**Gance, Abel (b. 25 October, 1889, Paris, France; d. 10 November, 1981, Paris, France)**

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 and a newfound belief in the medium even prompted Gance to create a short-lived production company, directing four short films in 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).

**References and Further reading**

Jeanne, R. & Ford, C. (1963) “Abel Gance,” *Cinéma d’Aujourdui* 14, Paris: Éditions

Seghers.

Brownlow, K. (1996) *The Parade’s Gone By…* , Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Abel, R. (1988) *French Film Theory and Criticism - a History/Anthology Volume I:*

*1907-1929*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Abel, R. (1987) *French Cinema: The First Wave 1915-1929*, Princeton: Princeton

University Press.

**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)

**Paratextual Material**

- A portrait of Abel Gance (<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/GANCE_Abel-24x30b-.jpg>)

- Abel Gance in his proper historical context through ads and articles in contemporary journals via the Media History Digital Library’s Lantern search tool (http://lantern.mediahist.org/?q=Abel+Gance&range%5Byear%5D%5Bbegin%5D=1896&range%5Byear%5D%5Bend%5D=1960&sort=date-start+asc%2C+title+asc&utf8=✓)

- Film historian extraordinaire Kevin Brownlow and expert musician Carl Davis explain the restoration process behind *Napoléon* in The Guardian (<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/nov/29/how-we-made-napoleon>)

- A full Abel Gance filmography can be found on the Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0304098/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1>)

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