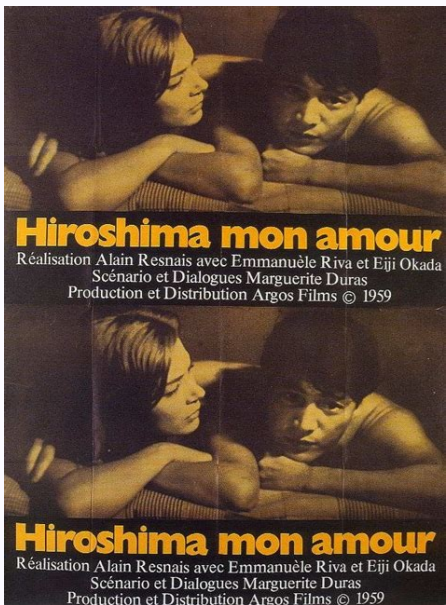
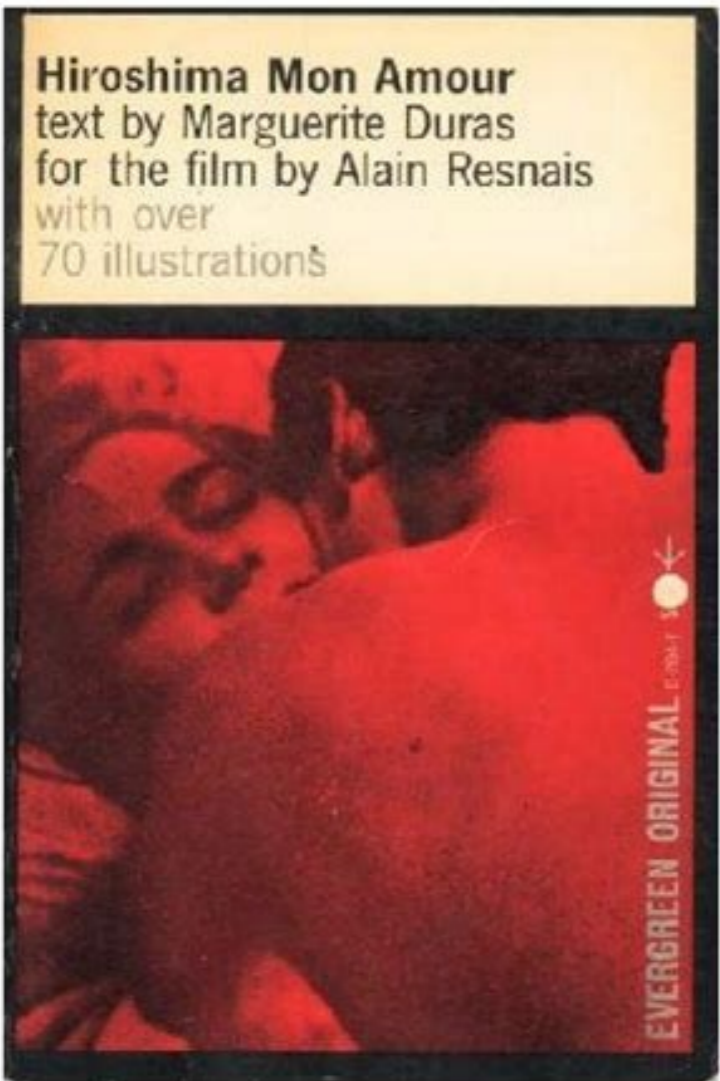
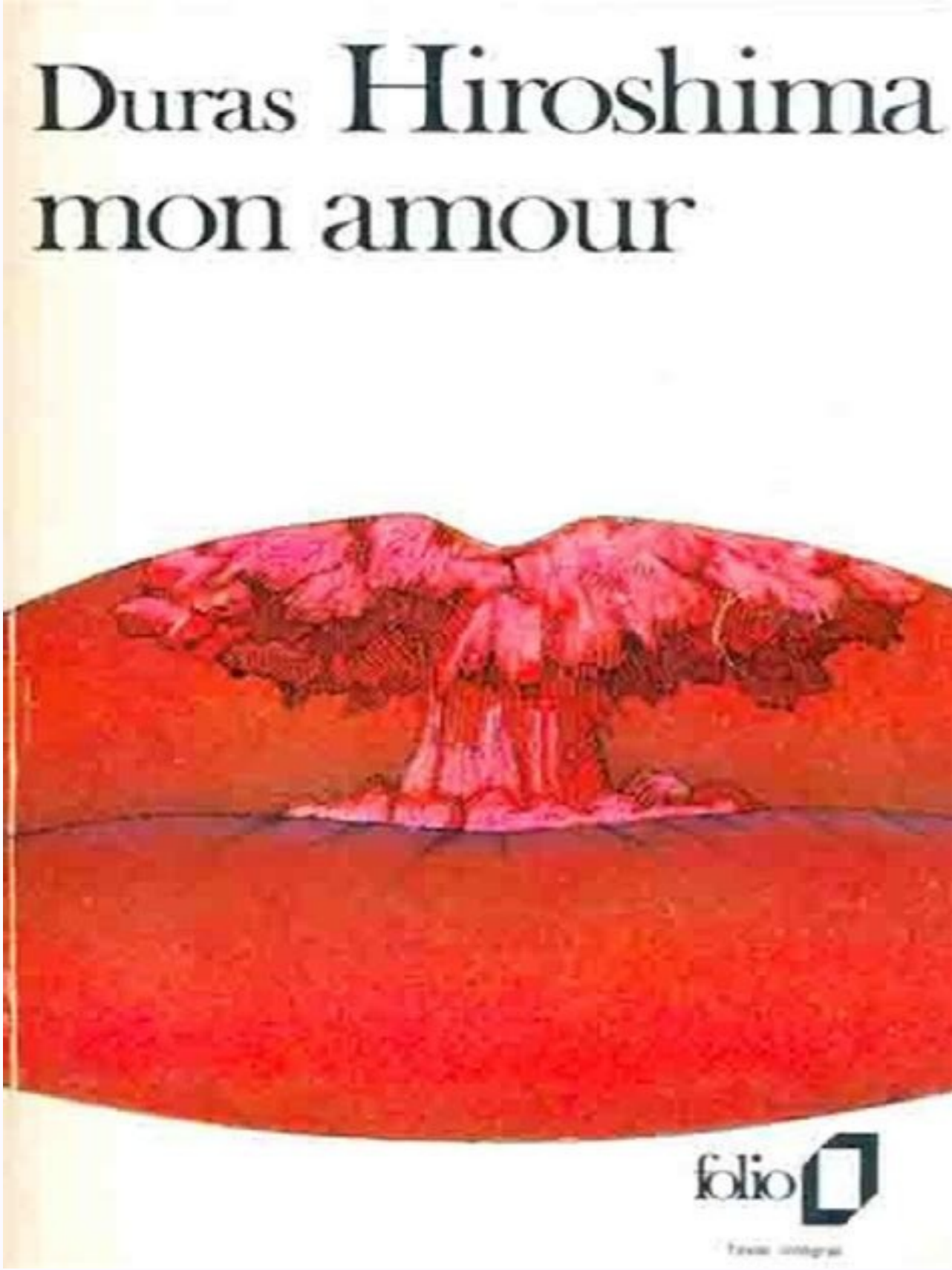
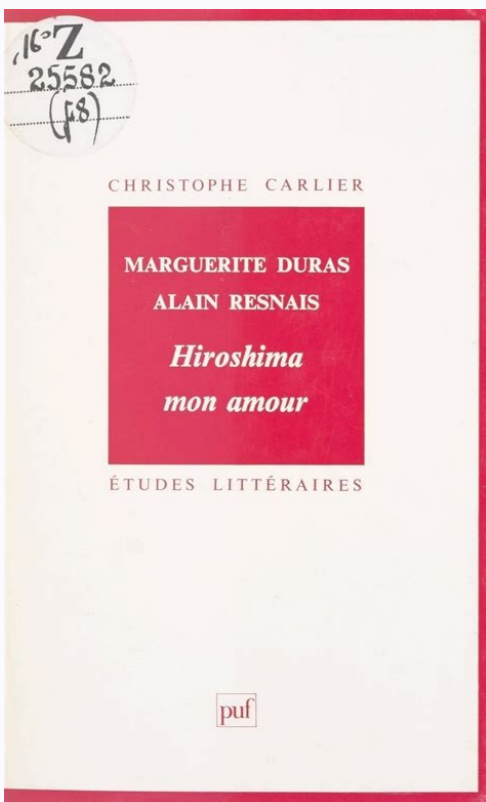
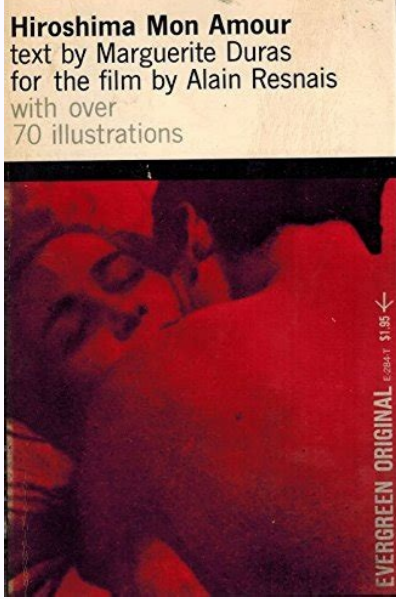


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Alain Resnais (1959) The word became flesh—and then through theologians it became words again. SO SAID KARL BARTH, one of the great theologians of the twentieth century. Something similar can be said of films—scriptwriting becomes cinema, then through essayists it becomes writing again. And so here I am, a filmmaker, writing about films which I believe transcend the written word. But I have a long history with, and deep affection for, both theology and criticism; the point of them both, of course, is that while theology is not God and journalism is not cinema, they are human tools we use to better understand and experience the ineffable. French critics of the fifties and sixties were uniquely concerned with the fundamental question encapsulated by André Bazin's book series What Is Cinema? I answer that question for myself in different ways at different times. I often distinguish movies from films, the former being made as a conscious manipulation of the audience, the latter with a trust and expectation that the audience will interact with their own thoughts, feelings, and inferences of meaning. And while I love and make movies, my first love will always be films. And of the many films I have come to love, a small handful I love in purely personal terms, divorced of objective analysis, because they fuse so deeply with my own experience during certain seasons of my life. The latest film to burn itself into me this way is Alain Resnais's beguiling Hiroshima Mon Amour. Set in the Japanese city of Hiroshima fourteen years after it was A-bombed, the film defies any prior narrative structure and can justifiably be said to lack any real story at all. We watch two lovers—a visiting French actress and a Japanese businessman—as they are drawn into a two-night affair. The beginning of the film is a documentary-style production-within-a-production about the devastating effects of Hiroshima's nuclear holocaust. During the war, the Japanese man had been away fighting for his country while the woman was in Nevers, France, falling madly in love with a German soldier who would only come to die in her arms. More than a decade later, the two meet in a café, spend the night together, then tell each other they are currently happy with their spouses. Neither seems particularly bothered by their mutual infidelity, nor does it seem as if such affairs are uncommon for them. But the film has nothing to say about marriage or adultery—the lovers and their spouses are never even given names. What then happens in Hiroshima Mon Amour is that this chance encounter deeply dislodges both the man and the woman from their former selves—the Japanese man because of his unexpectedly powerful feelings of longing and love for the woman, and the woman because of how the man unexpectedly draws out long-buried and profoundly painful memories of her past. They talk at length about their own erupting emotions, sometimes while lying in each other's arms, sometimes walking the mesmerizing nighttime city streets, and sometimes sitting in a bar drinking heavily to mitigate their mutual anguish. The film uses an unprecedented free-form structure that blends past and present, evoking constant questions about the nature of memory. How and why do we remember what we remember, and also forget what we forget? This is a deeply empathetic film, spellbinding and hypnotic with gorgeous black-and-white photography, counterintuitive score, and powerful close-ups of the couple's emotional anguish. There are layers of beauty here, but what hooks me deepest is the raw honesty. I understand and relate to the experience of these people in agony, wrestling with overwhelming emotions and painful pasts—things too big to be reckoned with in isolation. Strangers have at times unexpectedly dislodged me from my old self when I came to love them, and even more so if they left—sometimes through death—increditing my sense of self with the nuclear blast of true love and loss. A signature line in the film has taken on two different meanings for me at different times. Near the beginning of the film, and then again near the end, the woman tells the man, "You're destroying me. You're good for me." When I first saw the film in graduate school, and when I revisited it again two years ago, I understood that line to be an expression of her tortured inability to separate from him or to remain with him, as either choice was too painful to accept. Rewatching Hiroshima Mon Amour again this year, I now understand her line not so much as an expression of inner conflict, but as her honest and grateful acknowledgement of the transformative power of their unforeseen human collision and separation. When someone comes along who unexpectedly shatters my currently constructed self, in time I am re-formed into someone else. Hopefully someone better. You're destroying me. You're good for me. Scott Derrickson is a director whose films include Doctor Strange, Sinister, and The Exorcism of Emily Rose. Image depends on its subscribers and supporters. Join the conversation and make a contribution today. + Click here to make a donation. + Click here to subscribe to Image. The Image archive is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. This modernist masterwork began as a documentary commission from Japan's Dai-ichi Studios, secured for Alain Resnais by producer Anatole Dauman. Resnais decided that the bombing of Hiroshima and its impact needed a fictional narrative, brought writer Marguerite Duras onto the project, and worked with her to create a story—of a French actress (Emmanuelle Béart) who goes to Hiroshima to make a film and has an affair with a Japanese architect (Eiji Okada)—that would unfold "in two tenses... the present and the past coexist." Few films have had such a lasting, wide-ranging impact. Hiroshima mon amour is a devastating experience on every level: visually, sonically, emotionally, intellectually. Restoration by Argos Films, Fondation Groupama Gan, Fondation Technicolor, and Cineteca Bologna, with support from the CNC. A Rialto Pictures release. Hiroshima, mon amour is in many ways our Citizen Kane: between Duras and Resnais the film seems to express all the possibilities of cinema magically encapsulated in just 92 minutes—at once a radical formal experiment, a philosophical dissertation on memory and trauma, and an endlessly moving love story. The themes of memory and time expressed with this level of formal sophistication are in many ways still unmatched in film history... It was the eye-catching formal elements that first impressed us, but revisiting it during the years it is the psychologically complex love story that has made the most lasting impression.—Joachim Trier and Eskil Vogt Cast & crewUser reviews17viaA French actress filming an anti-war film in Hiroshima has an affair with a married Japanese architect as they share their differing perspectives on war.A French actress filming an anti-war film in Hiroshima has an affair with a married Japanese architect as they share their differing perspectives on war.A French actress filming an anti-war film in Hiroshima has an affair with a married Japanese architect as they share their differing perspectives on war.126User reviews136Critic reviews Hiroshima Mon Amour is brilliantly made and brilliantly acted, with a thoughtful, poetic script by the great French writer, Marguerite Duras. Its images are lyrical, disturbing, fascinating, and its anti-war message is profound and still frighteningly relevant. But in terms of strict entertainment... Any film which begins with abstracted images of the entwined body parts of human lovers, slowly becoming encrusted with ash and (presumably) atomic fallout... and then spends an obscure 15 minutes arguing about the death and disfigurement of multitudes during the atomic bomb blast in Hiroshima, and the nature of memory and forgetfulness... well, you realize immediately that this movie isn't set up to go anyplace fun. Unless your idea of "fun" is witnessing someone else's graphic misery without the cleansing catharsis that accompanies a more conventional tragedy. Hey, some people enjoy that kind of thing! Not me, but to each his/her own.Despite a structure which is famous for meandering through time, the film's narrative is fairly cogent and non-confusing, which is a plus. But the central illicit, inter-racial affair between a French actress and the Japanese architect whom she hooks up with during a film shoot in Hiroshima... It doesn't really make any sense. From the tiny acorn of a chance hookup, grows a mad-passionate love affair based almost entirely on memories dredged from the actress' past, which she disgorge to the architect, rather like a colorless Scheherazade, as she loses all rational connection to the present, conflating a youthful indiscretion with a deceased German soldier (and her subsequent descent into madness) with the non-happenings surrounding her current Japanese amour. German, Japanese... clearly, she can't tell these Axis races apart! I understand that the point of the film was not to create strict narrative coherence, but rather to delve into some kind of symbolic and psychic clash between this cold-yet-overwrought union of a French woman and her obsessed Japanese lover, and the horrors of War. But, despite some moments which are outright absurdist in effect, the overall tone of the film is grinding in its humorlessness. As I watched the characters fatalistically surrendering to their doom, all I could think was, "man, that Marguerite Duras must have been a drag to be romantically involved with." I mean, the Duras script, for all it's poetic symbolism and intellectual brilliance, etc etc, tells a story of people who are criminally passive and hopelessly clingy. Love seems to transform her characters into mere victims, of love, of war, of life, masochistically reveling in their own operatic suffering while doing virtually nothing. As the nameless SHE recalls her own suffering during her madness, scraping her fingertips off on the saltpeter-encrusted walls of her parent's cellar-prison, then receiving validation of existence by luxuriously sucking her own blood from her ravaged hands because otherwise she is utterly alone, all I could think was... Oh brother! This character is so badly damaged, how did she ever manage to get happily married before she embarked on this chance affair in Japan? The imagery is fabulous and intense, but are these really human beings that could have plausibly embarked on a journey together? One human being, actually, because the Japanese architect is little more than a handsome cipher of "love"... love, in this story, apparently meaning the obsession that arises from the act of physical copulation, an experience which is equated with destruction of the nuclear holocaust variety. So, Marguerite Duras clearly had issues surrounding her expression and experience of sexuality. And the film betrays little in the way of empathy, either, the characters are infused with an undercurrent of intense selfishness as they struggle to connect. HE is constantly delving into HER unhappy past even though it can give neither of them any pleasure or joy. The more HE delves, the more SHE becomes hopelessly entangled, and the more obsessed HE becomes... until the cold and bitter end.At least in an opera, you get to revel in an outpouring of passion! In this bitter pill, everything is so cold and humorless... well, it really is difficult to understand why people wax enthusiastic over this film so much. There is much here to ADMIRE... but not much to love, in my opinion. Except intellectually, because the film is awash with symbolism and thought-provoking moments. As a viewing experience for the average intellectual, such as myself, however, I felt that once was enough. The time jumping and abstractions and other critically lauded elements of this movie have been done better and more entertainingly by others. Though this is the most emotionally powerful anti-nuclear statement I've ever seen, for which, as someone who had much of his family die in the Hiroshima nuclear blast, I am profoundly grateful.See detailed box office info on IMDbProSuggest an edit or add missing contentBy what name was Hiroshima, rakastettuni (1959) officially released in India in English?AnswerYou have no recently viewed pages

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