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Presenting the Past: Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927), from Live Projection to Digital Reproduction

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the textual and contextual status of Abel Gance's *Napoléon* between 1927 and the present day. In 1927, the film was distributed in two distinct editions. Both of these copies were subsequently altered for various special screenings and a limited general release. In the sound era, Gance reused elements of his 1927 film(s) in *Napoléon Bonaparte* (1935) and *Bonaparte et la Révolution* (1971) – as well as authorizing various piecemeal assemblies of original material for screenings at the Cinémathèque française. The challenge of locating and reassembling the two primary versions of the silent *Napoléon* from this chaotic range of prints continues to occupy modern restorers. Parallel to this textual evolution of Gance's film is an equally complex contextual evolution. The addition of various soundtracks and dubbing to the silent material altered the film's mode of address. In 1927, the film was accompanied with music assembled by Arthur Honegger – but in 1935 this was replaced with recorded music by Henri Verdun. Since 1980, new generations have been able to experience the film at special screenings with music created for live performance. Various scores have been used to recreate historical modes of exhibition – resurrecting a contextual dimension lost since the arrival of sound. Accordingly, this article seeks to understand how the impact of Gance's creation has been shaped by music, sound, and performance across the eras of silence, sound, and digitization. I argue that the issue of “liveness” is essential to understanding the evolution of *Napoléon* as a work of experiential cinema – and that Gance's creation continues to challenge the way in which films may be restored and presented today.

Résumé

Cet article examine la relation entre l'état textuel et l'état contextuel du *Napoléon* d'Abel Gance de 1927 jusqu'à nos jours. En 1927, le film est distribué en deux versions distinctes. Ces deux copies sont modifiées par la suite pour différentes séances spéciales et une sortie générale limitée. Dans l'ère du son, Gance réutilise des éléments du film de 1927 dans la réalisation de *Napoléon Bonaparte* (1935) et de *Bonaparte et la Révolution* (1971), et autorise également divers montages partiels des éléments originaux pour des projections à la Cinémathèque française. La localisation et la restauration des deux versions primaires du *Napoléon* muet à partir de la diversité chaotique des copies constituent un défi qui occupe encore les restaurateurs d'aujourd'hui. Parallèlement à cette évolution textuelle, le film subit une évolution contextuelle tout aussi complexe. L'ajout par Gance de diverses bandes sonores et doublages modifie le mode d'adresse du film. En 1927, le film est accompagné par une partition musicale d'Arthur Honegger – mais en 1935, celui-ci a été remplacé avec de la musique enregistrée d'Henri Verdun. Depuis 1980, les nouvelles générations ont pu faire l'expérience de *Napoléon* lors de projections spéciales avec de la musique conçue exprès pour ce spectacle vivant. Plusieurs partitions sont employées pour recréer des modes historiques d'exposition et ainsi ressusciter une dimension contextuelle perdue depuis l'arrivée du son. Par conséquent, cet article cherche à comprendre comment l'impact de *Napoléon* a été façonné par la musique, le son et l'aspect performatif à travers les époques du muet, du son et de la numérisation. Nous affirmons que la question de performance en public est essentielle pour comprendre l'évolution de *Napoléon* comme une œuvre de cinéma expérientiel, et que la création de Gance présente un questionnement par rapport aux façons dont les films sont restaurés et présentés de nos jours.

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PRESENTING THE PAST: ABEL GANCE'S *NAPOLÉON* (1927), FROM LIVE PROJECTION TO DIGITAL REPRODUCTION

by Paul Cuff

Napoléon has led many lives, experienced many deaths, and undergone more than one resurrection. This extraordinary masterpiece of silent cinema has defied countless efforts to rationalize and control its immense size – even Abel Gance seemed uncertain how to best to tame his creation. In 1927, *Napoléon* had two premieres in Paris: the first at the Théâtre de l'Opéra, the second at the Apollo. Each event presented a different edition: the “Opéra” version was four hours long, the “Apollo” version over nine hours. While the longer copy contained more material, only the shorter copy boasted two “Polyvision” sequences – triptychs that required three projectors to produce a vast widescreen effect. However, in the next few years the distinction between Opéra and Apollo editions blurred as Gance and his distributors dismantled and rearranged *Napoléon* to explore a wide range of aesthetic and structural options.¹ In the sound era, the director cannibalized material from his 1927 film to make *Napoléon Bonaparte* (1935) and *Bonaparte et la Révolution* (1971).

Yet the history of *Napoléon* should not be seen solely in terms of textual alteration: the context in which the film may be experienced has undergone considerable change. In 1927, the film was exhibited within a culture of live performance; the subsequent imposition of synchronized sound fundamentally altered the film's mode of address. In the 1980s, Kevin Brownlow's work not only restored a physical text of the silent *Napoléon*, but enabled the film to be seen in theaters accompanied by a full orchestra. By tracing the evolution of Gance's film from the silent era to the present day, this paper will examine the ways in which *Napoléon* demonstrates a conceptual and practical engagement with ideas of “liveness” and the cinematic experience. As well as analyzing the importance of the film's varying modes of presentation, I will highlight the challenges that Gance's work presents for its exhibition in the digital era.

Synchronizing performance

For Gance, the cinematic process enabled a literal and metaphorical reanimation of the past. More than a historical biopic, *Napoléon* was conceived as a kind of communal resurrection. The screenplay for the film was written in 1924 at the palace of Fontainebleau, in the very rooms where Napoléon had resided as Emperor. After witnessing Gance at work, Jean Arroy reported that the director was involved in an “evocation of the afterlife” – and that his creative method could be “mistaken for a spiritualist séance.”² Before filming began in January 1925, Gance gave a speech to his cast and crew, urging them to “rediscover” their ancestors by “resurrecting” the collective consciousness of the Napoleonic era. This mass reincarnation would generate a force “capable of sweeping away all critical barriers” and infusing spectators with a “miraculous” power drawn from history.³ His words must have had some effect: one visiting journalist likened the director to a “god,” and his recreation of the Napoleonic era to a new “birth of Christ.”⁴

This rhetoric may be fanciful, but it was spoken with sincerity and taken seriously by many people at the time. During production, lead actor Albert Dieudonné was twice mistaken for the ghost of the real Bonaparte: first by an elderly guard at Fontainebleau, later by a group of shepherds in rural Corsica.⁵ When historian Élie Faure saw this performer on screen for the first time, his “uncanny” likeness to Bonaparte provoked a deep “anxiety”: “Napoléon’s spirit lives again in [Dieudonné],” he exclaimed.⁶ Gance’s film begins with a quotation in which Bonaparte seems to address the filmmaker 100 years in advance: “I should like to witness my posterity, and discover what a poet would make me feel, think, and say.” The director later said: “It was not I who made this great film, but Bonaparte himself” – and scenes photographed in 1925 were simply the events of 1793 reliving themselves.⁷

Gance made extraordinary technical efforts to give audiences of *Napoléon* a sense of history in the present tense. Cameras were attached to the chest of their operators, enabling spectators to walk into the film as if they were a character; other cameras were put on sleds and pushed into the action, mounted on mobile guillotines and on pendulums to swoop over crowds, strapped on horseback to gallop through battles, plunged into the sea to feel the force of waves. Throughout *Napoléon*, our perspective is dazzlingly multiple: we see the action from the viewpoint of its every participant, and even from the viewpoint of the space in which the action is taking place. This camerawork is designed to wrench viewers from the safe vantage point of historical distance, and immerse them into the dangers of a living past.

This idea of communion between art, performers, and audience is at the heart of Gance's ideology of the cinema. The director wrote that the projected world on screen was not simply a mechanical document, but a "miraculous space" in which audiences might live and believe for the duration of the performance. Cinema should be a participatory experience – a total transformation of the world for those inside the theater.⁸ Such process is depicted within several of Gance's early films. In *La Dixième Symphonie* (1918), the audience that Enric Damor (Séverin-Mars) has invited to hear his new symphony witnesses the "transfiguration" of the composer and his music. Gance presents the experience of music as a visual hallucination: his images are seen simultaneously by on- and off-screen audiences. This eponymous "Tenth Symphony" signifies the evolution of artistic expression: from the "choral" symphony of Beethoven's *Ninth* to the visual symphony of Gance's *Tenth*. Similarly in *J'accuse!* (1919), the process of Jean Diaz (Romuald Joubé) reading aloud his poetry provokes a series of lyrical visions shared by audiences within and beyond the film.

It is important to note that the musicality of such sequences was not simply confined to the internal rhythm of filmic imagery or montage, but externalized through live performance within the theater. A special score by Michel-Maurice Lévy accompanied screenings of *La Dixième Symphonie*, and Gance prepared detailed notes regarding music and sound for *J'accuse*.⁹ At a special exhibition of the latter in January 1929, Gance asked Joubé to perform a live recital of verse to accompany sequences of visual poetry.¹⁰ For his scene depicting a large crowd singing "La Marseillaise" in *Napoléon*, Gance went even further to achieve this involvement. Under Gance's direction, the score compiled by Arthur Honegger (with the assistance of Charles Gourdin) allowed room for spectatorial participation. The theatrical audience of *Napoléon* would be provided with printed copies of "La Marseillaise" and encouraged to sing along with the live accompaniment of orchestra, chorus, and soloist. The film score enabled this communal ritual to unite audiences and musicians with their counterparts on screen – a superb reconciliation of live and recorded performance.

The arrival of sound at the end of the 1920s had profound consequences for this participatory aspect of cinema. In America, recorded sound was promoted as a kind of aesthetic democracy: each screening would possess musical accompaniment of uniform quality, regardless of the size or wealth of an individual theater. However, as Michael Slowik demonstrates, the advocates for sound failed to address the contextual consequences of this textual "improvement." Some of the only people to produce vocal opposition to the imposition of new technology were cinema musicians, who faced sudden and widespread unemployment. As evidenced by the bru-

tal treatment they received, sound rendered extinct the “human element” of the film experience that these artists had provided throughout the silent era. Theatrical variety was replaced by a standardized, mechanical delivery of accompaniment – a type of music that the American Federation of Musicians derisively termed “canned” or “robotic.” Though their anger was chiefly in response to job loss, the argument in defense of “live” cinema presented by performers was also aesthetic:

Live music was a visible attraction that could potentially vie for the audience’s attention via its immediacy and spontaneity. By the late 1920s, music increasingly became another behind-the-scenes technical aspect of the film experience, produced by a faceless entity and piped into the auditorium via the less personal technology of the loudspeaker.¹¹

The mere fact of a recorded soundtrack fundamentally alters the nature of a film text: it preserves performers and fossilizes performance. Only after the coming of sound could Walter Benjamin classify film as “the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction”¹² – or André Bazin claim cinema was “missing” the “presence” that made live theater more “morally uplifting.”¹³ Silent cinema never conformed to such assumptions: historically, it offered a way of reconciling recorded reality and live performance. If the images on screen were mechanically reproducible, the musicians in the theater provided an accompaniment that was entirely particular to place and time. This kind of experience is denied by the isolated quality of recorded sound:

Before the advent of sound recording, a live musical performance retained some of the awe that music engendered when it was still entirely immersed in religious rituals [...]. One approached the event with heightened expectations, with the awareness that one had to pay close attention because the performance was unique and not to be repeated again.¹⁴

In spite of these apparent restrictions, Gance welcomed the idea of “sonorized” cinema. “When I think of everything that can be added to the power of silence, I don’t hesitate for a moment,” he said in 1929. “The music of sound in the Seventh Art – which new Wagner will be able to orchestrate it?”¹⁵ Recorded sound tallied with Gance’s view of the director as a kind of “symphonist” and suited his conception of film as a musically oriented art. To him, the technological idea of “synchronism” was suggestive of far more than simply aligning sound with image. Rather, sound offered the potential to develop the immersive aspect of cinema. He explicitly rejected the notion of “the dialogued film” in favor of what he called “the great visual and sonorous symphony” possible through synchronism. Such a work would “capture universal sounds and movements” from nature, “offering them to our amazed eyes and ears like a magnificent and divine gift.”¹⁶ Pursuing this idea, Gance patented his “perspective sonore” system in August 1929 – and extended

this invention with André Debrie in March 1932. In this “perspective” arrangement, speakers were to be placed on all four walls, the floor and ceiling, as well as behind the screen. Sound could be relayed between any number of them at different times, enabling the action to extend into the auditorium. By regarding sound as another layer of expression with which to draw the spectator into the drama of the screen, “the eruption of words and sounds into the visual poem” of cinema would “enrich [our art] enormously by opening up unexplored domains of nature and narrative.”¹⁷

Gance’s first sound film was *La Fin du monde* (1930), an epic drama detailing the cataclysm of a comet colliding with the earth – and mankind’s rebirth as a united society in its wake. Though he planned an innovative use of “orchestrated” sound in combination with an array of visual experimentation, the film’s most ambitious designs proved unrealizable with the available technology. The production quickly spiraled out of control, and the resultant film was taken out of Gance’s hands and radically reshaped. The critical and financial failure of *La Fin du monde* was ruinous to its author’s career – and necessitated the pursuit of projects that were far smaller in scale. After directing or supervising a number of quickly-made commercial films (*Mater Dolorosa*, 1932; *Le Maître de forges*, 1933; *Poliche*, 1934; *La Dame aux camélias*, 1934), Gance returned to his Napoleonic project in 1934. The director added new sound sequences to the footage he had shot nine years earlier, and used many of the original cast to synchronize their voices with the pre-recorded performances. By relying primarily on existing material, Gance found a more economical way of producing a “new” film – and (through dubbing) simplified the task of “orchestrating” audio-visual layers.

Napoléon Bonaparte is set in March 1815, when a group of followers loyal to the exiled Emperor gather in a popular printing press to recount their memories of the glorious past. Surrounded by images of the lost Empire, their aural accounts of Bonaparte’s rise to power trigger flashbacks that consist of scenes from Gance’s 1927 film. The contrast between old and new modes of audio-visual address is particularly evident in the sequence set at the club des Cordeliers, in which the on-screen performance of “La Marseillaise” is synchronized with a sound recording of soloists and chorus. Though most of the 1935 montage is taken from the footage of 1927, Gance inserts one significant new scene. This consists of a single shot, mimicking the view from a balcony within the Cordeliers’ church. On the right of frame, we see a small group of *sans-culottes*; the background of the image is occupied by a back-projected long shot taken from the silent version. A man on the right of frame turns almost directly to the camera and cries out: “What about you? Are you deaf? You can’t sing with us? Well, come on! Sing!” It is a startling disrup-

tion of what is otherwise a continuous section of footage from 1927. Gance allows his characters to address the audience, encouraging their participation in the events on screen. (When *Napoléon Bonaparte* was presented with the addition of “perspective sound” at the Paramount cinema in May 1935, the sense of immersion in the Cordeliers scene was surely enhanced by the diverse arrangement of speakers.) The sonorization of this sequence attempts to find an alternative method of engaging the theatrical spectator. However, though the aim may be the same, the method is different. Footage from the silent *Napoléon* has not only been extracted from its original textual body but removed from the context of live performance. In 1927, orchestra and singers performed “La Marseillaise” *directly* within the theater; in 1935, the recorded action on screen is mediated by figures within the film. Voices on the soundtrack provide only the recorded illusion of interaction, not its live actualization.

The conflation of silent and sound material in *Napoléon Bonaparte* causes a continual disjunction of space and time. The silent *Napoléon* was filmed at a camera speed of between 18 and 20 frames per second, while material from 1935 was shot at 24 fps (the standardized rate for sound recording). This discrepancy causes fluctuating visual rhythms in *Napoléon Bonaparte*, as well as actors having to synchronize different eras of performance by speeding up their delivery. Direct-recorded voices from 1935 are slow, stately, and theatrical – but dubbed voices must gabble to keep up with the increased velocity of their incarnations from 1927. This rhythmic oddity is particularly acute when the same actor appears in footage from both periods: though all their scenes are set in the same time, Marat (Antonin Artaud), Robespierre (Edmond van Daële), and Masséna (Philippe Rolla) age nearly ten years in between shots. The visual condensation of these different layers never overcomes the fundamental problem of their aesthetic difference: the figures of 1935 struggle to involve themselves with the action of 1927. In a new scene near the end of the film, Masséna and Bonaparte perch awkwardly on the right of frame, peering at a back-projected image on the left that shows cavalry charging across the Italian landscape. Rather than encouraging the audience to thrill in the prospect of action, Gance (unintentionally) imbues the spectacle with pathos. These actors are looking back at their youthful comrades, failing to maintain the pretense of being in step with cinematic continuity. It is as if the characters were themselves viewing Gance’s silent work as the source of participatory action – and longing for its return.

Aesthetically and narratively, *Napoléon Bonaparte* is concerned with this distance between the creativity of the past and the reproduction of the present. The film’s setting within a print works is deeply significant. The characters are surrounded by

huge two-dimensional illustrations of battles, and old veterans stand next to life-size reproductions of their young selves. Their situation mirrors that of the film: old and new footage is juxtaposed, past and present are made to interact. When the character Capucine (Marcel Delaître) uses a magic lantern to bring to life images of Napoleonic campaigns, Gance uses vertical wipes to transit between live-action and still images. The apparatus of modern cinema thus mimics the historical effect of glass slides overlapping during an illustrated lecture. Gance affirms the link between fictional and real spectators: for audiences of 1935, *Napoléon Bonaparte* has the same function as the magic lantern for the on-screen audience of 1815. This subtle means of connection is evocative, but the effect is very different to the kind of connection established in the silent *Napoléon*. The sound film's characters are witnesses, not participants; they reflect on the lost ideal of a living past, consuming mass-produced images in the hope that their content will one day be reanimated. By so cleverly mirroring 1815 with 1935, Gance isolates the real audience as well as the fictional one.



Fig. 1. Foreground figures from 1935 overlook background footage from 1927 in *Napoléon Bonaparte*.

Napoléon Bonaparte ends with the arrival of news that the Emperor has returned to France from the island of Elba. Bonaparte himself passes through the streets, but the old, scarred veterans are only able to see his silhouette against the wall. They drag themselves in the wake of the general's gathering army, hoping to rejoin their comrades – but their ancient bodies are unable to sustain them on the march. Years seem to pass and still, they whisper to the camera, Bonaparte is out of reach. In a series of close-ups, Gance shows the last strength drain from these living fossils of previous wars; they fall into silence and stop. A final, lingering close-up of one of

their number dissolves into a still image of his face, freezing the man's movement within the confines of the frame. A second dissolve transforms this still photograph into a charcoal etching of his features – and a third changes this illustration into a sculpture. The camera finally tracks backwards to reveal that the form of the soldier belongs to a relief carved into the side of the Arc de Triomphe. The Napoleonic spirit becomes petrified; we await some future resurrection to lift these bodies from the stone of the monument and allow them to reach their destination.

By retrogressing from the moving images of cinema to the static images of plastic art, Gance's haunting vision draws attention to the fossilization of creative energy. Regretfully, the use of sound throughout *Napoléon Bonaparte* perpetuates this same effect of disengagement: recording technology annuls the power of participatory action found in the silent *Napoléon*. Even if the lost dimensions of “perspective sound” were to be restored to it, *Napoléon Bonaparte* would likely retain a feeling of temporal displacement. The film reflects the decline of Gance's own artistic authority in the 1930s, and signifies awareness that the triumph of his first *Napoléon* was receding ever further into history.

The author as curator

Gance's final effort to rework his Napoleonic project was *Bonaparte et la Révolution*, a four-hour film released in 1971. As well as using footage from his *Napoléon*, *Napoléon Bonaparte*, *Austerlitz* (1960), and *Valmy* (1967), Gance added new live-action material, still photographs, and voiceovers. It is perhaps more rewarding to consider the result of this assembly as a kind of historical documentary about its author's earlier projects. In this regard, *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is the culmination of numerous projects aimed at memorializing the medium in which Gance worked. As early as October 1916, the young filmmaker noted that the potential “weakness” of a film's impact on an audience was the brevity of its performative life. Once seen, a film is soon forgotten. The “strength” of a publicly-exhibited work would be enhanced if it was possible to “quietly replay it at home”. This domestic contemplation of a film allows the viewer “to identify the beauties that the atmosphere of the theater often masks.”¹⁸ In the 1910s, the director envisaged illustrated literary editions of his films; by the 1920s, he was more ambitious about film distribution beyond the cinema.

In 1923, Gance planned to circulate his series of Napoleonic films “through every school, college, and university.” *Napoléon* would be “the first film classic for schools,” a fact which could “double its commercial value.”¹⁹ That same year, he proposed the creation of a cinematic encyclopedia, which would involve using

short films as a form of cultural memory bank for humanity.²⁰ As well as this social benefit, the distribution of documentaries could also serve as valuable publicity. The effort Gance put into recording his major productions resulted in significant films in their own right. A great deal of behind-the-scenes footage was taken during the filming of *La Roue* (1922), and this material was subsequently edited by Blaise Cendrars into *Autour de la Roue* (1923). Cendrars' documentary was released in cinemas at the same time as *La Roue*, announcing itself as a "prologue in two parts" to Gance's feature.²¹ In 1925, even more elaborate projects were planned to document *Napoléon*. The first was to be the *Revue Napoléon*, a special magazine containing images, anecdotes, and updates from the shooting. Published in multiple issues before and during the film's exhibition, 20,000 copies were to be circulated among popular news kiosks, as well to "cinema establishments, [...] schools, societies, and more generally to any organization liable to appreciate Gance's efforts." The second initiative was to be an exhibition hosted by the musée des Arts décoratifs at the pavillon de Marsan (part of the Louvre) in October 1926. As well as displaying numerous props and costumes from *Napoléon*, this would feature "daily demonstrations of cinematography" by one of Gance's assistant directors and other film technicians.²² While neither of these plans was realized, a detailed record of the filming process was made by the cameramen. Their footage was assembled by Jean Arroy into *Autour de Napoléon* (1928), which premiered at the newly opened Studio 28 in Paris. This documentary was originally the length of a feature film and provided comparative sequences from behind-the-scenes and from *Napoléon*.²³

By the time he came to make *Bonaparte et la Révolution*, Gance had been trying to promote and expand this same Napoleonic project for nearly half a century. Posters for his 1971 film announced that it had been "45 years in the making," and its first sequence is a prologue in which Gance explains the history of his creation. In this monologue, the author directly addresses his film: "Rise up from your tomb – and speak!" In *J'accuse*, Jean Diaz summons the dead from the earth with these same words; in *Bonaparte et la Révolution*, Gance resurrects celluloid from rusting cans. This was as much an effort at self-regeneration as it was an attempt at film restoration. Though *Bonaparte et la Révolution* represents a resurgence of his creative ambitions, Gance had been fighting critical oblivion for some considerable time – he had already professed to believe himself a member of the "living-dead."²⁴ In an address at the memorial service for Jean Epstein at Cannes in 1953, he announced: "I too have a mouth filled with earth [...] I too have been killed by French cinema; this is one dead man speaking to you about another!"²⁵ To the detriment of this project of reanimation, the prologue of *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is bereft of cinematic imagination. This scene is distinguished from the subsequent film by being

shot in color, yet the flat lighting and drab colors of the wood-paneled interior make it aesthetically torpid. Gance sits in the center of this generic office space, his bright red jumper incongruously vivid amid his bland surroundings. Although he addresses the camera, he continually relies on paper notes that lie on his otherwise empty desk. The awkwardness of this delivery is exacerbated by the discontinuous cutting between establishing shot and close-ups. Lacking curatorial panache, Gance renders himself a quaint exhibit.

Gance's career had been strongly influenced by the showmanship and self-promotion of American directors like D.W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille. In the intertitles Griffith provides for his epics *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), historical footnotes act as markers of authenticity and as boasts of laborious research. Gance replicated this strategy in the silent *Napoléon*, and peppered much of his work with quotations from diverse authors. He also appeared at the beginning or ending of his early films, making his presence felt by more than just the authorial initials with which Griffith signed his intertitles. Particularly when compared to the glamorous appearance of DeMille in the prologues and trailers for his own films, Gance's on-screen charisma is strikingly earnest and self-reflexive. In the opening of *La Roue*, his face appears superimposed over multiple views of the film's railyard environment: Gance is absorbed into the texture of the image, affirming his role as both author and subject of the text. In the silent *Napoléon*, his presence as Saint-Just allows the opportunity to play with his dual role as author and actor – tacitly acknowledging the camera's gaze in a scene in which he monitors the fate of his characters.



Fig. 2. The elderly Abel Gance plays the young Saint-Just in *Bonaparte et la Révolution*.

This authorial presence is far less subtle in *Bonaparte et la Révolution*. By 1971, Gance was 45 years older than he had been when he filmed the silent *Napoléon* – and 55 years older than the historical Saint-Just had been when he died in 1794. Despite this gap, the director insisted on reprising his role. Though the scenes of Thermidor are taken primarily from the 1927 film, new footage shows Saint-Just in silhouette at the end of a dark passageway, supposedly a gallery overlooking the Convention. The camera approaches no further than a mid-shot of the character, but even here the silhouette is clearly that of an elderly man and not a youth. Gance's age is equally tangible in the timbre of his voice, in spite of the echo effect that is applied to his speech. While the soundtrack seeks to hide the unflattering quality of this direct-recorded sound, the noise of the crowd to which Saint-Just responds is retrospectively dubbed. This sense of dislocation is enhanced when Gance cuts between Saint-Just and the hall: the members of the Convention have bodies from 1927 but voices from 1935 or 1971.

Obscured in shadow and separated from his audience, it is as though Saint-Just is speaking from beyond the grave and seeks to hide his ravaged body from the lens. There is a piquant contrast between Gance's attempt to give the words of Saint-Just new life and the tentative exhibition of his own corporeal frailty. When his speech from the gallery is finished, Saint-Just turns slowly around and ascends the staircase towards the camera. His silhouette looms closer and closer to the lens, until it blocks our view entirely. Gance's next cut takes us from 1971 to 1927, while the soundtrack takes us from 1971 to 1935. When we see Saint-Just enter the Convention, the painful slowness of his gait visible in the previous scene has gone – he now walks with faster-than-life agility. From his reticent position in the shadows of the gallery, Saint-Just's youthful frame and bearing have been magically restored, his face is revealed in a fully-lit close-up, and his voice is piercingly alacritous. This extraordinarily bizarre sequence is potent evidence of Gance's refusal to let the material constraints of reality interfere with his personal vision.

Throughout, *Bonaparte et la Révolution* attempts to defy the dispersive effects of time. By seeking to reconcile past and present, Gance's 1971 film compounds all the manifold problems of asynchronism evident in *Napoléon Bonaparte*. Actors age several decades between shots, or else rediscover their youth in a fraction of a second. Every aspect of filmstock, photography, lighting, sound balance, and performance style is in riotous disagreement. Gance's use of static illustrations and still photographs places further disjunctions within the visual rhythm – and makes the juxtaposition of different media even more disconcerting. While live-action material dates from anywhere between 1927 and 1971, Gance's illustrations and still photographs have a historical range between 1789 and 1971.

This assembly of diverse source material was a longstanding feature of Gance's work. In the silent *J'accuse*, he reuses wartime newsreel footage of battlefield destruction – and his screenplay suggests incorporating unused footage from *La Zone de la mort* (1917) and *Ecce homo* (1918);²⁶ in *La Roue*, Gance takes a pivotal shot of a train crash from Maurice Tourneur's *The Whip* (1917); in *La Fin du monde*, large amounts of newsreel footage are used to show the effect of extreme weather conditions around the world; in *J'accuse!* (1938), Gance reuses newsreel footage from the 1910s, and (in the film's climactic sequence) recycles footage shot for *La Fin du monde*. *Bonaparte et la Révolution* goes further than any of these earlier examples. It owes the majority of its physical body to the repurposed parts of filmic predecessors. Rather than being a coherent or self-sustained work, *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is a palimpsest that muddles together all of Gance's earlier projects. In 1971, this once masterful editor was apparently impervious to the problems of textual compatibility: every seam and stitch is horribly visible.

In 1938, Rudolf Arnheim argued that sound was an entirely different expressive format to the image of film. These two “voices” possessed “intrinsic contradictions of principle”; overlaying one with the other was as absurd as an attempt to “put a sound in a painting.”²⁷ In *Bonaparte et la Révolution*, Gance attempts something very similar. Nearly half a century after the fact, it was a prodigious feat to find words for the mute lips of 1927 – a restorative effect that many contemporary reviewers deemed “supernatural.”²⁸ Yet there are also “silences that can never be filled by sound”²⁹ – and the very efforts taken to reconcile material from contrasting eras only serve to accentuate their difference. Though the film makes every effort to deny it, the truth is that the author of *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is exiled from his text by dint of time. The aesthetics of 1971 cannot be reconciled with those of 1927 or 1935, just as the Abel Gance of 1971 cannot be the Abel Gance of 1927. The author's first and last Napoleonic films are “as distant in conception, vitality, and execution as they are in time.”³⁰ *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is a museum that preserves the remains of its previous incarnations – it is a work which can but speak of history and of itself in the past tense.

The possibilities of live cinema

To help finance *Bonaparte et la Révolution*, Gance sold the rights to all versions of *Napoléon* to his new producers: Claude Lelouch and Films 13. Having surrendered legal control over his film in order to save it, Gance said that he had emerged “triumphantly defeated” from negotiations with Lelouch's lawyers.³¹ Although Henri Langlois claimed that a precedent agreement gave him the right to distribute Gance's silent version, *Bonaparte et la Révolution* was deemed the “definitive” edi-

tion: legally, *Napoléon* was now a sound film.³² Ironically, this occurred at the same time that others were trying to restore a silent edition. Marie Epstein and the Cinémathèque française assembled a lengthy version of *Napoléon* during the 1960s, but the most extensive work was carried out by British film historian Kevin Brownlow. Screenings of his first revivals gathered enough critical and financial interest to reassert the status of the silent *Napoléon*: after much negotiation, Lelouch eventually ceded the rights to distribute new editions.³³

By 1980, Brownlow had established a copy that ran to nearly 300 minutes, including the final triptych – and the length of this edition continued to increase as new footage was discovered within and beyond the archives of the Cinémathèque française. What would distinguish these restorations of *Napoléon* would be the fact they were shown in cinemas with a full orchestral score – something that had not happened since 1927. For its presentation in the UK, American composer Carl Davis created an ingenious blend of repertory classical music with newly-written themes. He conducted the live premiere of Brownlow’s restoration in London in November 1980, the success of which enabled the British Film Institute to support a number of subsequent performances. These live shows were a revelation to audiences and critics. There was “no praise too high” for Davis’s score, which was hailed for exactly capturing the “vivid, dramatic force” of the film: “the music seemed integral to the images on screen.”³⁴ For Bernard Levin, it was a “model” of “sympathetic and intelligent” accompaniment – and an essential part of the “vast, dazzling, and profound experience” of *Napoléon*.³⁵

The triumphant success of the film was repeated in North America, where it was released through Francis Ford Coppola’s company Zoetrope in 1981 – accompanied by an orchestral score by his father Carmine Coppola. To make the film a more viable commercial prospect, Brownlow’s restoration was reduced in length by removing a number of scenes and projecting the film at 24 fps. The fact that this version of *Napoléon* was shown at sound speed also enabled subsequent prints to be distributed with Coppola’s music on a pre-recorded soundtrack. This method proved its financial worth, guaranteeing the film’s viability in the modern marketplace – but the way in which it was sold garnered criticism. Many observers felt that “the omnipresent names of the distributor and the composer completely overwhelm that of the original author”;³⁶ on American advertisements, Gance was an “insignificant” presence “somewhere at the bottom.”³⁷ The score also received predominantly “unfavorable reactions” from critics, particularly those who had seen *Napoléon* with Davis’s music.³⁸ François Vallerand deemed Carmine Coppola’s work an “abomination,” finding it “disconcertingly trite and banal, lacking any serious melodic or thematic idea, [and] swathed in an orchestration that is both

sickly and noisy”; experienced live, it was proof that “bad music could destroy a good movie, even a masterpiece.”³⁹ Coppola’s version of *Napoléon* has been compared with Giorgio Moroder’s 1984 edition of *Metropolis* (1927), which similarly reissued a silent film at a fast frame-rate with a controversial recorded soundtrack.⁴⁰

Many of those who felt that the aesthetic choices of the American edition were “barbarous”⁴¹ (or evidenced “nepotism”⁴²) also expressed a preference for a more “authentic” historical score. Miklós Rózsa said that Carmine Coppola was a “terrible composer” in comparison to Davis, but “neither of them was Honegger” – and it was “crime” not to resurrect a score close to the “original.”⁴³ Much of this postulation took place before the surviving music for *Napoléon* was reconstituted by Swiss composer-conductor Adriano in 1987. The idea of a single “lost” score is also misguided. Honegger’s involvement with the film was fraught with difficulties and disagreements – not only did the composer have to revise his work, but most screenings in the silent era used other arrangements. Nor were contemporary reviews of Honegger’s score enthusiastic. At the Opéra premiere in 1927, commentators felt that the musical accompaniment was “impossible”: “one couldn’t imagine a more atrocious cacophony, nor one so devoid of interest.”⁴⁴ Notably, when creating the soundtrack for *Napoléon Bonaparte*, Gance chose to commission new music from Henri Verdun rather than to restore Honegger’s original score.

Nevertheless, in 1992 Marius Constant adapted and expanded surviving musical material to accompany the exhibition of Bambi Ballard’s new edition of *Napoléon*, undertaken for the Cinémathèque française. Purportedly “returning Honegger to his place” in the “collective, promethean enterprise”⁴⁵ of Gance’s work, Constant actually gives the composer’s work much greater prominence than had been the case in 1927. (In this regard, Davis’s balance between new and historical work – including music by Honegger – is far closer to the method of accompaniment afforded *Napoléon* in the silent era.) Having deemed Coppola’s score “laughable,” “amateurish,” and “frightful” in 1982,⁴⁶ Royal S. Brown was subsequently surprised that the revived music of Honegger possessed less “modernism” than he had anticipated – though Constant’s arrangement fell “just short of spectacular.”⁴⁷ However, as a live performance, it has not proved popular: at screenings in 1992, the press reported that many spectators fell asleep before the first interval.⁴⁸ Despite the expense of its commission and creation, Constant’s full score is very rarely heard – and has received little attention outside France. Adriano had led the revival of Honegger’s film music, but he concluded that Davis’s score for *Napoléon* was in fact “the most effective and practical” option for modern revivals – and the “most in accord with Gance’s intentions.”⁴⁹

If the style of these rival scores varies, what unites them is their practical involvement in the resurrection of *Napoléon*. All three were used for numerous live performances across the world between 1980 and the present day. Yet it was not just Gance's work that benefited from such presentation. The huge success of *Napoléon* enabled the restoration of other silent films through the sponsorship of Thames Television and the efforts of Photoplay Productions, a company founded by Brownlow with David Gill and Patrick Stanbury. These men were seen as "evangelists" for the silent era, and fought to ensure that every film they restored was shown in theaters with an orchestral score.⁵⁰ Most of this was newly-composed music, but they also found and performed the best surviving scores from the 1920s. This was restorative collaboration on a huge scale: their work saw the revival of 29 silent feature films between 1980 and 2007, and Davis continues to create new scores. The historical importance of these restorations cannot be underestimated: *Napoléon* paved the way for a renaissance in silent film accompaniment and a critical re-evaluation of cinematic presentation. Bernard Eisenschitz wrote that the live *Napoléon* "reopens the very issue of 'silent' cinema."⁵¹ Davis's music allowed modern audiences to experience early cinema as "a form of total art that is profoundly alive"; these performances "brought a unique dynamic to the music's juxtaposition with the film – and created a unique sensory dimension" to its life in the cinema.⁵² Having undertaken projects for contemporary television and cinema, Davis said that his experience with silent films forced him to be less "mathematically minded" in his working method – responding to live projection encouraged a closer relationship with the images themselves. In the theater, he and the orchestral performers learned to develop a "rapport with the screen": while the films remained an "unvarying" constant, the musicians became "the human factor" lost to cinema since the advent of sound.⁵³

The new wave of live performances in the 1980s demonstrated that an alternative model of cinema presentation was possible in the modern era. Having experienced several of the "Thames Silents" revivals, music critic Michael Walsh noticed that "the live element of the performance commands a certain respect and attention" and the "absence of spoken words" makes audiences all the more attentive to the art before them.⁵⁴ The phenomenal presence of these films revealed cinema's lost link with performance – and its physical engagement with spectators. As Greg Giesekam writes, theater creates "a complicitous relationship in which the audience shares the challenges [faced by the performers] in working with the mediated imagery" – live art "implicitly acknowledges the spectators' role in completing the performance."⁵⁵ This spirit also has practical implications for festivals and specialized distribution. Preservationist Marijke de Valcke reminds us that "events taking

place in actual space and time are more capable of creating a festive atmosphere” and attracting audiences. Permanent availability of films through digital distribution is “less likely to create the right setting for this type of highly attentive media consumption.”⁵⁶

To this model of live cinema, one must also add the performative role of technicians. The presentation of film art in the twenty-first century calls for a communal exertion of a different order to the mounting of digital cinema. By returning to earlier exhibition practices, such events challenge the process of depersonalization begun by the apparatus of sound (which eliminated live accompaniment) and exacerbated by digital technology (which eliminated the projectionist). Just as Gance required a team of assistants to design and construct numerous pieces of bespoke equipment for the film, so modern theaters require specialist help to mount *Napoléon*. Most prominently, the Polyvision system demands the assembly of special lamps, motors, and shutters. This is a film that involves creative endeavor and whose exhibition must be rehearsed according to the unique requirements of each venue. These elements make the cinema akin to a theater: it becomes a living environment, not simply a mechanical outlet. Each screening is a unique event, formed within a particular space at a particular time. Silent cinema is a communal experience created by (and shared among) film audience, film musicians, and film technicians.

The impact of this performative context is profoundly important – for the aesthetic power of cinema exists not merely on the screen, but extends into the auditorium. *Napoléon* offers the perfect example of this principle. In the triptych sequences, the screen itself magically expands to fill the whole width of the theater. Equally, the live orchestra vivifies the film: its images may be pre-recorded, but the film is enacted at every presentation. In June 2014, a screening of Brownlow’s version of *Napoléon* at the Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam featured a triple screen measuring 40 meters in width and 10 meters in height. If the content of film images remains the same regardless of their projected size, the contextual difference between small and large screens is immeasurable. The climax of *Napoléon* shows Bonaparte leading his army across the frontier of France, fulfilling his earlier promise to the “ghosts” of the Revolution to liberate Europe from the tyranny of kings and to establish the “Universal Republic.” As this regenerative force pours forward, an eagle soars overhead in the sky – a literal and metaphorical manifestation of Napoleonic energy. To see Gance’s eagle spread its wings across a 40m screen, accompanied by the tremendous orchestral surge of Davis’s score, is to encounter the cinematic sublime. The effect is both emotional and physiological: it is a moment that takes your breath away, that shakes you in your seat, that makes your heart thunder with ex-

citement. This giant bird is an embodiment of aesthetic and narrative potential – flying out into the future, expanding the limits of the film frame. The experience of *Napoléon* is created not only by the dimensions of the enlarged frame, but by the gasp of the thousand spectators at its revelation – by the sensation of orchestral sound traveling through space to reach your body – by the vibration of the floor reeling in response to the applause of those around you. This is the realization of Gance’s desire to make each spectator feel that they “belong to a group with a concrete, real existence.”⁵⁷ At the end of *Napoléon*, the desire to applaud the experience of the film is overwhelming. Thanks to the presence of conductor and orchestra, there are artists in the theater who can receive an audience’s appreciation and reinforce the connection between creative processes and active reception.

This collective experience was at the heart of the “Thames Silents” series launched by *Napoléon* in 1980. These restored films were not “lost” in the sense of physical destruction, but “lost to the audience for which they were made.”⁵⁸ Brownlow acknowledged the irony of this project being sponsored by a television network (Thames Television/Channel 4): despite the necessity of broadcasting all restorations on the small screen, these films were “designed for big screens, large theaters, and equally large audiences.”⁵⁹ His comment illustrates the essential dilemma of reviving early cinema in the modern era. In order to achieve maximum revenue, a silent film must sacrifice its presence within a particular time and space. Economic considerations necessitate that audiences be measured in numbers, regardless of where these people are located. An audience of thousands might see *Napoléon* in a theater, but millions might see it on television – even if they are no longer watching a work of *cinema*. Interviewed in 1973, Gance reaffirmed his commitment to a form of “epic” art that mimicked the huge theatrical spectacles of ancient Greece: “I wanted the audience to come out of the theater amazed victims, completely won over, emerging from paradise to find, alas, the hell of the street. *That* is the cinema!”⁶⁰ Scale was vital to this vision: Gance explained that this kind of cinematic experience was available only in the theater, and mourned the loss of giant auditoria. Producers seemed to prefer partitioning theaters that could seat several thousand spectators into multiplexes whose screens accommodated mere hundreds – “as if they were meant for television.”⁶¹ Clearly, the new Delphi or Athens could not be created inside someone’s living room.

Though it launched a new era of live cinema, *Napoléon* is the most problematic silent film to show in this ideal context. The Cinémathèque française is currently undertaking a new restoration of the film, scheduled for release in 2017.⁶² This print is estimated to reach 400 minutes and will include the final triptych – echoing the tradition established by Brownlow’s edition, though replicating the problem of

what to do with the additional scenes present only in the single-screen ending of the Apollo version. In January 2015, Georges Mourier introduced the miraculous work being undertaken on this project – and screened a preview of the restored Apollo montage of the Cordeliers sequence.⁶³ Visible for the first time since 1927 was the precision with which Gance visualizes “La Marseillaise” in performance: each line and word of the anthem is carried across multiple close-ups of different faces. It is a tour-de-force of editing, and clearly the most sophisticated of all Gance’s many versions of this sequence. Equally fascinating was the way in which Mourier’s digital working copy renegotiated the technical and performative aspects of the film’s history. Gance used the text of “La Marseillaise” to construct his visual montage in the 1920s, just as the song was a template to reconstruct the sequence in the 2010s. Yet the digital synchronization of “La Marseillaise” from commercial recordings in 2015 also replicated the sonorization of the scene for *Napoléon Bonaparte* in 1935. Though voice artists in any future live performances will have to adapt their tempo to that of Gance’s montage, Mourier’s preview evidenced the possibilities of manipulation possible with digital technology – and offered a glimpse of how the silent *Napoléon* will play with “canned” sound on Dvd.

Ironically, progress towards a lengthy original state pushes the Cinémathèque française restoration further away from the possibility of its live performance. In 1927, the Apollo version was designed to be shown in episodes across multiple days or weeks; in the modern era, there is no place for a film which requires this kind of exhibition. *Napoléon* may be more coherent in the longest possible edition, but it is extremely unlikely to be shown in this format under anything other than exceptional circumstances. It cost \$720,000 to mount four live performances of *Napoléon* in San Francisco in 2012 – and to record a musical score for commercial release would require another tremendous sum.⁶⁴ Such expense can only be reclaimed by realistic distribution strategies: domestic distribution is more readily profitable than live exhibition. The 2010 edition of Lang’s *Metropolis* offers an interesting point of comparison. As with *Napoléon*, a significant amount of “lost” footage was discovered and incorporated into a new restoration, which then received commercial release with a symphonic score. This edition of *Metropolis* was released across multiple platforms: in theaters as a live performance with orchestra, on television as both live and recorded broadcast, in cinemas as digital recording, and as home entertainment on Dvd and Blu-ray. This proved hugely successful for Lang’s 250-minute film; a 400-minute version of *Napoléon* might struggle to match such widespread distribution.

In addressing this problem, digital exhibitors are forced to make the same choices faced by their predecessors in the 1920s. Gance’s strategy of releasing abbreviated

and extended versions of *Napoléon* in 1927 allowed for greater commercial flexibility, but also caused the textual anomalies that continue to dog restoration work 90 years later. His actions may give precedent for modern distributors to play cut-and-paste with *Napoléon*, but the way in which this is done should aim to vindicate rather than censure Gance's multiplicative film. A short version (akin to the Opéra *Napoléon*) would be much easier to fit onto screening schedules (either as a live performance or as a broadcast), while a long version (akin to the Apollo *Napoléon*) would have to sacrifice convenience for a more "complete" presentation. Dvd/Blu-ray distribution will also play an essential role in satisfying these competing requirements. Domestic formats can more easily provide the public with a wide range of historical material, which in this case is considerable. Although the Opéra *Napoléon* has always been considered less artistically successful than the Apollo version, there is surely an ethical responsibility to make Gance's premiere edition available for fresh evaluation. Equally, Dvds will free the Apollo *Napoléon* from commercial time constraints, making accessible all the surviving material from this "definitive" edition. However *Napoléon* is shown, it is to be hoped that the 2017 release of Gance's creation reaches the largest possible audience – this is, surely, the ultimate purpose of film restoration.

Since its first frames of celluloid were exposed to light in 1925, *Napoléon* has been subjected to a series of physical and moral trials: censorious cuts have reduced its length, time has eroded its body, sound has colonized its voice. From live presentation to recorded broadcast, this film has been shown in almost every conceivable format – and its financial future can only be secured by adapting once more to new technology. On Dvd, Gance's creation will finally conform to the definition of a work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction: physical celluloid will be disembodied as video; physical performance will be disembodied as soundtrack. This transferral from the space of the theater to the space of the home will mark the most fundamental change to its life on screen. Seen on a television or a computer monitor, the eagle's open wings can no longer be cinematic. Divorced from their theatrical life, the images of Polyvision may be denied their transformative capabilities. Regardless of the convenience of small-screen distribution, it will be a great loss to our historical and aesthetic understanding if we lose touch with Gance's masterpiece as a phenomenal reality. For *Napoléon* is a film that realizes its true potential only in the cinema: as a living, performative work of art.

I offer my thanks to Georges Mourier for his detailed and extremely helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

Notes

- ¹ See Georges Mourier, “La comète *Napoléon*,” *Journal of Film Preservation*, n° 86, 2012, p. 35-52; Georges Mourier and Paolo Cherchi Usai, “Restoring *Napoleon*,” 42nd Telluride Film Festival, 2015, <http://www.telluridefilmfestival.org/assets/pdfs/NAPOLEON-handout-FINAL.pdf> (all electronic references were last accessed 19 October 2015).
- ² Jean Arroy and Jean-Charles Raynaud, *Attention ! On Tourne !*, Paris, Tallandier, 1929, p. 34.
- ³ Abel Gance, “Proclamation” to the cast and crew of *Napoléon*, 4 June 1924, BnF, Paris, département des Arts du spectacle, 4-COL-36/554 [Abel Gance].
- ⁴ Léon-Gabriel Gros, “Gance tourne au soleil,” *Le Feu*, 1 August 1926.
- ⁵ Kevin Brownlow, “*Napoleon*”: *Abel Gance’s Classic Film*, London, Photoplay, 2004, p. 51-3; Jean Arroy, En tournant “*Napoléon*” avec Abel Gance. Souvenirs et impressions d’un sans-culotte, Paris, Plon/La Renaissance du Livre, p. 54-6.
- ⁶ Élie Faure, “*Napoléon* ou l’imposteur,” *Comœdia*, 9 May 1927.
- ⁷ Abel Gance, Interview with Laurent Drancourt and Thierry Filliard, *Abel Gance, une mémoire de l’avenir* [documentary film], 1980.
- ⁸ Abel Gance, “Autour du moi et du monde : le cinéma de demain”, *Conférencià*, vol. 23, n° 18, 1929, p. 289-90.
- ⁹ Abel Gance, Notes for the use of music and sound in *J’accuse*, October 1920, BnF, Paris, département des Arts du spectacle, 4-COL-36/551, [Abel Gance].
- ¹⁰ Abel Gance, Letter to Romuald Joubé, 28 January 1929, Cinémathèque française, Bibliothèque du film, Paris, GANCE120-B46. This performance of *J’accuse* was held on 30 January 1929 for members of a pacifist organization called “Pour supprimer ce crime : La Guerre.”
- ¹¹ Michael Slowik, *After the Silents: Hollywood Film Music in the Early Sound Era, 1926-1934*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 80-1.
- ¹² Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn, London, Pimlico, 1999, p. 211-44.
- ¹³ André Bazin, “Théâtre et Cinéma (Suite)”, *Esprit*, vol. 19, n° 7/8, 1951, p. 234-5.
- ¹⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*, New York, Harper Perennial, 2008, p. 109-10.
- ¹⁵ Pierre Heuzé, “Abel Gance nous dit sa foi dans le film parlant,” *Cinémonde*, July 18, 1929.
- ¹⁶ Abel Gance, Interview in “Le Film sonore – Qu’en pensent nos réalisateurs ?” *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 138, 1929, p. 10.
- ¹⁷ Abel Gance, “Images d’hier, voix de demain,” *Cinéopse*, n° 125, 1930, p. 25.
- ¹⁸ Abel Gance, *Carnet IV*, January 1915-May 1917, BnF, Paris, département des Arts du spectacle, 4-COL-36/458 [Abel Gance].
- ¹⁹ Abel Gance, Proposal and resume for six-film Napoleonic cycle, 15 September 1923, BnF, Paris, département des Arts du spectacle, 4-COL-36/554 [Abel Gance].

²⁰ Abel Gance, “Rapport Confidentiel sur la nécessité de la création d’une bibliothèque internationale du cinéma en films d’une bobine”, March 1923, Cinémathèque française, Bibliothèque du film, Paris, GANCE491-B101.

²¹ *Le Nord Marocain*, 10 October 1923, BnF, Paris, département des Arts du spectacle, 4-COL-36/552 [Abel Gance]. The original list of titles proves that this fascinating documentary was considerably longer than the 320-meter copy that survives. List of intertitles for *Autour de la Roue*, n.d. [1923?], Cinémathèque française, Bibliothèque du film, Paris GANCE-242-B72.

²² La Société des Films Abel Gance, “Procès-verbal de la séance du Conseil d’Administration”, 4 February 1925, Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé, Paris. (My thanks to Élodie Tamayo for bringing this material to my attention.)

²³ *Autour de Napoléon* ran to 1605 meters, approximately 70 minutes at 20 fps. The introductory title at the premiere reads: “These documentary scenes from a great film were captured by surreptitious cameras and never intended to be shown to the public – this is why they have a thousand imperfections. However, we feel justified in demanding them from Abel Gance because they are the most striking evidence of the scale and detail of his work”. List of intertitles for *Autour de Napoléon*, 10 January 1928, BnF, Paris, département des Arts du spectacle, 4-COL-36/555 [Abel Gance].

²⁴ Sophie Daria, *Abel Gance : Hier et demain*, Paris, La Palatine, 1959, p. 9.

²⁵ Abel Gance, “Mon ami Epstein,” *Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 50, 1955, p. 57-8.

²⁶ Abel Gance, Screenplay for *J’accuse*, October 1917, Cinémathèque française, Bibliothèque du film, Paris, GANCE117-B45.

²⁷ Rudolf Arnheim, “A New Laocoön: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film,” 1938, in *Film as Art*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1957, p. 199-203.

²⁸ Kevin Brownlow, “Bonaparte et la Révolution,” *Sight and Sound*, vol. 41, n° 1, 1971-2, p. 19.

²⁹ Steven Philip Kramer and James Michael Welsh, *Abel Gance*, Boston, Twayne, 1978, p. 113.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

³¹ Kevin Brownlow, “Napoleon”: *Abel Gance’s Classic Film*, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

³² *Ibid.*, 211.

³³ The exceedingly complex legal history of *Napoléon* can be found in *ibid.*, p. 197-242. See also Sean French, “The Napoleon Phenomenon,” *Sight and Sound*, vol. 51, n° 2, 1982, p. 96.

³⁴ David Robinson, “Masterpiece of cinema triumphantly reincarnated,” *The Times*, 5 December 1980.

³⁵ Bernard Levin, “Tonight, Josephine, even if it costs you £15,” *The Times*, 7 January 1984.

³⁶ Bernard Eisenschitz, “The Music of Time: From *Napoleon* to *New Babylon*,” *Afterimage*, n° 10, 1981, p. 49.

³⁷ Sean French, “The Napoleon Phenomenon,” *art. cit.*, p. 96.

³⁸ Bernard Eisenschitz, “The Music of Time: From *Napoleon* to *New Babylon*,” *art. cit.*, p. 49.

³⁹ François Vallerand, “Musique de films : Napoléon... Coppola... et les autres,” *Séquences*, n° 108, 1982, p. 44-5.

- ⁴⁰ Vincent Pinel, "Pour un déontologie de la restauration des films," *Positif*, n° 421, 1996, p. 93.
- ⁴¹ Royal S. Brown, *Film Musings: A Selected Anthology from Fanfare Magazine*, Lanham (Maryland), Scarecrow Press, 2007, p. 25.
- ⁴² François Vallerand, "Musique de films : Napoléon... Coppola... et les autres," art. cit., p. 44.
- ⁴³ Royal S. Brown, "Interview with Miklós Rózsa" (1988), in *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, p. 277.
- ⁴⁴ J.K. Raymond-Millet, "Napoléon à l'Opéra," *La Lanterne*, 15 April 1927.
- ⁴⁵ François Amy de la Bretèque, "Des compositeurs de musique viennent au cinéma : le 'Groupe des Six'," *1895: Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze*, n° 38, 2002, p. 22-3.
- ⁴⁶ Royal S. Brown, "Delusions of Musical Grandeur", *Fanfare*, vol. 5, n° 3, 1982, http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/atop/05_3/0533220.aa_Delusions_Musical_Grandeur.html.
- ⁴⁷ Royal S. Brown, "Film Musings," *Fanfare*, vol. 18, n° 2, 1994, http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/atop/18_2/1825620.zz91_BY_ROYAL_S_BROWN.html.
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- ⁴⁹ Adriano, liner notes for *Honegger: Film Music*, Marco Polo 8.223134, 1991, compact disc.
- ⁵⁰ Nicholas Wapshott, "The growing sound of the silents," *The Times*, 29 November 1982.
- ⁵¹ Bernard Eisenschitz, "The Music of Time: From *Napoleon* to *New Babylon*," art. cit., p. 49.
- ⁵² Hubert Niogret, "Musiques pour un art silencieux," *Positif*, n° 299, 1986, p. 55.
- ⁵³ Mundy Ellis, "Crowd Music," *Sight and Sound*, vol. 50, n° 4, 1981, p. 224.
- ⁵⁴ Michael Walsh, "Sounds of Silents," *Film Comment*, vol. 23, n° 4, 1987, p. 69.
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- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ Steven Philip Kramer and James Michael Welsh, "Film as Incantation: An Interview with Abel Gance," *Film Comment*, vol. 10, n° 2, 1974, p. 21.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21-2.
- ⁶² La Cinémathèque française, "Lancement de la restauration du *Napoléon* d'Abel Gance (1927)," February 2015, <http://www.cineamatheque.fr/fr/actualites/lancement-restauration-napoleon.html>.
- ⁶³ "Dialogue et conférence autour de la restauration de *Napoléon*," Festival Toute la mémoire du monde, 29 January 2015, La Cinémathèque française, Paris. The sequence from

the new restoration that was shown at this event has been made available online at <https://vimeo.com/118610388>.

⁶⁴ Manohla Dargis, “*Napoleon* Is Lost, Long Live *Napoleon!*” *New York Times*, 18 March 2012.