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| Gance, Abel (1889-1981) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Abel Gance, né Abel Perthon, was a French dramatist, actor, critic, poet, screenwriter, and director. Trying to make it as a playwright and actor from 1906 to 1910, a lack of success led Gance to the cinema. He started writing screenplays and selling them to studios; a newfound belief in the medium even prompted Gance to create a short-lived production company, directing four short films between 1911-1912. His delicate health kept him out of the war and landed him a job at Film d’Art by virtue of severe personnel shortage, where Gance wrote and directed ten films. Like his contemporaries Delluc, L’Herbier, and Epstein, Gance was a strong vocal advocate for an artistic cinema that maximized the potential of the new medium. To achieve this, they made use of rhythmic editing patterns, optical devices such as masks, dissolves and multiple exposures, conspicuous camera movements and angles, and much more. They are therefore referred to as the first cinematic avant-garde and, even though their styles differed quite a bit, often categorized as French Impressionists. Today, Gance’s reputation hinges on three silent canonic masterpieces, *J’Acccuse!* (1919), *La Roue* (1923), and *Napoléon* (1927), in which, as Brownlow notes, ‘he made a fuller use of the medium than anyone before or since (1996; 518).’ |
| Abel Gance, né Abel Perthon, was a French dramatist, actor, critic, poet, screenwriter, and director. Trying to make it as a playwright and actor from 1906 to 1910, a lack of success led Gance to the cinema. He started writing screenplays and selling them to studios; a newfound belief in the medium even prompted Gance to create a short-lived production company, directing four short films between 1911-1912. His delicate health kept him out of the war and landed him a job at Film d’Art by virtue of severe personnel shortage, where Gance wrote and directed ten films. Like his contemporaries Delluc, L’Herbier, and Epstein, Gance was a strong vocal advocate for an artistic cinema that maximized the potential of the new medium. To achieve this, they made use of rhythmic editing patterns, optical devices such as masks, dissolves and multiple exposures, conspicuous camera movements and angles, and much more. They are therefore referred to as the first cinematic avant-garde and, even though their styles differed quite a bit, often categorized as French Impressionists. Today, Gance’s reputation hinges on three silent canonic masterpieces, *J’Acccuse!* (1919), *La Roue* (1923), and *Napoléon* (1927), in which, as Brownlow notes, ‘he made a fuller use of the medium than anyone before or since (1996; 518).’  [image: Gance.jpg]  Figure A Portrait of Abel Gance  <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/GANCE_Abel-24x30b-.jpg>  Selected Works:  *Mater Dolorosa* (*The Torture of Silence*;1917)  *La Dixième Symphonie* (*The Tenth Symphony*; 1918)  *J’Accuse!* (*I Accuse*; 1919)  *La Roue* (*The Wheel*; 1923)  *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance* (*Napoleon*; 1927) |
| Further reading:  (Abel, French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929)  (Abel, French Film Theory and Criticism: A History-Anthology, 1907-1939)  (Brownlow)  (Jeanne and Ford) |