

= Life 's Shop Window =

Life 's Shop Window is a 1914 American silent drama film directed by J. Gordon Edwards and starring Claire Whitney and Stuart Holmes . It is a film adaptation of the eponymous 1907 novel by Annie Sophie Cory . The film depicts the story of English orphan Lydia Wilton (Whitney) , and her husband Bernard Chetwin (Holmes) . Although Wilton 's marriage is legitimate , it was conducted in secret , and she is accused of having a child out of wedlock . Forced to leave England , she reunites with her husband in Arizona . There , she is tempted by infidelity with an old acquaintance , Eustace Pelham , before seeing the error of her ways and returning to her family .

Life 's Shop Window was the first film produced , rather than simply distributed , by William Fox 's Box Office Attractions Company , the corporate predecessor to Fox Film . Several reviewers approved of the film 's expurgated treatment of the novel 's plot , although opinions of the quality of the film itself were mixed . It proved very popular upon its initial release in New York , and that success was used to advertise the film elsewhere . Like many of Fox 's early works , it was likely lost in the 1937 Fox vault fire .

= = Plot = =

Bernard Chetwin is a boarder at John Anderson 's farm in England . He is unimpressed by Anderson 's spoiled daughter Bella , but is attracted to their orphaned servant , Lydia Wilton . She tells him of her dreams for a happier life , and they fall in love . Wilton also meets Eustace Pelham , who introduces her to his philosophy of " life 's shop window " : that many people make life decisions on purely superficial grounds . Chetwin marries Wilton in a secret ceremony .

Intending to establish a farm to support his new family , Chetwin leaves the English countryside for Arizona . Concerned about the dangers of frontier territory , he travels without his newlywed wife , intending to send for her later . When she gives birth to Chetwin 's child , Anderson 's wife refuses to accept evidence of her marriage , and throws her out of the farm for having a child out of wedlock . She takes the infant with her to Arizona and reunites with Chetwin at his ranch .

The demands of managing the ranch consume all of Chetwin 's time , leaving Wilton to feel neglected and unloved . One day , a traveler is injured near the ranch , whom she recognizes as Pelham . Pelham courts her , taking advantage of her loneliness . Although she admits she does not love him , he convinces her to abandon her family and run away with him . As she is preparing to depart , she is confronted by Starlight , an Indian woman who works as a servant on the ranch , who reminds Wilton of the needs of her child . She spurns Pelham and returns to her family . Eventually , Chetwin forgives her and devotes more of his time to her . Pelham may have been killed by Starlight , although his ultimate fate is left unclear .

= = Cast = =

Claire Whitney as Lydia Wilton
Stuart Holmes as Bernard Chetwin
Walter Hitchcock as Eustace Pelham
Theresa Michelena as Starlight

= = Production = =

Annie Sophie Cory , writing as Victoria Cross , was a popular but controversial British New Woman novelist . Adultery and female sexuality are common themes in her works , which often reversed the expected gender roles of the time , permitting female desire to motivate the plot . Elizabeth Bisland described Lydia , the main character of Cory 's 1907 novel Life 's Shop Window , as " a very modernist heroine " , comparing her to a more socially successful Hester Prynne . Like many of Cross 's novels , it attracted controversy , and was banned for a time by the Circulating Libraries Association in the United Kingdom . Life 's Shop Window had already become the basis of a

successful play , based on an expurgated version of the novel 's plot .

In 1914 , William Fox was operating the successful film distributor Box Office Attraction Film Rental Company . Box Office purchased films from studios such as Balboa Amusement Producing Company , showing them in Fox 's New York area theaters and renting prints to exhibitors elsewhere in the country . Life 's Shop Window may have originally been considered for production in this manner . However , Fox decided he was unwilling to depend on others for the products his business required , and instead prepared to produce his own films under the Box Office Attractions Company name . He purchased the Éclair film studio in Fort Lee , New Jersey and property in Staten Island , arranged for actors and crew , and began production with an adaptation of an established work , as was common at the time .

Rights to the film adaptation were purchased for \$ 100 . Like the theatrical adaptation , Mary Asquith 's screenplay removed much of the book 's controversial sexual elements , censorship intended to make Fox 's nascent studio appear more respectable to the industry . Fox selected J. Gordon Edwards to direct , in what may have been his directorial debut ; credit for the earlier St. Elmo is disputed , with sources disagreeing whether Edwards or Bertram Bracken directed .

Filming for Life 's Shop Window took place at a farm on the Staten Island property , and possibly in the Fort Lee studio . The budget for this five @-@ reel feature film was small , with the cost of production reported as \$ 4 @,@ 500 or \$ 6 @,@ 000 ; Fox would exaggerate the cost of production to over thirty times its true value in later advertising . At the time , films of comparable length generally required between \$ 20 @,@ 000 and \$ 30 @,@ 000 to produce . Film historian Terry Ramsaye reported that Fox was not pleased with the completed film and initially declared : " Let 's burn the damn thing " , before being convinced to allow its release . Life 's Shop Window premiered at the Academy of Music in New York on October 20 , 1914 , although it did not receive its official release until November 19 .

= = Reception and legacy = =

Contemporary reviews were mixed . Moving Picture World 's film critic W. Stephen Bush called the film " first @-@ class " despite problems with the plot , cinematography , and the " unbelievably poor " music accompaniment at the Academy of Music . He also remarked on the censorship of the novel 's plot , stating that " not even the sternest of moralists can find anything objectionable " in the film . Fox 's response was published the following week , in which he praised Bush 's review and committed to avoiding " the salacious or the sex drama " . Peter Milne of Motion Picture News also praised the decision to make a " clean " adaptation of the novel , as well as the film 's realism . However , Variety gave the film a negative review that criticized its editing , its direction , and Whitney 's acting ability , suggesting that the film would profit solely on the name of the book it adapted .

Despite some critical reviews , the film was popular , especially with women , and financially successful . Double @-@ file lines over a block long were reported for opening @-@ week showings at the Audubon Theatre in New York . After the incorporation of the Fox Film Corporation , distribution of this film continued under the new company 's name . The success of the initial New York showings featured in subsequent advertising , as did Fox 's greatly inflated claims of the cost of production .

The 1937 Fox vault fire destroyed most of Fox 's silent films , probably including Life 's Shop Window . The Library of Congress is not aware of any extant copies .