The real test was fought when the book itself was evaded.

Y.: Yet that in itself will cause the film to be received with eagerness.

N.L.: The eagerness of curiosity – yes. But if this can assist in establishing an Australian film-market, it will be a decided consolation. Far more than the novel or the cartoon, the film strikes at the people with almost an hypnotic power. The 'Redheap' film will stand or fall as a production of pure humour and drama – it will have neither purpose nor function as a piece of propaganda. The film that attempts a direct message is ridiculously out of place. What I hope to see is the foundation of an Australian school of motion-pictures which will accustom Australians to seeing their own country used as a background for every sort of drama. Only by this means can our national hallucination of inferiority be defeated.

Z.: That is certainly the supreme value of the film. It shows us that Australia and Australians can be used as story-material without a self-conscious assertion of local colour. We must be taught that there is a

background for culture and intelligence in Australia besides a background for boomerangs and bushrangers.

N.L.: When that has been achieved – and I look to the Australian film to do it – the Australian novel will be read by the entire world, and we shall have a self-supporting literature. [. . .] Once the film has convinced Australians that it is possible for an intelligent art to exist here as successfully as in any other part of the world, the Australian writer or artist will be able to make his living just as certainly as writers and artists who have established themselves overseas. (Slessor 17–18)

Among Slessor's papers in the National Library is his breakdown of *Redheap*, the draft of a film script that was never completed.

The literally thousands of reviews and journalistic pieces about cinema on Slessor's 'Private Projector' page and elsewhere in *Smith's* similarly contribute to the acculturation of a new medium of aesthetic expression and a new optic of modernity in Australia (Friedberg 7). They also indicate the significant extent to which the cineaste and scriptwriter Slessor was immersed in the production, consumption and reception of the cinematic apparatus in Australia, perhaps from his very first experience as a journalist. At the very least, for more than fifteen years Slessor's working life as a journalist involved his watching, writing about and helping to administer (through the influence of the media) the expansion of cinema industry and culture in Australia. If Paul Virilio is right about the relations between cinema and war, then by becoming a war correspondent in 1940, Slessor traded this absorption in the discourse of cinema for its continuation by other means, war (Virilio 30).

APPENDIX:

Slessor's review of *The Thirty Nine Steps* (Gaumont-British)

In 'The Man Who Knew Too Much' Alfred Hitchcock showed something approaching genius in the handling of violent melodrama. Here he has been given material of a far greater intrinsic value, and, though the melodrama is as smoky, the film rests on the foundation of John Buchan's superb prose.

It would be hard to find a writer of the first flight to-day whose work is more suited for the screen. Not only do Buchan's heroes move and act like men, against a background of authentic sky, but the producer has a rich gallery of minor parts with which to fill in his picture. One of the few advantages which a good novel possesses, and which a good original screen-story cannot hope to possess is the firmness with which its underlying details and characters are built. Within the larger scope of a book, an author can make these things live – a feat which can never be accomplished in even the most profuse or careful script-directions.

Buchan's book has the richness of Stevenson, to whom, in many respects he may be compared. Thus, for instance, the crofter and his wife, who appear in this picture, are not mere accessories of the movement, but are rooted in actuality. They are, in fact, flesh and blood, of as much importance to the story as the more obvious principals.

Hitchcock has given the tale a fine, exhilarating sweep. Like Stevenson again, in such books as 'Kidnapped' or 'St. Ives' Buchan delights in the excitement of an open-air chase. So here the camera rushes over Scotland, with some intoxicating glimpses of mountains and moor, and the feeling of wind and water. Hitchcock's process is peculiar in the power with which it revives familiar associations. The music-hall scenes, with which the film opens and closes, have the very smell of music-halls. The scene on board the Flying Scotsman have the true feeling of a great train in motion. Even the commercial travellers who are seen only for a twinkling, give you the feeling that they are commercial travellers, passing for a moment through the orbit of the story. On this basis of complete actuality, the tension and excitement of the mystery are immeasurably intensified.

The cleverness of the main theme is enriched by the sharp good humor of the incidental situations. And the chief asset of all tales of mystery – the element of surprise – is strongly preserved. There is a really exciting shot when the hero at last meets the man he has been searching for across Scotland. The director has shown imagination in selecting the right scenes from the book. All the most delicious parts are picked out for the camera, including the memorable election-meeting. The players, too, do full justice to their material. Robert Donat, Madeleine Carroll and Godfrey Tearle are almost ideally cast, and the fact that they are more prominent than people such as John Laurie (the crofter), and Wylie Watson (Mr. Memory) and the others is due merely to the importance of their roles. Altogether, a fine, exciting picture, one of the pleasures of the year. As a box office draw it will be an absolute winner. – K.S.' (28 September, 1935, 22).

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