*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*/*Last Year at Marienbad*  
  
*L'Année dernière à Marienbad* is a black and white film of 1961, directed by Alain Resnais and scripted by the *nouveau romancier* (‘new novelist’) Alain Robbe-Grillet. The film is considered an example of the cinematic modernist works of the French *Nouvelle Vague*. It is one of a sequence of films from Resnais’s early career – including *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955) and *Hiroshima, mon Amour* (1959, scripted by another new novelist, Marguerite Duras) – which question the veracity of collective, historical memory. The association with this avant-garde, literary group alone could position these films in a modernistic lineage, yet it was Resnais’s editing, which evolved through this period and matured in *Hiroshima* and *Marienbad*, that was especially innovative. The plot, such as it is, concerns a man (simply referred to as ‘X’ in the script) attempting to persuade a woman (‘A’) that the previous year they met in a palatial hotel or spa and agreed to meet one year later to run away together. The modernist style ensures the narrative is elliptical and hypnagogic, which has inspired a proliferation of academic debate. For example, ‘X’, in voiceover, often suggests a shared history, which is then contradicted in the images, or repeated with differences, allowing for disparate readings. This inherent ambiguity suggests a level of human isolation and disorientation that is a prevailing theme of the art-cinema canon of the 1960s, such as in the films of Ingmar Berman and Michelangelo Antonioni.   
  
Further Reading:  
  
Armes, R. (1968) *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, London and New York, A. Zwemmer Ltd. and A.S. Barnes & co.

Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais; The Rôle of Imagination*, London, Martin Secker and Warburg Limited.

Wilson, E. (2006) *Alain Resnais*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press.  
  
Paratextual Material:  
  
The Criterion Collection trailer for *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*/*Last Year at Marienbad*:  
  
<http://www.criterion.com/films/1517-last-year-at-marienbad>

An interview with Alain Resnais about *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*/*Last Year at Marienbad*:  
  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTg_knL4cks>

A trailer for *Hiroshima mon amour*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-VgIR26Eis>

Kierran Horner

King’s College, London