
DELLUC / DULAC / ÈVE FRANCIS

Inspired by an old project for a play, in 1917 Louis Delluc drew up a script under the title *Le Fandango*, which would become *Spanish Fiesta*. Mobilized by the war, he entrusted the shooting of his film to Germaine Dulac, who had already filmed with Ève Francis and whose work he appreciated for its sensitivity and intelligence. *Spanish Fiesta* is a film of atmosphere, a lively, concrete painting developed with strokes and impressions. The rare images of the film that have survived turn out to be even more singular, bewitching and poetic, being the final fragments of this melancholic tragedy.

Germaine Dulac was vice-president of La Cinémathèque française from April 1940 up until her death in July 1942. Henri Langlois often deplored the loss of a number of her films, in particular *Spanish Fiesta*, describing it as a 'revolutionary film', and wrote¹:

From this collaboration between Dulac and Delluc an unprecedented film was born, a film that cannot be read. It must be seen to understand what is owed to this collaboration and to the musical art of Germaine Dulac's editing. It is the multiplicity of shots that accounts for its unity; they are still quite simple and not looking for angles. They unwind at a rapid pace. They go by without lingering, and it is that, this way of going back over certain leitmotifs without appearing to do so, this way of isolating and encircling the characters, with a bullfight, a landscape, couples of dancers sometimes in counterpoint and sometimes, on the contrary, in reinforcement of the heroes, which heightens emotion. Delete the subtitles. Germaine Dulac, like Gance, edited their film without subtitles. Do this restraint, this concision in rapidity, this suggestive musicality of the editing evoke nothing for you²?

Tulip's Bar, a short story written by Louis Delluc, would become the scenario for *La Boue* (Mud), the first title attributed to *Fever*. About it, Henri Langlois wrote:

Shot at the Gaumont Studios in a few days, on a single set that Louis Delluc had wanted entirely closed as in real life, Fever is one of French cinema's most famous films. [...] Haunted by the gift of life in the anecdotal characters of American extras, Louis Delluc tries to enrich French cinema with it. He asks those he has chosen as extras to act freely, without paying attention to him or the camera. The belote players play a real, interminable game; the low-level civil servant and the girl speak and drink as in everyday life. And against this shifting background on which the eye of the lens sometimes settles, bringing it to the foreground, hinges the action, reduced to the essentials. Delluc substitutes a thoroughly interiorized impressionism on the form, on the background for an exterior form of impressionism. It is because of that that this man who, by the sole force of speech, brought the first French avant-garde into being and is the pioneer of realism, a return to basics, and classicism.

La Boue was presented to the *Commission Supérieure d'examen des Films Cinématographiques* in April 1921 and provoked strong opposition. Not only did the board demand the cutting of certain scenes (scenes of violence, Vintiane's bared breast...), deemed too subversive, but also a change of title, considered too provocative. Thus, with a few scenes eliminated, the film was finally accepted by the censors in May 1921, under the title of *Fever*.

¹ Henri Langlois, *Écrits de cinéma*, texts collected by Bernard Benoliel and Bernard Eisenschitz, Ed. Flammarion / Cinémathèque française, 2014

² Langlois is referring to Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*.

THE FILMS OF THE SHOWING « DELLUC / DULAC / EVE FRANCIS »

Running time : 51 min.

Spanish Fiesta (fragment) / La Fête espagnole (fragment)

France, 1919 – 8 minutes

Direction: Germaine Dulac

Script: Louis Delluc

Production: Les Films Louis Nalpas

Set: Gaston David

Photography: Paul Parguel

Cast: Ève Francis, Jean Toulout, Gaston Modot, Anna Gay, Robert Delsol



A holiday in a small Spanish town. Soledad receives the visit of her two suitors, Real and Miguelan, bound by a very strong friendship and by the same amorous feelings for the former dancer. Amused and indifferent, she proposes to them the idea of a duel in order to choose between them.

There remains only a 171-metre fragment (out of the original 1,671 metres), without intertitles, preserved in 1948 from a fragment of the nitrate negative then copied in 1970 from the preserved duplicate. This is the only known element preserved at present.

Fever / Fièvre

France, 1921 – 43 minutes

Direction, script and production: Louis Delluc

Production: Alhambra Films, Jupiter Films

Photography: Alphonse Gibory, Georges Lucas

Set: Francis Jourdain

Cast: Ève Francis, Edmond Van Daële, Gaston Modot, Elena Sagrary, George Footit

In a working-class cabaret of the Vieux-Port in Marseilles, the patron, Topinelli, and his wife, Sarah, are filling the glasses of the regulars. A group of sailors arrives, back from the Orient, gets settled and exhibits relics brought back from their voyage. Among them is Militis, Sarah's former lover.



La Cinémathèque française restored *Fever* from a nitrate negative deposited in 1943 and a period print acquired in 1950. In 1963, it preserved the original negative. In 2008, a new copy of *Fever* was copied from the 1963 duplicate, into which were reintroduced the title cards from the nitrate print. The same nitrate print served as a reference for the elaboration of the tints.