

Brideshead Revisited



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF EVELYN WAUGH

Evelyn Waugh was born to wealthy parents in 1903 in London. Waugh's family moved to the nearby countryside in 1907, and Waugh enjoyed his childhood in this idyllic setting. Waugh was a clever and inventive child, writing short stories and plays from a young age. He received a scholarship to attend Oxford University but studied little during his time there. Instead, he gained a notorious reputation for his drinking and his sardonic, unconventional approach to politics and culture. During this period, he had several homosexual relationships. Waugh did not complete his degree at Oxford, and instead enrolled in art school, which he also did not complete. His first book, based on the life of the painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was published in 1927. Shortly after this, his comedic satire, *Decline and Fall*, also went into print. At the end of this year, Waugh married Evelyn Gardner, but the couple separated two years later. Waugh began to gain a reputation as a writer and worked for several well-known magazines and newspapers. He became a war correspondent, covering events in Africa and South America and travelling extensively during this period. In 1930, Waugh converted to Catholicism and married Laura Herbert. The couple had seven children. Waugh served in World War II but was undisciplined and unsuited to military life. He injured himself in a parachuting accident in 1944 and, during his recovery period, wrote *Brideshead Revisited*. This novel was extremely successful and made Waugh famous. After *Brideshead*, Waugh wrote a series of novels about Catholicism, but they did not receive the same degree of success. Waugh suffered a nervous breakdown in 1953 and, although he recovered, his health was poor after this. He died of heart failure in 1966.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Brideshead Revisited is set in the period between the end of World War I in 1918 and the beginning of World War II in 1939. Charles's early life at university reflects the post-war years of the 1920s, in which British society was recovering from the enormous loss of life and huge cultural upheaval caused by World War I. The decadence and hedonism of the 1920s, reflected by Charles and Sebastian's as students, is tempered with memories of the war among the older generation, and a nostalgia for a time before World War I. The decline of Charles and Sebastian's relationship, as time goes on, reflects the prospect of a second war which ended this brief period of respite in Europe, as international tensions began to build again in the 1930s. There are several references to

Nazism, fascism, and to the rise of Hitler in Germany throughout the novel, which were central factors in the outbreak of World War II. There is also a reference to a concentration camp, which were later discovered en masse in Germany and which were used to kill Jewish, homosexual, and disabled people, along with other minorities, throughout World War II. *Brideshead Revisited* also deals with certain cultural changes in Britain in the early-20th century, as well as the rise of consumer capitalism during this time. Businessmen, like Rex Mottram, represent new money, earned wealth, and the new class of powerful men who began to gradually outrank the old nobility and aristocracy throughout the 20th century. There are also references to improvements in living standards and social status among the lower classes in Britain. There is a decline in the popularity of using servants, and mentions of strikes and labor movements which protested low wages and the mistreatment of workers in Britain.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Brideshead Revisited is an example of modernist fiction. Although Waugh is critical of modernity, and modern art, the novel makes several references to modernist literature throughout, and uses modernist techniques such as realistic dialogue and a non-linear plot. In its depictions of Europe in the build-up to World War II, *Brideshead Revisited* is similar to Christopher Isherwood's novels *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*. Its portrayal of life for the English upper classes before and during a war is like Siegfried Sassoon's Sherston trilogy which is set before and during World War II. Waugh's depictions of the upper classes, foreign travel, and alcoholism are reminiscent of novels by F. Scott Fitzgerald, such as *The Beautiful and the Damned* and *Tender is the Night*. His distant and reserved narrator is also similar to Fitzgerald's narrator Nick Carraway in [The Great Gatsby](#). Waugh references, and was clearly influenced by, T. S. Eliot's modernist poem *The Waste Land*, which deals with the breakdown of 19th century values and cultural change in the early-20th century. In its themes of nostalgia and regret, *Brideshead Revisited* is similar to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. The theme of homoerotic male friendship, such as the implied relationship between Charles and Sebastian, is also explored in novels like *Maurice* by E. M. Forster, which centers on a homosexual relationship between male college students. Religious allegory is also used in the novel, reminiscent of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* series, which are also set during World War II and deal with the desire to escape the realities of war. *Brideshead Revisited* is also similar to [Atonement](#) by Ian McEwan, which is set partly in an English country house and partly during World War II.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Brideshead Revisited*
- **When Written:** 1944-1945
- **Where Written:** Devon, England
- **When Published:** 1945
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** Oxford, England; London, England; the British countryside; various parts of Europe; and Morocco.
- **Climax:** Charles Ryder, an agnostic who falls in love with the son of a well-known Catholic family during his youth, returns to this family's home, Brideshead, during his time as an officer in World War II.
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

Lost Love. In his memoirs, Waugh wrote that the character of Sebastian Flyte in *Brideshead Revisited* is based on Alistair Graham, who Waugh met at Oxford and with whom he had a long-term relationship. Like Sebastian and Charles in the novel, Alistair and Waugh's relationship ended when Alistair went abroad. Waugh, like Charles, left Oxford soon after Alistair's departure.

Sword of Honor. Waugh wrote in more detail about his experiences in World War II in his novel trilogy, *Sword of Honor*. The trilogy was a critical success and won Waugh a great deal of literary acclaim.



PLOT SUMMARY

In 1943, Charles Ryder is a Commander in the British Army during World War II. His company has not been deployed overseas, and they wait in England for news of their destination. They have seen little action and have spent most of their time in army camps, which are set up in abandoned country houses in the English countryside. Charles is bored and disillusioned with war when he hears that the company must move again, to another location in England. When they arrive, Charles recognizes the house. It is a beautiful country house called **Brideshead**, and he has been there many times before. It has been converted into an army barracks and much of its décor has been destroyed. As Charles wanders around the property, he is overcome with memories from his past.

Charles first comes to Brideshead as a first-year student at Oxford University. There, he meets Sebastian Flyte, the son of the wealthy English lord, Lord Marchmain, the owner of Brideshead. The Marchmain family is Catholic, and Sebastian's mother, Lady Marchmain, is known to be especially devout.

Charles meets Sebastian one night when Sebastian gets drunk and is sick in Charles's room. The next day, Sebastian invites Charles for lunch to apologize, and the two become close friends and fall in love. At this lunch, Charles also meets Anthony Blanche, a friend of Sebastian's, who is infamous on campus for his unconventional behavior and his theatrical personality. Soon after, Sebastian takes Charles on his first visit to Brideshead to meet his nanny, Nanny Hawkins, who still lives in the house and who is like a mother to Sebastian. Charles thinks the house is beautiful and is curious about Sebastian's family. Nanny tells them that Sebastian's sister, Julia, will be home for tea, but Sebastian insists that he and Charles must leave and they hurry away before Julia arrives. On the way home, Charles asks Sebastian if he is ashamed of him, but Sebastian says he does not want Charles to meet his family because they are "always taking things away from him" and will make Charles their friend instead of his.

Charles and Sebastian continue to have fun and get drunk together at university. One night, Anthony takes Charles out for dinner and tries to turn him against Sebastian. He claims that Sebastian's family is strange and "sinister," and that Charles should stay away from them. He tells Charles that Lord Marchmain left Lady Marchmain during World War I, and that Lord Marchmain now lives with his mistress abroad. Since Lady Marchmain is a strict Catholic, she will not divorce her husband. Charles is confused but does not pay attention to Anthony. Charles and Sebastian separate for the summer holiday, and Charles goes home to stay with his father, who clearly does not want him there. One day, he receives a letter with the news that Sebastian has been in an accident and is "gravely" hurt. Charles rushes to the station and catches a train to Brideshead. Julia meets him, and he is struck by how much she resembles Sebastian. Julia tells Charles that Sebastian has only broken a bone in his foot, but that he cannot travel and wants Charles to stay with him through the summer. Charles is relieved and immediately agrees to stay. Julia leaves them the next day, and the boys enjoy a blissful summer together. Sebastian invites Charles to visit his father in Venice. Lord Marchmain lives with his mistress, Cara, whom Charles likes very much. One afternoon, Cara warns Charles that Sebastian is very much like his father and will become an alcoholic if someone does not stop him. Charles does not believe her, but her words unnerve him.

Charles and Sebastian return to Oxford, and Charles notices that Sebastian is depressed. His mother has asked a Catholic professor, named Mr. Samgrass (whom she has hired to write a book about her brother, Ned, who was killed in World War I) to watch over Sebastian. Charles notices that Sebastian begins to drink more than ever. One night, Sebastian is caught driving drunk while they are out with their friend Boy Mulcaster, which creates a public scandal. He is not expelled, but Charles and Sebastian are given a strict curfew at Oxford. Mr. Samgrass

keeps a close eye on them during the next term, and Sebastian seems very unhappy. The next year, Charles is invited to Brideshead for the Easter holiday, and Sebastian drinks heavily throughout the trip. One night, Sebastian gets very drunk in front of his family. Charles tries to take him up to bed, but Sebastian begins to cry and accuses Charles of spying on him for his mother. The next morning, Sebastian feels very ashamed and asks Charles if they can leave and go to stay in London with Charles's father. Charles says yes, and Sebastian goes on ahead, while Charles stays behind to explain to Lady Marchmain. Lady Marchmain is concerned about Sebastian's drinking and says that she has seen this behavior before, in her husband. She gives Charles a copy of the book that Mr. Samgrass has written, and Charles understands that Lady Marchmain wants him to spy on Sebastian. Charles will not do this, and tells Sebastian that it is them against the world. The next term at Oxford does not improve for Sebastian. He and Charles plan to rent a flat together, but Sebastian does not think Lady Marchmain will allow this. One afternoon, Lady Marchmain comes to visit and, that evening, Sebastian gets extremely drunk and is found on the university lawn. This prompts Lady Marchmain to remove Sebastian from Oxford and sends him abroad.

Without Sebastian, Charles does not want to stay at Oxford. He leaves to attend art school in Paris instead. The next time he sees Sebastian is at Brideshead that Christmas. Sebastian has clearly been drinking heavily for a while, and he is accompanied by Mr. Samgrass, who was paid by Lady Marchmain to take Sebastian on a historical tour of Europe. Mr. Samgrass gives them a slideshow of photos from the trip, and Charles recognizes Anthony Blanche in some of the pictures. Charles despises Mr. Samgrass and thinks that he has something to hide. Charles later discovers that Sebastian ran away from Mr. Samgrass and went to live with Anthony, whom they ran into by chance on their trip. Mr. Samgrass has not told Lady Marchmain this. Although the family tries to keep Sebastian sober throughout the holiday, he still finds a way to get drunk. One day, he goes out fox hunting with the family, but, midway through the hunt he escapes to a village pub and gets drunk on money that Charles has given him. Lady Marchmain is furious, and Charles leaves Brideshead that day and thinks that he will never go back.

Not long after this, Charles hears that Lady Marchmain is dying and that she would like to see him. He goes to Brideshead and meets Julia there. Lady Marchmain is very ill, and Julia asks Charles if he could try and find Sebastian, who is still abroad. Charles goes to Morocco, where Sebastian is known to live. Charles finds that Sebastian is in a relationship with a German man named Kurt, whom he lives with, and that Sebastian is still an alcoholic and currently hospitalized with a lung disease. Charles tries to persuade Sebastian to return to England once he is better, but Sebastian says that Kurt needs him and is

determined to stay in Morocco. Lady Marchmain dies while Charles is abroad. Charles leaves, deflated, and returns to Paris alone.

Ten years later, Charles is a successful architectural painter and is married to a woman named Celia. Although his work is very popular, he finds it uninspiring and plans a trip into the South American jungle in the hope that this will grab his attention. After several months, he returns to New York and meets his wife there. Their relationship is awkward, and Charles has not forgiven Celia, who was once unfaithful to him. They travel back to England by boat, and Charles meets Julia on board. Julia is unhappily married to a businessman named Rex, and has renounced Catholicism in order to marry him. Charles is immediately attracted to her, and the pair spend a long time talking. Not long into the crossing, a terrible storm breaks out and Celia is seasick. Charles and Julia are not affected by it. They spend the whole week together, and eventually begin an affair. After two years, Charles and Julia agree to divorce Celia and Rex and to get married themselves. Julia thinks there will soon be a war in Europe, and wants to be married before this. Charles agrees, and proceedings are set in motion. Julia's older brother, Brideshead, announces that he is also engaged to a woman named Beryl Muspratt. He tells Julia that he cannot introduce his fiancée to her while she is still married to Rex but is in a relationship with Charles. Julia becomes extremely upset, and Charles begins to suspect that Julia regrets her decision to leave the Catholic Church.

Not long after this, Lord Marchmain tells the family that he will return to Brideshead. He arrives with Cara, and it is immediately clear that he is very ill and will soon die. As his death approaches, Brideshead and his younger sister, Cordelia, who are both very religious, begin to pressure Julia and Charles to let Lord Marchmain have a priest present when he dies. Lord Marchmain has renounced Catholicism and is very hostile to the Church. Charles is totally against the idea, but Julia seems unsure. Eventually, as Lord Marchmain's death draws near, Julia summons a priest, Father Mackay, and Lord Marchmain renounces his sins and receives a final blessing. Charles is horrified at first, but soon realizes that this has always been inevitable. After this, Julia breaks up with Charles because she says she must return to the Catholic Church and cannot get a divorce or remarry. Charles leaves her bitterly and despises her.

World War II breaks out in 1939, and Charles joins the army. As he wanders around Brideshead, which has been converted into a military base, he is upset at the destruction the soldiers have caused. However, after he visits the chapel, which is now open and used by the soldiers, he begins to think that perhaps there is a purpose to all the change and upheaval caused by the war. It is implied that this experience in the chapel marks Charles's conversion to Catholicism. In light of this, Charles begins to feel that he cannot control how things change over time, and this

makes him feel better and inspires him to have hope for the future.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Charles Ryder – Charles Ryder is the protagonist and narrator of *Brideshead Revisited*. He is a middle-aged Captain the army, in charge of a Company during World War II. He is a misanthropic, reserved, and unhappy individual. Charles dislikes the modern world and has been disappointed with his experiences during World War II. As a young man, he thought that warfare was glorious and noble, and he is disillusioned by the mundane realities of war. Throughout the novel, Charles looks back on his life and examines his memories, which flood back to him one spring morning when his company are sent to a country house called **Brideshead** Castle. In his youth, Charles is a passionate and romantic young man, who is eager for love and for life experience. He is middle-class, well educated, and attends Oxford University. Although Charles has been given a conventional British upbringing, he longs for experience beyond this. He is curious about other cultures, enjoys travel, and is drawn to people who are unconventional and who break social taboos. At Oxford, he meets and falls in love with Sebastian Flyte, an eccentric young man, and becomes entangled with his family, the Marchmains, who own Brideshead Castle. Eventually, Sebastian descends into alcoholism and erratic behavior, and drops out of Oxford to move abroad, leaving Charles behind. Charles, a lifelong artist, builds a career for himself as an architectural painter in Sebastian's absence. He despises modern art, however, and believes that everything from the past is grander and more beautiful than the present. This parallels with Charles's general distaste for the present and idealization of his youth and past relationship with Sebastian. He dislikes fashionable British society, which he marries into when he meets his wife, Celia, and finds his peers shallow and disingenuous. Even as he gets older, Charles is very idealistic and tends to romanticize the past rather than see it objectively. He is deeply affected by his early relationship with Sebastian and is clearly a highly sensitive and loving individual. His experiences with Sebastian, and later with Sebastian's sister Julia (whom Charles almost marries) emotionally scar him and make him cold and bitter toward life. Throughout his childhood and young adulthood, Charles distrusts religion and is an agnostic. He objects to Julia's return to Catholicism, which ends their relationship, but is later converted himself.

Sebastian Flyte – Sebastian Flyte is the second son of Lord Marchmain and Lady Marchmain, and the brother of Brideshead, Julia, and Cordelia. Sebastian meets Charles Ryder at Oxford University, and the pair develop a very close friendship that borders on a romantic relationship. Sebastian's

family are wealthy Catholics, and Lady Marchmain is very concerned with the family reputation and with maintaining her religious values. Sebastian is not a practicing Catholic and describes himself as “half-heathen.” Despite this, he is deeply affected by his religious upbringing, and the guilt and shame for his lack of belief never really leave him. Sebastian feels oppressed by his family's close relationships and their tight hold on him. He is very happy in his first year of Oxford because he can keep his university life and home life separate. Independence is extremely important to Sebastian and, as Charles observes, “he needs to feel free” to be happy. Sebastian is terrified of being trapped, and of adult responsibility, and frequently runs away from people who are left in charge of him throughout the novel. His attachment to a carefree, childish lifestyle is symbolized by the fact that he carries a **teddy bear** with him at university, and by his close relationship with his childhood nanny, Nanny Hawkins. Although Sebastian wants to be independent, he cannot escape his family's influence. He is financially reliant on his mother and is constantly “under surveillance” by the network of Catholic acquaintances who report back to her. Sebastian rebels against these restrictions by drinking heavily, and eventually becomes an alcoholic. He secretly despises his mother, although he does not realize this, and blames her for the fact that his father left home. It is implied that Sebastian is homosexual, and he develops a long-term relationship with a German man named Kurt later in the novel. Sebastian returns to Catholicism as an older man, although he never stops drinking, and is considered extremely holy because of his suffering. He is a lovable character throughout the novel and is liked by everyone who meets him.

Julia Flyte – Julia is the oldest daughter of Lord Marchmain and Lady Marchmain, and the sister of The Earl of Brideshead, Sebastian, and Cordelia. Charles meets Julia when she is 19 years old, and the pair take little interest in each other: Charles is preoccupied with Sebastian and Julia is busy with her social life and the realization that she will be eligible to marry soon. Julia is a reserved, composed, and stylish young woman. She is extremely privileged and confident, and treats the world and everyone in it as though they somehow belong to her. Despite her wealthy background, however, Julia worries that her Catholic upbringing will count against her when it comes to finding a husband, which is her main concern in life as a young, rich woman in the early-20th century. Julia has renounced her Catholicism and is attracted to danger and to people who are considered socially taboo. She likes to shock people, and is irritated when Sebastian gets a notorious reputation for his alcoholism, as it takes attention away from her. Despite this, Julia is quite conventional and dislikes scandal and social impropriety. She wishes that Sebastian would go abroad so that he will not embarrass the family, which eventually ends up happening. Julia becomes engaged to, and eventually marries, Rex Mottram, an ambitious entrepreneur who marries her for her social and political connections. She does this against her

mother's wishes, as Rex is divorced, and therefore cannot become a Catholic. Julia is very unhappy with Rex and divorces him for Charles, with whom she has an affair several years later. However, despite her genuine love for Charles, Julia is haunted by guilt and believes that she is "living in sin" because of her transgressions. She eventually returns to Catholicism and ends her relationship with Charles after the death of her father.

Lady Marchmain – Lady Marchmain, the Marchioness of **Brideshead**, is the estranged wife of Lord Marchmain, and the mother of Brideshead, Julia, Sebastian, and Cordelia. She is a devout Catholic and is publicly known as an extremely virtuous woman whose husband has treated her cruelly. Lord Marchmain left Lady Marchmain after he went to fight in World War I and took an Italian mistress, named Cara. Although her husband will never return, Lady Marchmain refuses to get a divorce because of her strong Catholic principals. Lady Marchmain loves her children, but she is extremely controlling and feels the need to be control all aspects of their lives. Although she is motivated by love for them, and is never angry when they transgress, she makes them feel guilty if they upset her or go against her wishes. This causes her children (particularly Sebastian) to feel manipulated, and encourages him to rebel. Lady Marchmain cannot understand this behavior because she has only ever wanted to be good and saintly. She frequently compares Lord Marchmain and her sons to her older brothers, who were all killed during World War I. This makes Sebastian feel that he cannot live up to his uncles and, instead of inspiring him to behave, increases his self-hatred and self-destructive tendencies. Lady Marchmain goes so far as to use the people around her to spy on her children, so that she always knows what they are up to. While Sebastian is at university, she enlists a Catholic professor, Mr. Samgrass, to keep an eye on him and curtail his heavy drinking, and even tries to use Charles to gather information on her son. Charles realizes that he is being manipulated, however, and feels that, although Lady Marchmain *does* mean well, she is a danger to Sebastian's wellbeing because she drives him to rebel against her in extreme ways. Lady Marchmain is very hurt by Sebastian's rejection of her, and by Julia's renunciation of the Church when she marries Rex Mottram, and views herself as a martyr. She dies of a terminal illness and refuses treatment because of her belief that extreme suffering brings one closer to Christ.

Lord Marchmain – Lord Marchmain, the Marquis of **Brideshead**, is the estranged husband of Lady Marchmain, and the father of Brideshead, Julia, Sebastian, and Cordelia. He is the lover of Cara, an Italian woman, with whom he shares a house in Venice. Lord Marchmain is described as "Byronic"—someone who is emotionally volatile, misanthropic, and intense. When Charles meets him, he feels that Lord Marchmain pretends to be normal, while underneath he is not conventional at all and is an extremely passionate man. This

belief is confirmed when Cara tells Charles that Lord Marchmain is a "volcano of hate," underneath his reserved façade, and that, although it is believed that Lady Marchmain has turned everyone against him, Lord Marchmain really pushes people away with his bitterness and his cruel behavior. Sebastian idolizes his father and does not see this side of him. Sebastian has inherited Lord Marchmain's self-destructive tendencies—Cara tells Charles that Lord Marchmain almost became an alcoholic before she met him, and Sebastian gradually falls into alcoholism as the novel progresses. Lord Marchmain's mean-spirited nature is exacerbated when he returns to Brideshead to die toward the end of the novel. He is bitter and petulant, and likes to see the servants run around after him. Lord Marchmain is also extremely snobbish and refuses to leave Brideshead Castles to his eldest son, Brideshead, because he has married a middle-class woman named Beryl Muspratt whom Lord Marchmain considers "common." Lord Marchmain has renounced Catholicism but reconverts on his deathbed when his children summon a priest, Father Mackay. He ultimately leaves Brideshead Castle to Julia, who plans to marry Charles.

Rex Mottram – Rex Mottram is a businessman, an entrepreneur, and the husband of Julia Flyte. Rex is "new money" and is not from a wealthy family. He stands out in British society because he is Canadian, has travelled widely, and is believed to have some links to organized crime. Rex fought in World War I and is at least 10 years older than Julia. Rex is a ruthlessly ambitious man and only cares about money and power. Charles describes him as "the burlesque" of power, which suggests that Rex is a stereotype of newly-wealthy men in the early-20th century. Rex is associated with vulgarity, modernity, and materialism throughout the novel. He views the world, and people around him, as things that he can dominate, and his lust for power is revealed when he becomes interested in politics and decides to run for Parliament. He plans to use the outbreak of World War II to his advantage and tries to use populist tactics (giving a "rabid" anti-German speech in Parliament) to win public approval. Rex is based on the grandson of Winston Churchill, a real political figure in this period. Rex is a social climber and has no strong personal morals or principles: he is willing to do whatever it takes to get ahead. He views his marriage to Julia in these terms and even agrees to become a Catholic so that her family will accept him. Throughout the course of the novel, many of the other characters remark that Rex does not seem like a "whole person." His interests are extremely limited, and he is not at all concerned about spirituality, morality, or anything philosophical, artistic, or intellectual. Charles looks down on Rex because of this and views him as a representation of modernity, which Charles thinks is extremely limited and shallow in its outlook.

Brideshead – Brideshead is the eldest son of Lord Marchmain

and Lady Marchmain, and the older brother of Julia, Sebastian, and Cordelia. Brideshead is a devout Catholic, went to Catholic school, and wanted to be a Jesuit priest before his family persuaded him to go to Oxford. He was deeply affected when his father left home, and has hated Lord Marchmain ever since. Although he is young, Charles observes that Brideshead seems like an old man. He does not seem to have a sense of humor and is unaware and unconcerned when people make fun of him. He makes people feel uncomfortable in social situations but is oblivious to this, which Charles says lends him an air of gravity and commands respect. However, Brideshead is often insensitive and unintentionally hurts people's feelings. He has boring hobbies, such as matchbox collecting, and has no interest in rebellious or youthful pleasures, such as drinking, dancing, or attending parties. He does not seem to change much as he gets older and seems to take little interest in women. Charles and Julia know little about his life when he is not at **Brideshead** Castle, and joke about what he may get up to in his spare time. They even joke that he may be a serial killer because he seems so dull and unfathomable to them. His mind seems to work slowly, and he has no head for intellectual matters, which stands in the way of his entry into the priesthood. He eventually marries a middle-class Catholic woman named Beryl Muspratt, who feeds him well and has four children from a previous marriage.

Cordelia Flyte – Cordelia is the youngest child of Lord Marchmain and Lady Marchmain, and the younger sister of Brideshead, Julia, and Sebastian. Cordelia is still a child when Charles meets her. She is playful, naturally affectionate, and extremely compassionate. She is very much like Charles and often has a similar reaction to him about things. For example, when Rex Mottram brings Julia a tortoise which has had jewels put in its shell, they both immediately feel sorry for the poor animal. She and Charles are also connected by their unconditional love for Sebastian. While the rest of the family view Sebastian's drinking as a nuisance which embarrasses them, and something that they wish to stamp out and control, Cordelia accepts Sebastian's flaws and loves him, nonetheless. She even takes him whisky when he is suffering because she cannot bare to see him in pain. Cordelia is a devout Catholic and has a great deal of faith, although she does not understand the intellectual or moral arguments behind her religion. Charles thinks Cordelia is a "charming" child and is disappointed when she grows up to be a nun because he feels that she has squandered her potential and missed out on her chance at love and marriage. Cordelia does not view her life as a waste, however, as her role is useful and meaningful: she travels with an ambulance abroad and helps people who live in warzones. She believe that Charles is the one with a wasted life because, in her opinion, he has squandered his love to build a career for himself and to earn money. Cordelia remains a happy and optimistic character even though, in her work, she sees a great deal of suffering.

Cara – Cara is a middle-aged Italian woman and Lord Marchmain's mistress, for whom he left Lady Marchmain and his children. When Charles meets Cara in Venice, when he and Sebastian go to stay with Lord Marchmain, Charles is surprised to find that Cara is a respectable, mature, and kindly woman: not at all the wanton temptress he has imagined. Cara is perfectly realistic about her situation with Lord Marchmain. She accepts that she will never be his wife, because Lady Marchmain will not get a divorce, and, although she is a Catholic, seems to have made her peace with the idea that, by living with a married man, she is "living in sin." Cara understands that Lord Marchmain does not love her (she says that he used up all his love on Lady Marchmain, who he loved passionately and now despises because their relationship did not work out) and is happy to be his companion. She feels sorry for Lady Marchmain, who she feels has been "loved in the wrong way," but does not feel guilty about her own role in the breakdown of the relationship. Cara is kind to Charles and Sebastian during their stay, but hints that she disapproves of their relationship. She subtly warns Charles that his attachment to Sebastian should not "go on too long." This suggests that Cara disapproves of homosexual relationships—she believes that it is alright for men to have romantic or platonic relationships, but not for them to have sexual ones or to share their lives with other men. Cara also warns Charles about Sebastian's drinking and tells him that she recognizes the signs of alcoholism in him because she has seen them in Lord Marchmain. It is implied that Cara has saved Lord Marchmain from his self-destructive tendencies, and that Sebastian needs someone to do the same for him.

Anthony Blanche – Anthony Blanche is a friend of Sebastian's at Oxford University, and an acquaintance of Charles Ryder. Anthony is an outsider in British society for several reasons: he is foreign and has travelled all over the world, he is from a Catholic family, and he is homosexual. Anthony is picked on by other boys throughout his school years in England, and the bullying continues at university. He responds to this by embracing his unconventionality and using it shock people. He loves to break social conventions and to make people uncomfortable. However, although Anthony's eccentric behavior is a defense mechanism and a way to protect himself, it does not make him likable or accepted the way that Sebastian's similar behavior does. Anthony is slightly bitter about this and realizes that he is picked on because he is different, while Sebastian gets away things because people are taken in by his "English charm." Anthony, as a foreigner, cannot rely on this and is jealous of Sebastian. He tries to tempt Charles away from Sebastian and seems irritated that Charles prefers Sebastian to him. Anthony is presented as a "devilish" figure who is the exact opposite of Sebastian's angelic, youthful innocence. Anthony, in contrast, is worldly, experienced, and can be cruel. He thus represents the demonic side in the battle for Charles's affections, and tries to steer Charles towards a

life of lust, debauchery, and modern art, while Sebastian represents true love, and the wisdom and religious grace which comes from this. Anthony is an “aesthete,” someone who loves beauty and art, and wants Charles to unleash his inner artistic passion. He feels that Charles, who he thinks has potential to be a great artist, has been metaphorically “killed” by Sebastian because he has lost his interest in cultural exploration and, instead, wants to remain as he is and not allow change into his life. As Charles grows older, he realizes that Anthony is right in this sense, and that he must accept change to grow and develop as an artist.

Boy Mulcaster – Boy Mulcaster is a friend of the Marchmain family and a student at Oxford in the same year as Sebastian and Charles. Boy Mulcaster is also the brother of Celia, whom Charles eventually marries and then divorces. Boy represents conventional, upper-class society and is a figure of ridicule throughout the novel. He is depicted as a buffoon and a show-off at university, and he and his friends oafishly pick on Anthony Blanche because he does not fit in. However, after Anthony leaves Oxford, Boy and his friends are rather bored, and this suggests that they have very little substance and can only enjoy themselves when they have someone to ostracize and bully. Boy is extremely privileged and arrogant. Anthony gets Charles and Sebastian arrested when Sebastian drives Hardcastle’s car drunk and crashes, because Anthony tries to bribe the policeman. He likes to brag about his success with women but is usually embarrassed when it turns out that they do not know or like him. On the night of the car crash, Boy takes Charles and Sebastian to a gentleman’s club to meet his “girlfriend,” Effie, and the boys are highly amused when she does not seem to know who Boy is. Although Boy grows into a successful and well-known member of society, his name suggests that he is, literally, like a boy. His interests, humor, and emotional range are infantile, and his need to always meet conventions and fit in no matter what are equally childish. This joke is expanded upon when Boy becomes good friends with Charles and Celia’s infant son, “Johnjohn,” and Celia says that, “to hear them talk,” they “might be the same age.”

Mr. Samgrass – Mr. Samgrass is a Professor at Oxford, and a friend of Lady Marchmain. He becomes Sebastian’s guardian after Sebastian is expelled from Oxford for drunkenness, and is paid by Lady Marchmain to take Sebastian on a historical tour of Europe. Mr. Samgrass is Catholic, and is initially hired by Lady Marchmain to research and write a book about her older brother, Ned, who was killed in World War I. During this process, Mr. Samgrass ingratiates himself with the family, and Lady Marchmain allows him to keep tabs on Charles and Sebastian at university and report back to her about their behavior. Mr. Samgrass is a sycophantic character and a “fraud.” He takes advantage of Lady Marchmain and Sebastian. On their tour around Europe, Sebastian runs away, and Mr. Samgrass does not tell Lady Marchmain because this would spoil his

holiday. Instead, he allows Sebastian to stay in Istanbul with Anthony, only meeting up with him before they return to **Brideshead** for Christmas. Charles and Julia view Mr. Samgrass as a callous social climber and a “fraud” because he lies to Lady Marchmain. He is insufferable company, and everyone who meets him is bored and annoyed by him. Eventually Julia becomes irritated by his presence at Brideshead and tells her mother the truth about his and Sebastian’s time abroad. Charles also believes Mr. Samgrass is a voyeur and describes him as a “Victorian tourist.” (The Victorians famously collected and catalogued history but often did not show much respect for the cultures from which this history came.) Mr. Samgrass is fascinated by the past, and by the scandal and strife in the Marchmain family, and uses this to his own advantage and for his own entertainment without much consideration for the people involved.

Kurt – Kurt is a young German man who has served with the Foreign Legion and who lives with Sebastian in Morocco. Kurt is a physically powerful but easily-led and unintelligent young man, and joined the army because a friend persuaded him to. After his friend died of dysentery, Kurt shot himself in the foot to escape service. As a result of this, he has a wound on his foot that is infected and will not heal. It is implied that he and Sebastian are in a relationship, and Charles meets Kurt when he goes to try and find Sebastian in Morocco. Kurt is untrustworthy and unlikable, but Sebastian loves him because he believes that Kurt depends upon him. Kurt takes advantage of Sebastian (he spends his money and allows Sebastian to fetch and carry things for him even when Sebastian is ill), but their relationship is strangely reciprocal—Sebastian enjoys taking care of Kurt because it gives him a sense of purpose. Sebastian knows that Kurt would steal from him if he got the chance, but feels sorry for Kurt because he believes that he cannot help himself. In this sense, Kurt is similar to Sebastian, who is an alcoholic by the time they get together and who cannot control himself when it comes to drinking. Although Charles despises Kurt, he is clearly capable of change because, as Cordelia tells Charles, for a while he and Sebastian live quite happily in Athens together. They both stop drinking and Kurt becomes more mature and responsible. Their story takes a tragic turn, however—at the outbreak of World War II, Kurt is captured by the German Army and taken to join the Third Reich. Sebastian follows Kurt to Germany and persuades him to escape with him, but Kurt is caught and dies shortly afterward in a concentration camp.

Celia – Celia is Boy Mulcaster’s sister and Charles Ryder’s wife whom he eventually divorces. The pair have two children together: Caroline and “Johnjohn.” Celia is described as a “neat” and “jaunty” woman who is often mistaken for an American. Charles is rather disparaging about American culture and seems to view it as overly sanitary and neurotic, qualities he dislikes in his wife. Celia is a fashionable socialite, and it is her

sociability and popularity that have made Charles's artistic career. She almost acts as his agent, helping with his publicity and the organization of his exhibitions. Charles dislikes these fashionable circles to which she introduces him, and finds them shallow and pretentious. Charles finds Celia sly and passive-aggressive. She is not open about her emotions, and instead approaches things in a discreet and indirect way. Charles knows that she has been unfaithful to him and is pleased, because this gives him a reason to despise her. However, Celia makes several attempts to apologize to Charles after he has left her to paint in South America for a year, and is hurt when Charles rejects her affection. He does not have much respect for Celia and has an affair with Julia quite blatantly in front of her. Celia is a devoted mother, and although she quickly moves on after her divorce from Charles and remarries a younger man, Robin, she is disappointed that Charles does not make more of an effort to see his children.

Mr. Ryder – Mr. Ryder is Charles's father. His wife, Charles's mother, was killed abroad while working with a Red Cross missionary group during World War I. Mr. Ryder never remarried and lives, quite happily, alone in his house in London. Mr. Ryder is an extremely passive-aggressive man and hates to have his solitude interrupted. He studies history and is happiest when he is left alone with his books. Charles observes that he seems much older than he is and that he despises anything modern: he is like a person from another time. Although Mr. Ryder never openly dismisses anyone from spending time with him, he is so unpleasant that no one wants to do so. When Charles runs out of money, after his first term at Oxford, and must spend the summer at home, Mr. Ryder engages in a subtle "battle" with him to try and make him leave. He avoids Charles during the day and deliberately irritates him at dinner in the evenings. When Charles invites a friend named Jorkins for dinner, Mr. Ryder pretends to think that Jorkins is American and teases the poor, confused young man all night long. He then arranges his own dinner party for Charles and invites a group of young people whom he knows that Charles will hate. During Charles's childhood, after the death of his mother, Mr. Ryder's aunt came to live with them for a time and grew close to Charles. Although it made Charles happy to have her in the house, Mr. Ryder proudly explains to Charles that he soon "got her out" and seems pleased that she never came back to see them.

Nanny Hawkins – Nanny Hawkins is a servant for the Marchmains and was the nanny of Brideshead, Julia, Sebastian, and Cordelia when they were young children. Sebastian introduces Charles to Nanny on his first visit to **Brideshead**, and the Marchmain children are still very attached to her. Nanny is a mother figure for the Marchmain children and is the opposite of Lady Marchmain, who is extremely religiously devout and controlling. Nanny Hawkins is straightforwardly loving and maternal, and does not try to involve herself in the

children's lives. She is always pleased to see them, however, and listens patiently to whatever they tell her. Their relationship with Nanny is uncomplicated compared with their relationship with their mother. When Charles returns to Brideshead and goes to see Nanny at the end of the novel, he notes that she does not seem to change and that everything in her room stays the same. Nanny symbolizes childhood experience in the novel, and the nursery she lives in represents a place of innocence and carelessness to which Charles and Sebastian, as well as many of the other characters, wish to return.

Jasper – Jasper is Charles's older cousin who also attends Oxford University. He advises Charles about how to behave properly at school, though Charles doesn't take his cousin's tips seriously. Jasper's stuffy, overbearing attitude is a stark contrast to the wild antics of Charles, Sebastian, and their friends at Oxford. In this sense, he represents British tradition and conservatism, while unconventional characters like Anthony represent modernity's influence on youth culture.

Hooper – Hooper is a young platoon commander in Charles's Company during World War II. Hooper is not an enthusiastic soldier and is not popular with the authorities in the army. He is not very good at his job, and Charles views him as an embodiment of the modern world, which he sees as inefficient, pedantic, and unglamorous. Charles also looks down on Hooper because he is working-class and because he will not make use of his servants.

Jorkins – Jorkins is an old school fellow of Charles's. Although Charles and Jorkins were never close friends, Charles invites Jorkins to dinner one night with his father, Mr. Ryder, because he is so bored at home and sick of his father's company. Jorkins does not enjoy the dinner, however, because Mr. Ryder teases him throughout.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Ned – Ned is Lady Marchmain's older brother who was killed in World War I. During the novel, Lady Marchmain commissions Mr. Samgrass to compile a book about Ned's life.

Wilcox – Wilcox is Lady Marchmain's housekeeper at **Brideshead**.

Lunt – Lunt is Charles's "scout," or servant, at university.

Plender – Plender is Lord Marchmain's Italian butler, who comes with him to **Brideshead** towards the end of the novel.

Effie – Effie is a dancer at Ma Mayfield's, a gentleman's club on the Old Hundredth in London. Charles and Sebastian visit this club to see Effie with Boy Mulcaster. Boy tells them that Effie is his girlfriend but, when they arrive, she doesn't recognize or remember him.

Johnjohn – Johnjohn is the infant son of Charles and Celia, and the nephew of Boy Mulcaster.

Caroline – Caroline is the baby daughter of Charles and Celia,

and the niece of Boy Mulcaster.

Brenda Champion – Brenda Champion is a wealthy socialite and Rex Mottram’s lover.

Beryl Muspratt – Beryl Muspratt marries Brideshead. She is a middle-class woman and, because Lord Marchmain considers her “common,” she and Brideshead are not left **Brideshead** Castle after his death—it is left to Julia instead.

Father Mackay – Father Mackay is a Catholic priest who attends on the Marchmain family. He is summoned to give Lord Marchmain the last rites on his deathbed.

Mgr. Bell – Mgr. Bell is a Catholic priest who lives in Oxford and whom Lady Marchmain wants Sebastian to live with during his second year.

Hardcastle – Hardcastle is a student at Oxford who often lends Sebastian his car.

Collins – Collins is a friend of Charles at university, with whom Charles spends his Easter vacation.

Robin – Robin is Celia’s second husband after Charles.

Hayter – Hayter is Mr. Ryder’s servant.

Mr. Kramm – Mr. Kramm is a con artist whom Celia and Charles meet on board the ship from America. He pretends to be a film director to come to a party in their cabin and is later arrested as the boat docks.

Father Mowbray – A priest who tries to convert Rex to Catholicism.

Father Phipps – A priest who visits Charles and Sebastian during their summer alone at **Brideshead**.

family who owns Brideshead, and because he was young at that time and innocent compared with his older, more cynical self. Charles, and many other characters in the novel, crave a return to innocence and a cleansing of the sins they feel they have gained through their life experiences. Waugh, who was a devout Catholic, uses *Brideshead Revisited* to suggest that, as badly as people may want to regain their innocence, it’s not actually possible to recover it during earthly life. Rather, the novel indicates that recovering innocence is only possible through a return to God and a belief in redemption after death.

The characters in *Brideshead Revisited* frequently idealize the past. Sebastian is “in love with his childhood,” the only time in his life when he remembers feeling happy, and tries to present himself to the world as a boy; he carries around a large **teddy bear** and maintains an air of innocent irresponsibility well into his late teens. Sebastian romanticizes his childhood just as Charles idealizes the time in his life when he was in love with Sebastian. These characters’ devotion to implausibly perfect memories suggests that our memories of the past are unreliable and may make the past appear brighter than it really was. Charles thinks of his relationship with Sebastian as a period of innocence and childish pleasure. He feels that he was “close to heaven” and refers to the period as “*arcadia*,” a Greek term which suggests paradise on Earth. Although they are already young men when they meet, Charles claims that, because the experience of love is so new to them, there is a “nursery freshness” to their relationship, which suggests an idealized sense of childhood, play, and carefree fun. However, although Charles feels like he is in heaven with Sebastian, their paradise is an earthly one and is, therefore, doomed to be impermanent. This is represented by a **skull** which Charles keeps in his room and which has written on it the slogan “*Et in Arcadia Ego*,” which translates to “In Arcadia I am.” The skull represents death and suggests that, when paradise is found on Earth instead of in heaven with God, it cannot last, because death and decay are always present in even the most idyllic places. This symbol also foreshadows the end of Charles and Sebastian’s relationship, suggesting that even the most seemingly perfect experiences on Earth must eventually come to an end.

Characters try to recapture and recreate their pasts, but these attempts are unsuccessful because the characters have become too experienced. Sebastian’s attempts to prolong his childhood end in disaster and he becomes an alcoholic; he drinks to avoid responsibility and to escape his adult life. As his drinking escalates, Sebastian is plunged into what Waugh calls “midwinter” and loses his childish qualities; his drinking drives him away from Charles, and ultimately turns him into a tragic figure. The metaphorical description of Sebastian’s decline as “midwinter” links his life to the passage of the seasons, suggesting that the bright, fresh phases of human life (like Sebastian’s relationship with Charles) must always fade, just as



THEMES

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INNOCENCE, EXPERIENCE, AND REDEMPTION

Many of the characters in *Brideshead Revisited* are nostalgic for a time in their lives when they felt they were truly happy. The novel is narrated by Charles Ryder, a Captain in the British Army during World War II, who believes the happiest period in his life was his time spent at **Brideshead**, a large country house which has been turned into an army barracks during the war and which Charles rediscovers by accident when his company is diverted there. Charles remembers his time at Brideshead nostalgically because he was in love with Sebastian Flyte, the younger son of the Marchmain

spring and summer gradually fade to winter. Charles tries to recreate his love for Sebastian later in life, with Sebastian's sister Julia, whom he meets again by chance as an adult. However, although Julia and Charles do fall in love, their relationship is marred by the trappings of adult life, which they ultimately cannot escape. They are both married by the time they meet, and although both separate from their spouses, these concerns place obstacles in their way which cool their passion. These challenges suggest that adult experience cannot simply be forgotten or ignored. Charles and Julia have both been changed by their experience and no longer find it easy to lose themselves in love, the way that Charles and Sebastian once did. Julia is described as "much sadder," and Charles has become so detached from his own feelings that he thinks about their relationship as though it were a play or a novel. These changes suggest that the past, and innocence and youth especially, cannot be recreated once a person is grown up.

The only one *can* to return to innocence, Waugh suggests, is through reunion with God. Waugh uses the plot of *Brideshead Revisited* as an allegory for Catholic conversion—something which Waugh himself experienced—and the Catholic belief that, if a person repents for their sins, God will redeem them. This is represented through rites such as baptism, which is symbolized in the novel by the **fountain** outside Brideshead. Although Charles has become disillusioned with his life, he is redeemed at the novel's end when he prays in the chapel at Brideshead and, it is implied, experiences a religious conversion. Since the end of his relationship with Sebastian, Charles has felt that he has been cast out of paradise, because he believed that paradise was an earthly state—his youth—which he could never recover. This represents Catholic belief in the fallen state of humanity, which was separated from God when humans disobeyed him in the biblical story of the Garden of Eden and fell from grace. Charles's religious conversion at the novel's end suggests that it is possible to return to paradise, but that paradise is not a physical place or a period of earthly happiness. Instead, Waugh suggests, true paradise is union with God and genuine belief in religious faith. This is Charles's revelation at the novel's end, and signifies the return of hope and joy into his life.



SUFFERING, PERSECUTION, AND MARTYRDOM

The Catholic belief that suffering and persecution lead to godliness is a major aspect of *Brideshead*

Revisited. The novel centers around the experiences of Charles Ryder and his interactions with the Marchmain family, an aristocratic family of English Catholics who view themselves as outsiders because of the historical persecution of Catholics in Britain. *Brideshead Revisited* suggests both that Catholics are legitimately persecuted, because they do not conform, and that they deliberately seek out suffering because this brings them

closer to God. However, in the novel, it is those for whom suffering is deep, genuine and spontaneous—rather than those who try to martyr themselves—who receive God's graces.

The members of the Marchmain family feel that they are social outsiders in Britain. Catholics were historically persecuted in Britain, which was a majority Protestant country, and anti-Catholic laws existed there until the 19th century. It is implied that, because of this historical separation from other people, the Marchmain family *feel* that they are different, even though this is not obvious from the outside. This is implied when Sebastian tells Charles that Catholics are "not like other people" and that "everything that is important to them is not important to other people." British anti-Catholic sentiment is reflected when Charles's cousin Jasper tries to advise Charles on how to "get on" socially at Oxford. Jasper warns Charles away from "English Catholics" and attaches several prejudiced stereotypes to this group. This implies that English Catholics experience a degree of social persecution in Britain, and that characters like Sebastian are not judged on their individual merit but rather on their religion and upbringing. Society persecutes those who differ from the majority. This is represented through the character of Anthony Blanche, who is a friend of Sebastian's at university, and who is picked on because he is foreign, went to Catholic school, and, it is heavily implied, is homosexual. Anthony's experience suggests that British society is intolerant to those who stand out and who do not conform to mainstream standards of religion and behaviour.

However, although persecution is painful, it is an important idea in Catholicism because it is associated with martyrdom and the Catholic saints. Lady Marchmain, who is a devout Catholic, takes pride in the fact that she has suffered: her husband has left her, and two of her children, Julia and Sebastian, reject Catholicism. She feels that her suffering likens her to Catholic martyrs or saints, religious figures who were killed for their beliefs. Lady Marchmain tells Charles that, although she used to feel guilty because she was rich, and therefore had more than other people, she now realizes that it is a bigger blessing to be poor, because the poor suffer more, and therefore are closer to God. She views her wealth as a trial sent to test her faith and to make it harder for her to achieve holiness. This suggests that Lady Marchmain desires suffering and sees herself as a martyr or victim, even though, in many ways, this is not the case. Although Lady Marchmain feels persecuted, she works hard to stay within a close social circle—or "clique," as Anthony describes it—of Catholics. This choice supports the idea that the emulation of martyrs is an important idea in Catholicism and suggests that Lady Marchmain deliberately separates herself from others because she wishes to be *exceptionally* holy, and she knows that to do this, one must stand apart from the crowd. The novel suggests that Catholics like Lady Marchmain strive to be exceptional, and to stand out from

the majority rather than trying to blend in or conform.

However, it turns out that it is not the most devout characters (like Lady Marchmain) who are blessed with divine grace or spontaneous conversion, but rather those characters who do not seek it. Although anyone who repents and receives the sacraments can convert to Catholicism or receive God's grace, Waugh suggests that those who are truly blessed are those who are fallen or who have sinned. This is in keeping with the Christian idea that it is repentant sinners God loves most as they are the most difficult to reach and the least likely to return to, or find, their faith. Holiness through suffering is not something which can be contrived or manufactured—as Lady Marchmain tries to do—but must instead be something spontaneous and miraculous. Sebastian's sister Cordelia, who goes abroad to become a nun and nurse people in a warzone, supports this idea when she tells Charles that her older brother, Brideshead, wanted to be a priest but had no "mission." Without a "mission," Cordelia says, there is no point in striving to make oneself holy because the effort will be contrived. Both Brideshead and Cordelia wish to make sacrifices for their faith, but both are ordinary people. Although Cordelia does a great deal of good with her charity work, it is implied that she is only a practical relief worker and not a particularly spiritual or saintly nun.

The religious transformations wrought on characters like Julia, Sebastian, and Lord Marchmain, who all convert to Catholicism before the novel's end, are portrayed as genuinely miraculous because they are all non-believers. These characters have lived sinful lives according to the Catholic faith, and they return to God after periods of intense suffering: Lord Marchmain on his deathbed, after he has wrestled with his own mortality; Julia after her divorce and split from Charles; and Sebastian after his alcoholism. Unlike Lady Marchmain, Brideshead, and Cordelia, they have not tried to be pious but, instead, are deeply flawed individuals who are reluctantly brought to God. This is most strongly affirmed through the final conversion of Charles, who has always been an agnostic and hostile to the idea of Catholicism. His experiences suggest that those who are holy or saint-like are not always the people one would expect, and that suffering and persecution in a Catholic framework are the best paths to spirituality and to God.



AUTHORITY, REBELLION, AND LOVE

There are many different types of worldly authority in *Brideshead Revisited* and the characters rebel against these societal, familial, and emotional restrictions in a variety of ways. Although these forces may succeed in gaining a temporary hold over the characters, ultimately, they always lose their grip. Waugh, who was a Catholic, suggests that the only true authority in the world is God but that God does not control people—even though he easily could—and, instead, allows them freedom to sin because

he loves them unconditionally.

Brideshead Revisited suggests that it is impossible to escape authoritative and restrictive forces in the world. All the characters face restraints of some kind and must reconcile themselves with these restrictions before the novel's close. During his time at university, for example, Charles struggles against the fact that his father will not give him more of his allowance after he overspends. This experience is one of the novel's early examples of how people face practical and financial limitations which they must learn to adapt to as they go through life. Charles and Sebastian also come up against prohibitive forces, such as law enforcement, when they are arrested for drunk driving during their second year at university. And, as an adult during World War II, Charles joins the army, a life that involves constant subordination to overarching authority. Although they *feel* perfectly free with one another, Charles and Sebastian are not literally free to behave any way they want, and they must often adapt their habits around socially-organized rules and restrictions. These social rules are not only literal rules, such as laws or codes of conduct in certain institutions, but "rules" to do with fashion, etiquette, and propriety, which are followed by most people in their social circles. For example, when Charles becomes a successful painter and makes his name in respectable circles, he does not wish to be seen with Anthony Blanche—who arrives unexpectedly at one of his exhibitions—even though he is, secretly, pleased to see Anthony. Charles knows that Anthony would not be approved of in Charles's social circle and, therefore, would threaten his reputation. This suggests that, as people acclimate to their social surroundings, they not only learn to follow the rules imposed upon them but also learn to place limitations and impositions on themselves so that they will fit in.

However, this kind of restrictive authority is not always an effective way to control people. The novel demonstrates how it can, instead, push people to rebel further against rules and constraints. This is shown in particular through Sebastian and his attempts to "fly" from his family, who seek to control his behavior. It is implied that Lady Marchmain has always exerted a large degree of parental control over Sebastian. He dislikes going home for this reason, and is reluctant to allow his family to meet Charles, as he says his family would "make Charles their friend instead of his." It seems that Lady Marchmain tries to find out about her children's friends and only sanctions the ones whom she deems suitable. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that Lady Marchmain's hold on Sebastian is controlling. Lady Marchmain begins to take an interest in Sebastian's social life after his drinking escalates, and rather than let him live with Charles, she places him in the care of two of her friends at the college, Mgr. Bell and Mr. Samgrass, who spy on Sebastian and report back to Lady Marchmain. Although Lady Marchmain is motivated by her love for Sebastian, this

surveillance encourages him to drink more because, for Sebastian, alcohol is a form of escape. Sebastian's reaction shows that Lady Marchmain's strategy has backfired; her attempts to control him only push him further out of her control. Lady Marchmain's attempts to control Sebastian increase as his behavior gets worse, but eventually Sebastian frees himself from his family's interference altogether and disappears in Europe. This suggests that, although Lady Marchmain means well, her interference in Sebastian's life and the restrictions she places on his behavior—which are as much to save public face as they are to stop him from drinking—only intensify his destructive behavior because he must always go to greater lengths to avoid her. This suggests that Lady Marchmain's controlling love for Sebastian, though genuine, doesn't actually make anything better for him.

Waugh contrasts these restrictive versions of authority with God's permissive authority. The final section of *Brideshead Revisited* is entitled "A Twitch upon the Thread." This refers to the idea that, although God is the supreme authority, in terms of Catholic belief, he will nonetheless allow humans to stray from his rules and commandments, if they choose to. This is reflected in the Catholic rites of confession and the idea that, if sins are confessed and repented, they will be forgiven by God. Put simply, God gives people free will and the freedom to choose how they behave. This suggests that God's love is unconditional and is freeing rather than controlling. This is contrasted with Lady Marchmain's hold over Sebastian, which has the feeling of a web, or a tight network of threads, rather than a gentle hold. The negative results of her attempts to control Sebastian suggest that human love cannot have the kind of freeing effect that divine love does. Although Charles has always been an agnostic, his conversion at the novel's conclusion teaches him that, metaphorically, God is able to bring unbelievers back to him with just a "twitch upon the thread," which represents the unbreakable bond between humanity and God. This implies that God's creations are connected to him and that this connection cannot be broken, even if they stray, because it is based on forgiveness and unconditional love. God does not try to control Charles or the other characters, and the result is that they end up living by God's laws of their own free choosing. By showing how God easily achieves what human laws, norms, and restrictions cannot, Waugh suggests that God is the only true authority, even though he does not use that authority to limit humans.



WAR AND PEACE

Brideshead Revisited is set in the period between World War I and World War II, and these wars frame the action of the novel. Charles's perception of war changes throughout his life, and he thinks of war both in terms of literal battle and as a state of misunderstanding and miscommunication between people. Although war often seems

like a glorious pursuit, the novel reveals that it is, really, a dull—if pervasive—facet of everyday life.

As a young man, Charles romanticizes warfare. *Brideshead Revisited* begins in the aftermath of World War I, which caused great upheaval and enormous loss of life in Europe. Despite the destruction caused by the war, there is still a feeling among the young men of Charles's generation—who were too young to fight in it—that they have missed an opportunity for glory and cannot live up to an older generation who fought and died for their country. This romantic attitude towards war is demonstrated when Charles describes his childhood memories of playing at war and "sitting among campfires at Xanthus-side," which is a reference to the battle of Troy in Greek mythology. The novel makes it clear that war, for men of Charles's age, is something desirable that they aspired to as children. Additionally, the history of war is a large part of British public-school education, which many men of Charles's age and class have undergone. Charles contrasts his education to that of a young working-class officer named Hooper, whom he meets when he is a captain in World War II. Charles notes that, unlike his own, Hooper's education "had few battles in it but, instead, a profusion of detail about humane legislation." This suggests that Charles's education, which instilled the importance and the glory of warfare in the minds of young men, is outdated and that future generations will learn about modern politics rather than heroic accounts of battles. However, despite this difference in education and Hooper's general reluctance to join the war, Hooper still wants to see some action before the war is over. Hooper "does not want much," he says, but "just enough to say he has been in it." This demonstrates that it was still a matter of pride for young men to be involved in World War II, and that failure to participate would be viewed as a mark of shame, even though World War I revealed to many people the horror and realities of war.

Later in life, however, Charles often feels that he is metaphorically at war with the people in his life. Charles views his relationship with his father as an emotional battle in which he is constantly engaged while at home. Although it is a passive aggressive battle, rather than an aggressive one, Charles uses military language to describe this period in his life. He observes that "relations with his father deteriorated sharply," which is language often used to describe two countries on the brink of war. Similarly, when he meets an old schoolmate in town, Charles feels that, in the war against his father, "a weapon" has come to hand because he has found someone else with whom to spend time. This suggests that Charles views interpersonal relationships in terms of power and conflict rather than affection. This is demonstrated again later, in Charles's romantic relationships with women. Charles compares his experience in World War II to a loveless marriage, in which one has become disillusioned with one's partner. This reflects his recent divorce from his wife, Celia. Then, when Charles bumps

into Julia, Sebastian's sister, who later becomes his lover, he is relieved that he feels comfortable with her when all the other relationships in his life feel as though they take place on a battlefield. His relationship with Julia is passionate and fraught, however, and they ultimately part ways. Their time together shows that even Charles's most intimate relationships feel combative rather than loving. In contrast to these relationships, Charles's previous relationship with Sebastian was one of serenity and peace. That happy interlude mirrors the state of Europe in the brief period between the two World Wars. But for both Charles and for Europe, the calm is short-lived, suggesting that conflict is an inescapable element of human experience and not limited to literal warfare.

What's more, the reality of literal warfare is banal rather than glorious. Although Charles joined up eagerly at the outbreak of World War II, the opening of *Brideshead Revisited* finds him disillusioned and disappointed by the experience of war in contrast to his previous, romantic idea of it. He feels that discipline in the army is arbitrary and ineffectual—the men have ceased to pay attention to it—and that the generals and officers struggle to instill enthusiasm in their troops. Charles's experience shows how people in Europe, including soldiers, are sick of war and wish for it to be over. War is also associated with madness when Charles describes the lunatic asylum which is opposite the camp he and his men leave at the beginning of the novel. The asylum symbolically suggests that war is an exercise in madness in which Charles and the other soldiers are imprisoned, just as the mentally ill people are locked in the asylum. Waugh presents warfare as a constant anti-climax which must constantly be aggrandized, through its portrayal in art and literature, which Charles has studied at school, to make it seem worthwhile and necessary. This is demonstrated by the Colonel, who looks for violations and reasons to discipline his men, such as the rubbish left on the ground, but who seems to have no real authority anymore. This suggests that war is not an escape from the banality and conflict of everyday life but is, in fact, a continuation of it. Although the men have gone to war expecting a grand adventure, they are faced with many of the same arbitrary annoyances and petty disappointments which they experience in everyday life and in their personal relationships.



GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE, AND MODERNITY

Brideshead Revisited spans the 1920s to the early 1940s and reflects a period of intense cultural change in Europe. The impact of two World Wars, increased social mobility, and the influence of new global powers such as the United States, led to a feeling of instability in Europe. Although *Brideshead Revisited* is told from the perspective of Charles Ryder, a deeply conservative man who believes that British society is in decline, Waugh's novel makes it clear that it

is impossible to ignore change and that, ultimately, the instability of modernity may also provide new opportunities.

Charles feels that modernity and globalization are threats to traditional and, in his view, superior ways of life. Charles is conservative and admires the English aristocracy. Charles is middle-class and, when he arrives at Oxford, finds himself thrown together with other middle-class students. Charles, however, looks down on them and, after he meets Sebastian, begins to emulate the lifestyle of the upper-class students; he drinks champagne in the afternoons and tries to cultivate eccentricities associated with those who do not need to work. This demonstrates that Charles admires the luxury and excess of the upper classes, even though he himself is middle-class. The privileged world of Sebastian and the Marchmains is, in Charles's view, threatened by the presence of Rex Mottram, a Canadian entrepreneur who becomes engaged to Sebastian's sister Julia. Rex is associated with modernity and globalization; he is a businessman and grew up abroad. Rex represents new money (earned rather than inherited), as well as vulgarity and materialism. This is demonstrated particularly vividly when Rex buys Julia a live tortoise with a jewel-encrusted shell, a present which Charles thinks is grotesque and cruel. Rex seems to think he can buy and dominate anything, provided he has enough wealth. Meanwhile, Charles's reaction shows his distrust of modernity and of the new wealth produced by capitalism. Rex also differs from the Marchmains in terms of his interests, which are practical and specific—he is interested in how to make and use money—rather than broad and artistic. Charles views education as something which should be undertaken for its own sake, rather than something to build wealth on. He feels that Rex's greed reveals an incompleteness in his soul, and Julia also suggests this when she says that Rex is not "a whole person at all." Through Rex's character, Waugh suggests that the modern world is primarily materialistic, rather than spiritual or moral, and Charles is anxious about a future in which men like Rex have large amounts of influence.

Charles is also aesthetically conservative, and dislikes modern art. Charles becomes a successful painter and his work is popular among the upper classes. Charles is aware of modern artistic movements—such as Futurism—which is discussed in Paris while he is a student, and which seeks to deconstruct conventional artistic forms. These modern artistic movements are also associated with extreme political positions, such as fascism and communism, which seek to deconstruct old social orders. Charles's work, however, is literally the opposite of modern art: he paints the *constructions* (old country homes which belong to the aristocracy) that modernity wishes to *deconstruct* (these houses are being demolished). Charles's perspective on art again suggests that modernity is destructive. However, although Charles views modernity as the destruction of valuable old social systems, it also results in the removal of boundaries. This is reflected in the character of Anthony

Blanche. Anthony is like Rex in that he has travelled the world. However, unlike Rex, Anthony shares values with Charles; he is interested in aesthetics and culture. Anthony is associated with the breakdown of boundaries throughout the novel and likes to shock those around him by breaking social taboos. He is associated with homosexuality and gender fluidity; at one point he reads a passage from T. S. Eliot's modernist poem, *The Waste Land*, which is written from the perspective of the Greek prophet, Tiresias, who was both male and female. Anthony symbolizes the breakdown of traditional concepts, such as gender and propriety, but at the same time, he also shows how this breakdown can lead to greater personal liberation and new aesthetic perspectives. Although Charles is uncomfortable with Anthony, he is curious about him and respects Anthony's aesthetic opinion when Anthony tells him that his paintings are dull and pedestrian. This demonstrates that, while Charles dislikes modern art, he realizes that his own work, and his perspective more generally, is gradually becoming irrelevant.

Charles comes to realize that change is inevitable and cannot be prevented. The availability of new wealth, due to the birth of modern capitalism in the early-20th century, improved living standards and meant that ordinary people expected more for their labor. Charles opposes this type of social change, as is shown when he works against protestors in the General Strike (a large-scale protest over British mine closures in 1926) because it symbolizes the dissolution of the class system. However, although Charles wishes to preserve the old world, it is already on the verge of extinction. This is demonstrated when Rex tells Charles that the Marchmains are essentially bankrupt because they have not invested their money wisely. This suggests that new wealth must replace old, just as social values change and new ideas replace outdated ones. Charles's fetishization of the aristocracy is, in many ways, outdated. At the end of the novel, Charles accepts that he cannot judge the present or predict the future, and that the changes which have been wrought on society may be for the best. He comes to this conclusion after he revisits the chapel at **Brideshead**, which is now used by the lower-class soldiers on the army base. This setting suggests that, although the Marchmain family is a relic of an older time, they have contributed things of value to the world—the chapel, the beautiful country house, the preservation of artistic culture—which can now be enjoyed by ordinary people and may, in the future, inspire them to create something new. Despite Charles's hesitations, the novel ultimately suggests that the inevitable changes of modernity do have their benefits.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



BRIDESHEAD

The house in *Brideshead Revisited*, known as Brideshead Castle, represents the Catholic Church. The house itself invokes Catholic imagery, as its domed roof resembles the dome of St. Peter's Basilica. Its grand, aesthetic style also contrasts with the traditional architecture of Britain, and reflects the difference between Catholic churches (which are famously lavish and decorative) and Protestant churches (which are deliberately austere). The name "Brideshead" is also significant because, in Christian doctrine, the Church is often referred to as the "bride" of Christ—the "marriage" between the teachings of Christ and those of the Catholic Church comprise the teachings of Catholicism. The Church in Rome is also the seat of the Pope, who is the "head" of the Catholic Church. The combination of these two ideas in the name "Brideshead" reflects the idea that Charles's experiences at Brideshead also represent his experience with Catholicism. He is introduced to Catholicism by the Marchmain family, who live in Brideshead—they are members of the Catholic Church and are literally inside Brideshead just as they are figuratively enmeshed in the rituals and traditions of the church. Though Charles is initially unfamiliar with Catholicism and skeptical of its practices, he grows close to the family and attached to the house over time, a gradual transformation that parallels his conversion to Catholicism at the end of the novel when he returns to Brideshead.



FOUNTAIN

Fountains are associated with the Catholic sacrament of baptism throughout *Brideshead Revisited*, and thus represent the characters' spiritual proximity to God. Baptism is a Catholic practice in which infant children are anointed with water by a priest to symbolize their entry into the Church. Fountains are associated with redemption, and love throughout the novel. The fountain outside **Brideshead** was originally built in Italy and has been transported piece by piece and reconstructed in England. This symbolizes the idea that Catholicism has travelled from Rome, where the Pope resides, and has been transported all over the world by the teachings of the Church. Brideshead is an outpost of Catholicism in England, and the fountain symbolizes this. This also refers to the idea of missionaries teaching Catholicism abroad, a vocation that is taken up by many of the characters in the novel.

The fountain is first associated with the love between Charles and Sebastian. Although they are not religious, their love is framed as spiritual because they are innocent and love each other unconditionally. They spend many nights beside the fountain to symbolize their proximity to God through their love for each other. According to *Brideshead Revisited*, there are

many different types of love and, if they are genuine, they all reflect God's power in the world. Later, the fountain becomes an important spot in Charles's love affair with Sebastian's sister, Julia. Julia, like Sebastian, has also left the Church but, one night, at the side of this fountain, she has an emotional outburst which foreshadows her return to her faith. The fountain's steady, unchanging presence despite the people who come and go from the house and the changing dynamics within suggests that faith is something constant and enduring that, like home, can always be returned to.



TEDDY BEAR

During his time as a student at Oxford, Sebastian is well-known on campus because he carries a large teddy bear named Aloysius around with him. The teddy bear symbolizes Sebastian's youth and his reluctance to grow up. Sebastian is 19 at the time, and although he is too old for childish toys like teddy bears, he is afraid of responsibility and does not want to progress into adulthood. His attachment to the teddy bear thus represents his rejection of adult life and his desire to escape from it. Sebastian idealizes his childhood because it was the only time in his life when he felt happy. Although this is not immediately obvious to Charles, Sebastian's best friend, who views his teddy as a harmless eccentricity, it becomes clear that Sebastian is deeply unhappy and self-destructive. Sebastian's teddy is connected to the other symbols of childhood which Sebastian clings to in order to avoid the realities of his adult life: his nursery and his attachment to his Nanny, who he visits often. Sebastian tries to use his teddy as a protective device, like a magic amulet, to ward off age and prolong youth. However, as time goes on, it becomes clear that youth is impossible to hold onto, and "midwinter" creeps into the innocent warmth of Sebastian's life. This is externally reflected by the fact that Sebastian begins to forget Aloysius and does not carry him around after his first year at university. This suggests that youth, beauty, and innocence are temporary things which cannot be prolonged, regardless of how hard one tries to preserve them.



SKULL

In his first year at university, during his friendship with Sebastian, Charles buys a skull with the words "*Et in Arcadia Ego*" engraved on its brow. This is Latin for "and in Arcadia I am" and symbolizes the idea that, even during youth and in moments of beauty, death and decay are always present. This is demonstrated through Charles and Sebastian's relationship which, even at its peak, is on the verge of decline as Sebastian's alcoholism looms. It also refers to the Catholic idea, based in medieval devotional philosophy, that life is a wheel of fortune and that, although one might be at the height of one's beauty and power one minute, the wheel could turn and one

could be at the lowest point of it, in misery and destitution, the next. This idea was extremely important to medieval Catholics because it reminded them that it is God who is in control of the world, and that they must adhere to God's plan rather than attempting to control their own fates as Sebastian and Charles try and fail to do throughout the novel. The skull is a symbol of death, and this also reflects medieval and Catholic imagery, which frequently used images of skeletons and dead bodies to remind people of their own mortality and their need for God, who was the only way to gain access to life after death. "Arcadia" is commonly understood to represent an ancient Greek country, which was extremely lovely and bountiful, and literally translates to a "paradise" on earth. The skull in *Brideshead Revisited* thus suggests that paradise on Earth, like the love and joy that Sebastian and Charles share in their short-lived relationship, is ultimately unattainable—everything on Earth is subject to decay, and one must accept death and misfortune and let God into one's life as a comfort against these realities.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Back Bay Books edition of *Brideshead Revisited* published in 2012.

Prologue Quotes

●● We could watch the madmen, on clement days, sauntering and skipping among the trim gravel walks and pleasantly planted lawns; happy collaborationists who had given up the unequal struggle, all doubts resolved, all duty done, the undisputed heirs-at-law of a century of progress, enjoying the heritage at their ease.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes his Company's army base, which is located beside a mental institution. The soldiers can watch the inmates, who often spend time outside. Charles feels that the "madmen" are happier than the soldiers. Charles views the 20th century as fraught with conflict and madness. This has been demonstrated by the two World Wars through which Charles and his peers have lived. The soldiers, Charles suggests, are literally engaged in a war both for and against the modern world. They fight for it because they are literally soldiers who defend their

countries against modern political forces, such as Nazism, which led to the outbreak of World War II. They also fight against it, because the type of war they are engaged in is particularly modern (in terms of the technology), and they fight to keep themselves alive and sane in the face of these forces.

The “madmen” have “given up” this fight because they no longer participate in the world. Instead, they surrender to the madness of the 20th century and “collaborate” with it. Charles suggests the struggle is “unequal” because an individual has little chance of remaining sane in the face of huge societal changes, such as the economic shifts toward industry and the progressive social attitudes which took shape in 20th-century Europe. It is possible that the “madmen” are soldiers who have been gone mad in the war and, therefore, have “done their duty.” This possibility reflects Charles’s attitude that modernity is inherently harmful when compared to his idealized notions of the past, and that 20th century “progress” leads to madness.

☞ I lay in that dark hour, I was aghast to realize that something within me, long sickening, had quietly died, and felt as a husband might feel, who, in the fourth year of his marriage, suddenly knew that he had no longer any desire, or tenderness, or esteem, for a once-beloved wife; no pleasure in her company, no wish to please, no curiosity about anything she might ever do or say or think; no hope of setting things right, no self-reproach for the disaster. I knew it all, the whole drab compass of marital disillusion; we had been through it together, the Army and I.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

Charles lies in bed one morning and realizes that he no longer cares about his role in the army, and that he has become disillusioned with the idea of war. He compares it to the process of marriage and divorce, which Charles has also experienced. Charles equates disillusionment with death, because it is the death of hopes, ideals, or faith. The belief that has “died” in Charles is his faith in the army and the idea that warfare is a worthy and noble enterprise. Charles feels that this has been coming for a long time, like something that gradually “sickens,” because his time in the army has been a disappointment to him and has not compared with

his hopes. His faith has died “quietly” because it is not something dramatic which has caused this change of heart, but the general inefficiency and banality of army life.

Charles compares this gradual disillusionment, and eventual loss of hope, with an unsuccessful marriage. Charles suggests that people often enter relationships with an idealized perception of the person they will marry. When one has got to know the person one is married to, however, and the optimism of early love has worn off, it is easy to lose faith in the relationship because of the banality and boredom of everyday life in marriage. Charles’s experience in the army has been much the same—his romanticized notions of what it means to be a soldier have given way to the mundane, unfulfilling reality of war. This quote also suggests that Charles has experienced disillusionment in relationships before and that he has already lost his faith in romantic love, before he lost his faith in the army.

☞ Gallipoli, Balaclava, Quebec, Lepanto, Bannockburn, Roncevaux and Marathon—these, and the Battle in the West where Arthur fell, and a hundred such names whose trumpet-notes, even now in my sere and lawless state, called to me irresistibly across the intervening years with all the clarity and strength of boyhood, sounded in vain to Hooper.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Hooper –

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 9-10

Explanation and Analysis

Charles compares himself to one of his subordinates in the army, a young man named Hooper, and understands that, while he has always dreamed of warfare as a glorious thing, Hooper never has. Charles cites the names of several famous battles which are important cultural and literary touchstones in Western history. “The Battle in the West where Arthur fell” refers to a Welsh battle, which is believed to have taken place in the 6th century, where the legendary King Arthur died. Although this may have been a real battle, and Arthur may or may not have been present, King Arthur is more commonly associated with myth and legend than with historical reality. This suggests that Charles sees the real battles he has mentioned the same way he sees mythical battles, meaning that Charles holds a romanticized, idealistic view of fighting and does not understand the reality of battle, which is often horrific rather than heroic.

Charles has learned about these battles as a child, during his “boyhood” education. This reflects the public school system in Britain, which emphasized ideas such as nationalism and taught heroic literature and the history of war to young boys. In the early-20th century, this education system encouraged young men to join the military in droves at the outbreak of World War I and World War II in Europe. Hooper is working-class, not highly educated like Charles, and so does not connect war with heroic. The names of these battles mean nothing to Hooper, and he does not aspire to martial glory.

☞ He told me and, on the instant, it was as though someone had switched off the wireless, and a voice that had been bawling in my ears, incessantly, fatuously, for days beyond number, had been suddenly cut short; an immense silence followed, empty at first, but gradually, as my outraged sense regained authority, full of a multitude of sweet and natural and long forgotten sounds: for he had spoken a name that was so familiar to me, a conjuror’s name of such ancient power, that, at its mere sound, the phantoms of those haunted late years began to take flight.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 16-17

Explanation and Analysis

Charles learns the name of the place to which his regiment has relocated. It is a country house, called Brideshead, where Charles spent time in his youth. The name brings back memories which have a calming effect on Charles. Charles is not a man at peace with himself—before he comes back to Brideshead, his thoughts are never quiet and there is an incessant drone in his mind. His return to Brideshead reminds him of a time in his life when he felt happy and content, and the effect of these memories brings him a sense of peace in the present. Brideshead is a symbol of the Catholic Church in the novel, and this suggests that Charles does not know peace when he is outside of the Church and only regains peace when he converts to Catholicism at the end of the novel, after his experience at Brideshead.

Part 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ In her spacious and quiet streets men walked and spoke as they had done in Newman’s day; her autumnal mists, her gray spring time, and the rare glory of her summer days—such as that day—when the chestnut was in flower and the bells rang out high and clear over her gables and cupolas, exhaled the soft airs of centuries of youth. It was this cloistral hush which gave our laughter its resonance, and carried it still, joyously, over the intervening clamor.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes his early impressions of Oxford around the time he met his friend, Sebastian. Charles remembers Oxford as a tranquil, old-fashioned place, untouched and uncorrupted by the modern world. “Newman’s day” is a reference to John Henry Newman, a Catholic priest and professor at Oxford in the mid-1800s, who became an important figure in Catholicism and wished to bring back many of the rituals and sacraments which were no longer used in the Catholic Church. This reference foreshadows Charles’s conversion to Catholicism at the novel’s end. It also suggests that the past is superior to the present. Charles likes Oxford because it seems like nothing has changed there, and Newman is a figure who disliked modern changes to Catholicism and wanted to return to the past.

Although Oxford is described as an “autumnal” city, Charles remembers its summer days first, even though these were “rare” This time in his life is associated primarily with the warmth of summer because he was young and happy, which later contrasts with the feeling of “midwinter” that Sebastian feels encroaching on his own sense of innocence. Oxford is a place of eternal youth because it is a university town and there are always young students there. The “cloistral hush” refers to the church like architecture, which makes Oxford appear sacred, further solidifying Charles’s perception of the university as a safe haven of innocence and fun that is insulated from the painful experiences that he and Sebastian go on to have later in life.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ Collins and I spent several economical and instructive weeks together in Ravenna. A bleak wind blew from the Adriatic among those mighty tombs. In a hotel bedroom designed for a warmer season, I wrote long letters to Sebastian and called daily at the post office for his answers.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian Flyte, Collins

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

Charles spends his Easter vacation with his friend Collins, whom he met early on at university. However, since then, Charles has fallen in love with Sebastian and wishes he was with Sebastian rather than Collins. Ravenna is a city in Northern Italy which was once the capital city of the Roman Empire. It is known for its intricate mosaics and beautiful churches, which only serves to remind Charles of Sebastian and the Marchmains because of their extravagance and associations with Catholicism. Charles's time with Collins is "economical" because Collins is middle-class, like Charles, and does not have a large disposable income. Collins is sensible and focuses on his studies, unlike Charles, who is preoccupied with Sebastian. Charles compares his time with Collins unfavorably to his time with Sebastian, who is very rich and leads an extravagant, frivolous life. In this sense, Collins represents more antiquated, conservative British culture, whereas Sebastian embodies newness, excitement, and the distinctly non-British traditions and aesthetics of Catholicism.

Charles mentions the tombs because the history of the place feels dead to him compared to his present life with Sebastian. A "bleak wind" blows and the place feels wintery, although it is spring, because Charles connects summer with joy and joy with Sebastian. He is temporarily cast out of summer and into winter while they are apart, suggesting that his happiness is entirely dependent upon being with Sebastian, rather than finding contentment within himself or a higher purpose.

☞ Now, that summer term with Sebastian, it seemed as though I was being given a brief spell of what I had never known, a happy childhood, and though its toys were silk shirts and liqueurs and cigars and its naughtiness high in the catalogue of grave sins, there was something of nursery freshness about us that fell little short of the joy of innocence.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes his early friendship with Sebastian, whom he meets at university, and recalls their first summer together. The early days of Charles and Sebastian's relationship are associated with summer because summer is traditionally associated with warmth and happiness, as it connotes the peak of life and nature in full bloom. Charles feels that his time with Sebastian is a second chance at a type of happiness which has passed him by: the carefree happiness of childhood. Charles has gone through a strict, public-school education, and his mother died when he was young, so his childhood has not been a careless, innocent time, but a time fraught with responsibility and care.

Charles says the "silk shirts" and "liqueurs" are "toys" because he and Sebastian experiment and play with them. Like children, they are experiencing new things (adult luxuries and alcohol) for the first time, and enjoy the freedom that comes with this. Life is new and "fresh" to them, and they have none of the cynicism or worldly experience of adulthood. It is possible that the "naughtiness" Charles refers to is a reference to homosexuality, but this is ambiguous throughout the novel. "Innocence" is also associated with the Garden of Eden story in Christianity, in which Adam and Eve were cast out of their earthly paradise because they disobeyed God. Similarly, Charles equates his time with Sebastian to a return to this innocence, before death and decay were part of the world.

☞ I could tell him, too, that to know and love one other human being is the root of all wisdom. But I felt no need for these sophistries as I sat before my cousin, saw him, freed from his inconclusive Struggle with Pindar, in his dark gray suit, his white tie, his scholar's gown; heard his grave tones and, all the time, savored the gillyflowers in full bloom under my windows. I had my secret and sure defense, like a talisman worn in the bosom, felt for in the moment of danger, found and firmly grasped.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Jasper, Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

Charles's cousin Jasper comes to warn him that his rebellious behavior during his first year at Oxford could earn him a bad reputation. Charles does not listen to Jasper, however, and only thinks about his love for Sebastian. Jasper advises Charles to pay attention to his studies. He, himself, is in the middle of studying "Pindar" (an ancient Greek poet) for an upcoming exam. Charles, in contrast, is unconcerned with his studies. He believes that true "wisdom" comes from love and that he learns more from his love for Sebastian than he ever could in books. Charles does not feel the need to defend himself "with these sophistries" to Jasper, because he feels that Jasper has never experienced real love and will not understand.

Jasper's dress, and his "grave" speech, suggest that he is a sensible, conventional, and respectable member of British society and that he does not deviate from the rules of propriety laid out for him. Charles thinks that these things are shallow and unimportant compared to the experience of love, which is set apart from the material world. The "gillyflowers in full bloom" represent the high point of Charles and Sebastian's love, and equate their relationship with youth, life, and summer: all things associated with pleasant sensations and with Christian ideas of Heaven. Charles thus feels that his relationship with Sebastian is perfect, pure and separate from the outside world. He ignores the metaphorical attacks of conventional people like Jasper, who might look down on their love, because he feels that his and Sebastian's relationship makes them untouchable.

☝ So through a world of piety I made my way to Sebastian.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

One Sunday morning at Oxford, Charles walks across campus to Sebastian's room. Most of the other students he passes are on their way to church. Charles feels rebellious because, while conventional students are going to church

and following religion, he is only concerned with his love for Sebastian. This suggests that Charles feels impious and that his love for Sebastian may be viewed as sinful by the outside world. It may be perceived as such because Sebastian is Catholic, and it was not considered proper for Protestants to mingle extensively with Catholics. Britain was a majority-Protestant country in this period, and Catholics were social outsiders and were generally associated with derogatory stereotypes. Their relationship may also be considered sinful because there are implications that it may be sexual, or at the very least romantic. Homosexuality was not legal or socially acceptable in Britain in this period.

Charles thus suggests that he challenges conventional notions of religious piety and cultural propriety. He also implies that, while other people worship God, he worships Sebastian and their relationship. Although this could be considered idolatry, Charles and Sebastian's relationship is associated with pure love. The novel also suggests that God has unconditional love for humanity and, therefore, Charles and Sebastian's love is spiritual because they, too, love each other unconditionally. This implies that there are different types of "piety," and that although Charles is not religious at this point, his love for Sebastian is like religious worship because it is natural, unconditional, and selfless.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

☝☝ Strife was internecine during the next fortnight, but I suffered the more, for my father had greater reserves to draw on and a wider territory for maneuver [...] He never declared his war aims, and I do not to this day know whether they were purely punitive—whether he had really at the back of his mind some geopolitical idea of getting me out of the country, as my Aunt Philippa had been driven to Bordighera and cousin Melchior to Darwin, or whether, as seems most likely, he fought for the sheer love of a battle in which indeed he shone.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Mr. Ryder

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

Charles spends all his money, during the Oxford term, and must go home to stay with his father in the summer holiday because he has no money to go anywhere else. Mr. Ryder does not seem to want Charles there, and tries to make Charles's stay at home unpleasant. Charles uses warlike language to describe the feud between himself and his

father. Like participants in a war, they fight over territory: the house in London, which Mr. Ryder wants to keep for himself, and that Charles wants to share with him over the summer vacation. Charles does not have a good relationship with his father and does not know why his father does not want him at home or why he makes life so hard for him while he is there. He suspects that his father's motives may be "punitive" because Mr. Ryder may want to punish Charles because he has spent his money carelessly all term. It is also possible that Mr. Ryder is simply an antagonistic person and enjoys conflict with other people. This supports the idea that humans are naturally warlike and struggle to be at peace.

The animosity between Charles and his father adds another layer to Charles's relationships with Sebastian and the rest of the Marchmains. It can be inferred from the death of Charles's mother and from the behavior of Charles's father in this passage that Charles had an unhappy childhood. Thus, his fixation on Sebastian, who epitomizes youth and innocence, makes sense—Charles is able to feel safe, loved, and carefree with Sebastian in a way that he clearly doesn't feel in his own home. And, having come from an unhappy home life, becoming somewhat of an honorary member of the Marchmain family as Charles gets to know Sebastian likely gives him a sense of belonging and camaraderie that he never experienced with his own family.

reflects the idea that Charles and Sebastian's relationship is "heavenly" and is a period of peace and happiness in both their lives. It is like heaven when they are alone because they are free from the constraints and responsibilities of the outside world, and can do exactly as they please. This suggests that this period is a time of freedom for them and is associated with the biblical Garden of Eden, in which Adam and Eve lived free from suffering, sin, and death, before they disobeyed God and were expelled from the Garden. Charles shaves because a beard is a sign of adulthood—Charles sheds this for a time at Brideshead in order to connect with the more innocent, childlike side of himself that Sebastian brings out in him.

In contrast to their private summer together, Julia represents the outside world. She is not a part of their solitary, and "heavenly," relationship and suggests the fashionable, conventional world beyond the walls of Brideshead, to which Julia will return. Julia's retreat from the house is equated with the retreat of an enemy—not unlike the retreat of the Germans in World War II. This suggests that, for a time, Charles and Sebastian are safe in their fortress at Brideshead. This feeling of insularity and protection is recalled when Charles describes a night of being bombed by the Germans during the war, and the relief that one feels when the siren sounds to say that the enemy have gone.

☝ "We'll have a heavenly time alone," said Sebastian, and when next morning, while I was shaving, I saw from my bathroom window Julia, with luggage at her back, drive from the forecourt and disappear at the hill's crest, without a backward glance, I felt a sense of liberation and peace such as I was to know years later when, after a night of unrest, the sirens sounded the "All Clear."

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Julia Flyte, Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

Charles goes to stay with Sebastian for the summer at Brideshead. Sebastian's sister, Julia, is with them for the first night but then leaves on her own vacation. Charles watches her leave that morning. Sebastian's statement

Part 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ Here under that high and insolent dome, under those coffered ceilings; here, as I passed through those arches and broken pediments to the pillared shade beyond and sat, hour by hour, before the fountain, probing its shadows, tracing its lingering echoes, rejoicing in all its clustered feats of daring and invention, I felt a whole new system of nerves alive within me, as though the water that spurted and bubbled among its stones, was indeed a life-giving spring.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes the architecture of Sebastian's family home: Brideshead. He spends a summer here with

Sebastian, and makes several attempts to sketch the rooms and the fountain outside Brideshead. The beautiful architecture of the house is a source of inspiration for Charles; it makes him want to draw so that he can capture its beauty. Brideshead symbolizes the Catholic Church throughout the novel, and this reflects the idea that Waugh is inspired by the Catholic Church as a source of beauty and meaning amidst the more ascetic style and traditions of British culture. The dome and the lavish design of the house represent the decorative churches of the Catholic religion, as opposed to deliberately simple and unadorned Protestant churches in England. Brideshead was built and designed by Catholics, and Charles suggests that Catholic architecture both inspires art and *is* art in and of itself. There is evidence of this in the long tradition of religious art in Western Europe before the Reformation, when the church split into Protestants and Catholics.

The fountain at Brideshead represents the Catholic sacrament of baptism in the novel. Charles feels that the fountain is a “life-giving spring” because baptism is symbolic of entry into the Catholic Church, and implies that the person who is baptized will receive new life after death through their relationship with God. Charles’s proximity to the fountain as he sketches, then, suggests that he is spiritually close to God while doing so. Art is not considered idolatry in Catholicism, but, instead, is a form of worship. Thus, Charles indirectly worships God when he worships beauty, and feels both artistic and divine inspiration.

term and find themselves in low spirits after the excitement of the holiday. Sebastian attempts to be cheerful, but it is clear that both he and Charles have lost their enthusiasm for student life. The progression of their relationship follows the progression of the seasons. It begins in spring, reaches its peak in summer, and as time wears on, begins to fade in autumn. Although Charles and Sebastian still love each other, the arrival of autumn suggests the beginning of old age. Of course, the boys are literally still very young, but they begin to lose their youthful, carefree excitement about life.

Charles and Sebastian live in the “shadows” because they begin to withdraw from social life at the university. Aloysius is Sebastian’s teddy bear, which he carried with him throughout his first year at Oxford. Aloysius symbolizes Sebastian’s stubborn attachment to youth and innocence, and as Sebastian grows more weary and troubled with age, he begins to forget Aloysius. A “fetish,” in this context, refers to an object believed to be magical or protective. Charles suggests that Sebastian used Aloysius to ward off adulthood. Charles refers to the idea that many tribal people worship objects that are unfamiliar to Christians, but that they gradually forget these objects as they are converted to Christianity by foreign missionaries. Similarly, Sebastian is steadfastly attached to Aloysius as a figure of his childhood, but gradually forgets about him once the mature relationships and problems he faces at university “convert” him into adulthood.

Part 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ “This is no way to start a new year,” said Sebastian; but this somber October evening seemed to breathe its chill, moist air over the succeeding weeks. All that term and all that year Sebastian and I lived more and more in the shadows and, like a fetish, hidden first from the missionary and at length forgotten, the toy bear, Aloysius, sat unregarded on the chest-of-drawers in Sebastian’s bedroom.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder, Sebastian Flyte (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

Charles and Sebastian return to Oxford after the summer

☞ Anthony Blanche had taken something away with him when he went; he had locked a door and hung the key on his chain; and all his friends, among whom he had always been a stranger, needed him now.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Anthony Blanche, Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

Anthony, a friend of Charles and Sebastian’s, leaves Oxford after the first year. He is an outsider among the other students and is known for his unconventional and eccentric behavior. Anthony’s departure has, in effect, removed the potential for controversy and taboo behavior among the students at Oxford. While Anthony is at Oxford, he is often picked on by the other boys in the year. He does not fit in

and is a “stranger” even among the people with whom he socializes. However, although the other students have often been critical of Anthony’s subversive behavior, they miss him when he is gone because his presence provides them with entertainment.

Most of the other boys at Oxford are conventional and conservative, and comply to the rigid social structures of propriety in British life. Sebastian, Charles, and Anthony stand out against this backdrop in their first year because they rebel against these structures. However, Anthony’s eccentric persona is not entirely an act of rebellion—he is different from the other students in many ways and is being himself when he engages in taboo behavior. The other students are bored and forlorn without Anthony, because they all conform to social rules and are, therefore, all the same. This makes them uninteresting to spend time with, and they get bored of each other. Although they often picked on Anthony, because he is different, this gave them a common purpose and a person around whom to gravitate. Without Anthony, their real, dull personalities are revealed.

☞ She found Sebastian subdued, with all his host of friends reduced to one, myself. She accepted me as Sebastian’s friend and sought to make me hers also, and in doing so, unwittingly struck at the roots of our friendship. That is the single reproach I have to set against her abundant kindness to me.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Lady Marchmain, Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

Lady Marchmain comes to visit Charles and Sebastian, and her presence in their lives has a lasting impact on their relationship. During his second year, Sebastian withdraws from social life at university and spends all his time with Charles, who is his closest friend. He is “subdued” after the high spirits of the previous year, because he has grown depressed and has lost his youthful enthusiasm for things. Lady Marchmain wants to get to know Sebastian and to understand and be involved in his life. She treats Charles as a friend because he is a friend of Sebastian’s.

Although Lady Marchmain does not intend this, her presence in Sebastian’s life makes Sebastian feel trapped

and controlled. Her attempts to befriend Charles “strike at the roots of their friendship” because she damages their relationship, and makes Sebastian feel that Charles may take her side against him or pass on news of his behavior to his mother. Charles and Sebastian’s relationship is connected with nature and with the seasons throughout the novel due to its natural progression. The idea that the “roots” of their relationship have been attacked suggests that their bond will soon wither, just as plants wither with the seasons, after their full bloom. Although Charles knows that Lady Marchmain did irreparable damage to his and Sebastian’s relationship, he cannot hold it against her because he knows that she meant well and did not mean to hurt him or her son.

☞ He claimed to love the past, but I always felt that he thought all the splendid company, living or dead, with whom he associated slightly absurd; it was Mr. Samgrass who was real, the rest were an insubstantial pageant. He was the Victorian tourist, solid and patronizing, for whose amusement these foreign things were paraded.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Ned, Sebastian Flyte, Lady Marchmain, Mr. Samgrass

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Samgrass is a professor at Oxford whom Lady Marchmain hires to write a book about her brother, Ned, who was killed in World War I. She also uses him to spy on Sebastian. Although Mr. Samgrass claims to “love the past,” Charles feels that he does not really love it because he does not respect it. Mr. Samgrass specializes in the historical study of monarchs, and he carries this work into his everyday life because he is a social climber and always wants to be associated with wealthy and important people, like the Marchmains. Charles thinks Mr. Samgrass is “absurd” because it is so obvious to him that Mr. Samgrass is obsessed with status and clings on to anyone who he feels can boost his own reputation.

Mr. Samgrass does not respect the past because he does not view the people who inhabited it as real or respect their traditions. Mr. Samgrass views history as something he can use for his own entertainment and social advancement,

rather than a serious study which he undertakes out of real interest or passion. His belief that the past is an “insubstantial pageant” suggests that he enjoys the spectacle of the history but has no interest in the individuals involved. Charles’s comparison of Mr. Samgrass to a “Victorian tourist” makes sense, then—educated and wealthy people in the Victorian Era often behaved like “tourists” because they examined the history of many cultures, but always believed that they were civilized, while people from the past or from cultures they considered backwards were not.

☞ And since Sebastian counted among the intruders his own conscience and all claims of human affection, his days in Arcadia were numbered. For in this, to me, tranquil time Sebastian took fright. I knew him well in that mood of alertness and suspicion, like a deer suddenly lifting his head at the far notes of the hunt; I had seen him grow wary at the thought of his family or his religion, now I found I, too, was suspect.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 144

Explanation and Analysis

Charles and Sebastian spend time with Sebastian’s family at Brideshead. Charles notices that, the more time he spends with the family, the more Sebastian withdraws from them and tries to escape. Sebastian used to feel like he was in paradise with Charles, when they were left alone together and did not have to answer to anyone. “*Arcadia*” is a term for a paradise on Earth based on the supposedly idyllic land of Arcadia in ancient Greece. However, this period of solitude cannot last forever, and gradually the realities and responsibilities of everyday life begin to encroach on this. Although Sebastian can escape from people in the outside world, he cannot escape from his own conscience and his own internal state, which is very unhappy. Therefore, no matter how much Sebastian withdraws from the world, he will be unhappy because his depression comes from inside himself.

Charles, unlike Sebastian, easily adapts to this more adult period of life. He likes Sebastian’s family and enjoys getting to know them. Sebastian views this as a betrayal and feels

that Charles gangs up against him with his family. He feels that, like his family, Charles now wants to “hunt” him and force him to live an adult life, which he feels he cannot cope with because he is still attached to the innocent, carefree days of his youth.

☞ Mr. Samgrass’s deft editorship had assembled and arranged a curiously homogeneous little body of writing—poetry, letters, scraps of a journal, an unpublished essay or two, which all exhaled the same high-spirited, serious, chivalrous, other-worldly air and the letters from their contemporaries, written after their deaths, all in varying degrees of articulateness, told the same tale of men who were, in all the full flood of academic and athletic success, of popularity and the promise of great rewards ahead, seen somehow as set apart from their fellows, garlanded victims, devoted to the sacrifice.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Ned, Sebastian Flyte, Lord Marchmain, Lady Marchmain, Mr. Samgrass

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

Lady Marchmain hires Mr. Samgrass to write a book about the life of her brother, Ned, who was killed as a young man in World War I. After Charles has spent Christmas at Brideshead, Lady Marchmain gives Charles a copy of this book to read. Charles suggests that Mr. Samgrass has edited the material which he collected for the book so that it has become “homogenous”—it all sounds the same. Mr. Samgrass is interested in flattering Lady Marchmain because she provides him with work. Charles suggests that Mr. Samgrass’s book idealizes Lady Marchmain’s brothers and does not make them seem like real men, but instead like mythical, “chivalric” knights who have died in battle.

Lady Marchmain’s brothers all died young and, therefore, are perceived to have never reached their full potential. Lady Marchmain idealizes them and believes that, because they showed such promise as young men, they would have gone on to have wonderful futures. However, it is impossible to prove this is the case. It is implied that Lord Marchmain and Sebastian are compared to these brothers and cannot live up to their standard. Lady Marchmain’s

family is Catholic, and the ideas of martyrdom and sacrifice are important in Catholicism. Although thousands of young men were killed in World War I, it is important for Lady Marchmain to believe that her brothers were killed for a special purpose and that their suffering makes them exceptionally holy and virtuous.

Part 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

“Well. I’m fond of him too, in a way, I suppose, only I wish he’d behave like anybody else. I’ve grown up with one family skeleton, you know papa. Not to be talked of before the servants, not to be talked of before us when we were children. If mummy is going to start making a skeleton out of Sebastian, it’s too much. If he wants to be always tight, why doesn’t he go to Kenya or somewhere where it doesn’t matter?”

Related Characters: Julia Flyte (speaker), Lord Marchmain, Lady Marchmain, Sebastian Flyte, Charles Ryder

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 186

Explanation and Analysis

Julia complains to Charles about Sebastian’s alcoholism during one of his visits to Brideshead. Julia is embarrassed by Sebastian’s behavior and worries that he will create a public scandal which will reflect badly on her. Julia is very young and is quite self-absorbed. Although she cares about her brother, she cares about herself and her own public image more. Julia calls Lord Marchmain a “skeleton” because he is a family secret and is not allowed to be mentioned. He has left Lady Marchmain and gone abroad to live with another woman.

The idea that Lady Marchmain will “make a skeleton out of Sebastian” suggests that she will cover up his existence and hide him from public view so that he will not embarrass the family. However, it also suggests that she may inadvertently kill him because, the more she tries to repress Sebastian, and the more she reminds him that she views him as a failure and an embarrassment, the more self-destructive he will become. This implies that both Julia and Lady Marchmain care more about their reputations than Sebastian’s health, and that they would rather he was abroad and forgotten about than in England to create gossip and scandal.

“But as I drove away and turned back in the car to take what promised to be my last view of the house, I felt that I was leaving part of myself behind, and that wherever I went afterwards I should feel the lack of it, and search for it hopelessly, as ghosts are said to do, frequenting the spots where they buried material treasures without which they cannot pay their way to the nether world.”

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Lady Marchmain, Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 194

Explanation and Analysis

After a disagreement with Lady Marchmain over the fact that Charles gave Sebastian money to buy alcohol, Charles leaves Brideshead for what he believes will be the last time. Charles has a strong emotional connection to Brideshead because it is a place where he has been happy and experienced pure love in his relationship with Sebastian. Charles feels that the loss of this love will leave him detached and alienated in the world, as he tries unsuccessfully to recapture it. This gradually comes true for Charles throughout the novel, as he is never able to find true love or a lasting sense of fulfillment in his adult life. Charles is cast out of a place he associates with paradise, or heaven, and this suggests that the loss of Sebastian for him is like a biblical fall from grace, in which Adam and Eve were cast out of their earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, because they disobeyed God.

Charles has metaphorically sinned against his relationship with Sebastian because he has been curious about Sebastian’s family despite Sebastian’s warnings about them, just as Adam and Eve were hungry for knowledge, and disobeyed god to gain experience. Brideshead symbolizes the Catholic Church throughout the book, and Charles is cast out of Brideshead and out of the Marchmain family in part because he is not a Catholic. This suggests that he cannot get into heaven, and this makes Charles “like a ghost” who has no way to enter the afterlife. This also relates to Sebastian’s comment earlier in the novel that he would like to bury gold in places he has been happy. This, combined with Charles’s ongoing attachment to Brideshead, suggests that places have magical significance to people when they have emotional connections there.

Part 2, Chapter 2 Quotes

Foreigners returning on post from their own waste lands wrote home that here they seemed to catch a glimpse of the world they had believed lost forever among the mud and wire, and through those halcyon weeks Julia darted and shone, part of the sunshine between the trees, part of the candle-light in the mirror's spectrum, so that elderly men and women, sitting aside with their memories, saw her as herself the blue-bird.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Julia Flyte

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

Charles hears that Julia's coming out ball is extremely beautiful, and is one of the finest of the season. In contrast with the aftermath of World War I happening at the same time, the ball is a lighthearted escape from the violence, death, and catastrophic changes happening as a result of the conflict. Charles refers to other Europeans as "foreigners" and suggests that they write back to countries such as France and Germany, which were badly damaged during World War I. The use of the term "waste lands" to describe European countries in the aftermath of World War I refers both to the idea that these lands have been laid to waste by war, and is a reference to T. S. Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*, which deals with the breakdown of social, cultural, and psychological boundaries after World War I. The "mud and wire" relates to the trenches and battle fields of the World War I.

For the survivors of World War I, the Europe of the past, before the outbreak of the war, has been destroyed and will never be the same. This suggests both that countries and cultures change as time moves on, and, also suggests that these people have been disillusioned or psychologically damaged by the war and have lost their ability to hope and enjoy life. The reference to "halcyon weeks" refers to the period of Julia's social introduction, when she attended parties with other young girls and was the talk of fashionable society, again emphasizing the contrast between the relatively trivial events of civilian life with the horrors of the war.

This was the creature, neither child nor woman, that drove me through the dusk that summer evening, untroubled by love, taken aback by the power of her own beauty, hesitating on the cool edge of life; one who had suddenly found herself armed, unawares; the heroine of a fairy story turning over in her hands the magic ring; she had only to stroke it with her fingertips and whisper the charmed word, for the earth to open at her feet and belch forth her titanic servant, the fawning monster who would bring her whatever she asked, but bring it, perhaps, in unwelcome shape.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Julia Flyte

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes Julia as a young woman, on the night she meets him at the station and takes him to Brideshead. Julia is on the "edge of life" because she is midway through the transition between an adolescent girl and an adult woman. Charles idealizes Julia and views her as an "unearthly creature" rather than a human being. In early-20th century society, Julia's beauty is her greatest power because it was deemed the priority of young woman to look for a husband, and many men wanted a beautiful bride. Charles depicts her beauty as miraculous and inexplicable. To Charles, it is part of the mysterious beauty of life which seems to have no reason to exist. This supports the idea that Charles loves aesthetics and seeks out beauty for its own sake.

Julia's power is framed as somehow malevolent. It is suggested that she holds back from using it because, if she does use it, she may not be able to undo the spell she casts. This implies that, if Julia uses her beauty to attract a husband, she may not be able to predict how the man will treat her or what their marriage will be like. This suggests that, although beauty is a source of power, it is a limited one, because Julia, as a young woman with limited rights and as a Catholic who cannot divorce, cannot protect herself from a husband who may mistreat her.

●● He had stepped straight from the underworld into the world of Brenda Champion who was herself the innermost of a number of concentric ivory spheres. Perhaps Julia recognized in Brenda Champion an intimation of what she and her friends might be in twelve years' time; there was an antagonism between the girl and the woman that was hard to explain otherwise. Certainly the fact of his being Brenda Champion's property sharpened Julia's appetite for Rex.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Brenda Champion, Rex Mottram, Julia Flyte

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 211-212

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes the man whom Julia falls in love with and eventually marries: Rex Mottram. Rex is a businessman who has earned his money rather than inherited it, and is therefore from a different world than Julia and most of her social group. Julia is an aristocrat from a long family line of wealth. Her social status depends on her family and their reputation, whereas Rex's reputation is something that he must build and manage himself. British society is described as a clique, in which one must belong to an inner "circle" to succeed, and it is implied that Brenda Champion is aristocratic, or very well-bred, since she is at the heart of these circles. Rex and Brenda's world is an "underworld" because there is nothing grand or noble about it. Rex is likely from a lower-class, family and has perhaps had to engage in seedy and unpleasant activities to get ahead.

Julia is antagonistic toward Brenda because she embodies who Julia herself could become. Julia essentially represents youth, while Brenda Champion represents age. Brenda Champion is married, and it is clearly not a happy marriage since she has an affair with Rex. Julia, like most young people, does not want to age and has great hopes for herself in the future. Her antagonism to Brenda, then, suggests her antagonism towards loss of youth and the passage of time, and a fear of having an unfulfilling future.

●● And Lady Marchmain saw this and added it to her new grief for Sebastian and her old grief for her husband and to the deadly sickness in her body, and took all these sorrows with her daily to church; it seemed her heart was transfixed with the swords of her dolours, a living heart to match the plaster and paint; what comfort she took home with her, God knows.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Sebastian

Flyte, Lord Marchmain, Lady Marchmain, Rex Mottram, Julia Flyte

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 217

Explanation and Analysis

Julia renounces her Catholicism so that she can marry Rex, who is divorced and therefore cannot become a Catholic. Lady Marchmain has a terminal disease and is very hurt by Julia's behavior, which she views as just another thing for her to bear. Sebastian, too, has rejected Catholicism and has become estranged from his family in his descent into alcoholism. Lord Marchmain has left Lady Marchmain and taken a lover. Lady Marchmain is hurt by the rebellion of her family against her religious beliefs—she is so pious that she views their rejection of Catholicism as a personal slight. Despite Julia merely the Church, not her mother, Lady Marchmain feels abandoned and hurt by her too. She is also generally sad because she is in pain and dying. Instead of being angry at God for these misfortunates, however, she becomes more religious and spends more time in church.

Lady Marchmain seems to view herself as a martyr because she suffers so much. Martyrdom is an important aspect of Catholicism, as martyrs are exceptionally holy figures who allow themselves to be tortured and killed for their beliefs. This both shows their dedication to God and imitates Christ's suffering at his crucifixion. It also supports the idea that God loves those who suffer most. Therefore, Lady Marchmain is comforted because she can feel sorry for herself and view herself as a victim of persecution, like a martyr. The "swords" of her suffering ("dolours") represent the devotional images of martyrs which are common in religious art. These images of saints are often in Catholic churches, made from plaster, and represent the saint's death.

Part 3, Chapter 1 Quotes

●● For nearly ten dead years after that evening with Cordelia I was borne along a road outwardly full of change and incident, but never during that time, except sometimes in my painting—and that at longer and longer intervals—did I come alive as I had been during the time of my friendship with Sebastian. I took it to be youth, not life, that I was losing.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Cordelia Flyte, Sebastian Flyte

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 259

Explanation and Analysis

After he loses touch with Sebastian, Charles becomes a successful artist and has an apparently exciting career. However, although he appears successful outwardly, internally, Charles does not enjoy his work or his life. Charles feels as though he does not “change” because he cannot feel anything. Change and growth are associated with emotional development, but since Charles feels that nothing stimulates his emotions, he does not enjoy the emotional benefits of the external changes which take place in his life. Charles describes the years as “dead” because they are emotionally stagnant for him, and he feels as though he is dead inside. Even his art, which used to provide him with satisfaction, now leaves him cold because his artistic life is tied to his emotional life. His time at university with Sebastian is still the most profound emotional experience of his life and this suggests that, despite the things that have happened to him, nothing compares to his love for Sebastian and the youthful innocence he associates with this time. Charles wants to recapture the feelings he had with Sebastian, but cannot move forward to create new happiness for himself because he is too idealistically attached to the past.

☞ The financial slump of the period, which left many painters without employment, served to enhance my success, which was, indeed, itself a symptom of the decline. When the water-holes were dry people sought to drink at the mirage. After my first exhibition I was called to all parts of the country to make portraits of houses that were soon to be deserted or debased; indeed, my arrival seemed often to be only a few paces ahead of the auctioneer’s, a presage of doom.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 260

Explanation and Analysis

Charles describes his career as a painter of English country houses and the types of commissions which he is offered. Charles describes an economic recession which took place in Britain during this period. In a recession, times are harder, even for wealthy people, as there is less money available and work is in short supply. Therefore, in times of recession,

people remember more successful economic periods favorably because these were times when they enjoyed more comfortable and stable lifestyles and incomes. Charles’s work as a painter of country houses is basically an exercise in nostalgia, because society was changing so drastically during this period. The rise of the middle-class, and the breakdown of the class system in Britain more generally, means that powerful families who were once extremely socially important and who lived in these country houses are now in decline and suffer financial losses.

As a result of this, many of their country homes are being sold, torn down, and replaced with more modern buildings, and Charles is hired to paint these houses before they are destroyed. This increases the allure and popularity of Charles’s work, as people hire him to capture something which is about to be lost. This gives his work a sense of lost potential, as people will never know how these houses might have been used in future, and lost beauty and grandeur. Charles views himself as a sign of death for these houses because, if he is commissioned to paint them, it is probably because they are about to be destroyed and their owners want them to be memorialized. This ties into the fact that Charles feels that he is emotionally dead inside after losing his ties with Sebastian and his family.

Epilogue Quotes

☞ No, I said, not what it was built for. Perhaps that’s one of the pleasures of building, like having a son, wondering how he’ll grow up. I don’t know; I never built anything, and I forfeited the right to watch my son grow up. I’m homeless, childless, middle-aged, love-less. Hooper.

Related Characters: Charles Ryder (speaker), Hooper –

Related Themes:     

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 401

Explanation and Analysis

Charles discusses Brideshead with a younger officer, named Hooper. When Charles returns to Brideshead with his Company, he finds that it has undergone many changes. For one, it is now an army based rather than a family home. Hooper says that it was not built to be an army base and Charles agrees. Charles is an artist, however, and understands that, when a piece of art is produced, the artist cannot control how this work will be received or

interpreted once it is publicly displayed. Although Charles is usually conservative, he acknowledges that one of the pleasures of creativity is that the end result (a building or a piece of art) is not something fixed, but is always subject to change. This suggests that the return to Brideshead has already brought about a change in Charles and made him more open-minded.

Charles compares artistic pursuits to having children because reproduction is an act of creation. He means his statement literally, because he is absent in his children's lives, and therefore, will not see them grow up. However, this idea also refers to God as the creator of humanity. It

suggests that although God had creative control over humanity, according to Catholicism, he has given humans free will so that they have freedom to develop in different ways. Charles's acknowledgement that he is "love-less" refers to the loss of his personal relationships and the absence of professional or spiritual passion in his life. However, the fact that Charles acknowledges this suggests that he surrenders to it and will no longer try to recapture what is gone, but will potentially seek love in new and more fulfilling ways. This aligns with his conversion to Catholicism, which is heavily implied at the novel's end.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE

On a misty spring morning in England in 1944, Captain Charles Ryder looks out across the army camp in which he and the rest of the “C” Company have lived since the previous winter. The camp is on the outskirts of the city and, as Charles looks down at it, he realizes that he no longer enjoys his role in the army, and that he is not afraid of what is to come because this camp is the worst place he has been.

The army offices at the camp have been set up in an old farmhouse, which was due to be demolished before the start of the war. Charles can see that people had already begun to lay pipes and dig up the fields before the war started. Opposite the camp is a lunatic asylum, and the soldiers make jokes about the inmates there. Charles thinks that madness is the natural result of “a century of progress,” but one of his subordinates, a young man named Hooper, is jealous of the inhabitants of the asylum and comments that Hitler would have killed them all. He says that “Hitler has the right idea.”

When the “C” Company first arrived at the camp, they were enthusiastic about the future and heard rumors that they would soon be sent to the Middle East. However, as time went on, they began to lose hope and got used to everyday life in the camp and venturing into the nearby town. Charles is their commanding officer and is meant to inspire the men and keep their spirits up, but he cannot motivate himself to do this. Most of the men he knew in his battalion at the start of the war have been killed or promoted, and the replacements drink every evening before dinner.

During his time at the camp, Charles begins to feel his age. That morning, as he lay in bed, he realized that his “last love,” his love for the army, had passed away. It reminds him of the breakdown of a marriage, in which one partner suddenly realizes they no longer love the other. He feels that he knows army life intimately, the way one knows a wife, but now, after four years, he is disillusioned with it and can see through the charms he once admired.

Brideshead Revisited is set during World War II. Although being a soldier was generally revered as a brave and honorable pursuit during this time, it's clear that Charles is disillusioned with the war and no longer passionate about his role as a Captain.



Ironically, World War II, which caused destruction throughout Europe, has saved the farmhouse from demolition and given it a new purpose. The inmates mirror the soldiers, as the soldiers are essentially trapped in their military and cannot escape and war, which itself is like a form of madness. Along with World Wars I and II, the early-20th century was also a period of extreme technological and social change. Although this is commonly thought to represent “progress,” Charles thinks that it is really a regression and that the modern world is a brutal place. This is confirmed when Hooper implies that it would be better to kill the lunatics: Hooper is a symbol of modernity to Charles, and his comment supports the idea that the modern world is callous.



Many men considered it to be a matter of pride and honor to participate in World War II and fight for their countries. However, even Charles, the company's Captain, cannot muster up the sense of duty necessary to motivate his own men. This suggests that Charles has become gripped by the tedium of everyday life in the camp and thus disillusioned with his former notions of what serving in the army would be like. He has clearly lost control of his men, and discipline is lax in the camp.



Youth is associated with love throughout the novel, and Charles likely feels old because, like a young man growing apart from his first love, he has come to recognize the military for what it really is beneath its glamorized public persona. His comparison between war and divorce suggests that Charles has been disillusioned in romantic love as well as in his career as a Captain, and that he may be divorced himself.



The “C” Company must get ready to leave the camp that morning. Charles thinks that the camp looks like the site of an archeological dig. Charles tries to imagine the way that academics in the future might write about the site. They might think that it was evidence of an ancient civilization ruled by “tribal anarchy.”

Charles finds that a window has been broken in the night and has not been recorded in the “damages book,” and goes in search of Hooper, who is meant to inspect the camp. Hooper is unpopular with the other men and not very good at his job, but Charles likes him. He feels sorry for Hooper because, on Hooper’s first night at the camp, the Colonel took a dislike to him and made him cut his hair in front of all the other men.

Hooper is not enthusiastic about the army and has never dreamed about being a soldier or read about historical battles, the way that Charles did as a boy. Hooper loves efficiency but is very inefficient and impractical himself. Charles feels that Hooper represents the younger generation and playfully replaces the word “youth” with the word “Hooper” when he hears about young people’s activities.

Hooper trudges out to meet Charles and explains that he is late because he had to pack his kit. Charles tells Hooper that his servant should pack for him, but Hooper says he does not like to irritate the servants in case they get back at him another time. Charles sends Hooper off to inspect the camp and the C.O. approaches Charles. The C.O. spots the broken window and rebukes Charles for not writing it up. He then inspects a nearby ditch and triumphantly comes across a patch of rubbish that has been left there. He tells Charles to clean it up, but Charles orders another officer to do it, and the C.O. slinks away.

Charles is clearly educated and has an academic background. He has read academic books and can imagine the style in which they are written. Charles is also very detached and lives in an imaginative world of his own. He believes that archeologists in the future will think that 20th-century society was violent and lawless, which Charles suggests it is, although it pretends to be “civilized.”



The “damages book” implies that there extensive records are kept of everything that happens in the army. This suggests that there is also a dull, bureaucratic side to military life—not unlike the civilian sector. Charles is clearly quite a sympathetic man and pities Hooper because he is socially ostracized. The Colonel likely cut Hooper’s hair to make an example of him for the other men, and to reinforce the strict uniformity and discipline that the army requires.



Hooper has been conscripted into the army, whereas Charles signed up willingly and has a lifelong belief in patriotism and the idea of war as heroic—an idea that has clearly come to pass as Charles has come to recognize the tedium and meaninglessness of war. Hooper represents the modern world for Charles, suggesting that the 20th century, like Hooper himself, loves efficiency but is inefficient. This is demonstrated by World War I and World War II, in which countries tried to use efficient new weaponry to fight wars. However, war dragged on for much longer than expected, and the result was more chaos and destruction, rather than a cleaner or less painful conflict.



Charles’s nonchalant attitude toward servants suggests that he is of a relatively high social class, and that having family servants was a common occurrence when he was growing up. Hooper is younger than Charles, and from a working-class background, so he’s less familiar with this. The idea that servants will “get back” at their masters suggests that the discipline between servants and masters has broken down and predicts that, soon, having servants will be a thing of the past. The C. O. looks for reasons to discipline Charles, because Charles disrespects his authority. However, the C. O. backs down, and this suggests that the C. O. has lost his men’s respect.



The Company depart, and Hooper asks Charles where they are going. Charles doesn't know, and Hooper hopes that they will be deployed to fight just so that he can say he has been in the war. They get on a train which travels slowly through the English countryside. The C.O. calls Charles and the other officers into his carriage and berates them again for the rubbish left at camp. He tells them that when they arrive that at the next location, the "C" Company will unpack the train. Hooper complains to Charles that the men will be annoyed: their company gets all the worst jobs.

They arrive in the dark that evening, and Charles orders his men to unload. They seem pleased to have a real job to do. Another officer approaches and tells Charles that they are camped in a large country manor with a "village and a pub" nearby. Charles finally gets to bed in his hut in the early hours of the morning, just as it begins to rain.

The next morning, Charles asks his second-in-command where they are. When the man tells him the name of the place, Charles feels as though all the noise in his mind has been muted, and a sense of peace and silence reigns. Charles goes to the door of the hut and looks out; he sees the river, called the Bride, which flows among the trees to an old "Doric temple." The grounds are beautiful and were designed to look old and grow in beauty as the place aged.

Hooper trudges up to Charles and tells him that the house is hidden behind a nearby hill. Hooper has had a look around and says the house is very old and grand, with a Roman Catholic chapel built onto it. In the chapel, an old man is taking mass with a priest. Hooper says that there is a **fountain** outside the house and Charles tells him that he knows this: he has been here before.

PART 1, CHAPTER 1

Charles has been to this house, **Brideshead** Castle, many times, but he remembers his first visit most fondly. It is 1923 and he is a student at Oxford University. On a spring day during the "Eight Weeks" holiday, and Charles sets out on an excursion with his friend Sebastian. Charles remembers Oxford as a beautiful city, full of history and "youthful laughter" because of the students who live there.

Hooper does not dream of military glory and simply wants to fit in with other men his age who have been part of the war. The C. O. punishes Charles's company for Charles's insolence. This clearly happens often and suggests that Charles dislikes authority and is not a good leader for his men.



The men like this job because it gives them a sense of purpose. This suggests that they lack direction while they wait to be deployed in army camps, demonstrating the mundane reality of military life that fails to live up to how the soldiers likely imagined their time at war would be.



It is implied that Charles knows the place, and that his return to it brings him a sense of calm, as though he has returned home. This suggests that Charles feels out of place in his current role, and perhaps in his current stage in life as a whole, and that his past holds a sense of peace that he's been lacking. The grounds of the house have been designed to look old, suggesting that whoever built them believed that the past is superior to, and more beautiful than, the present.



The grounds are very large, and this is clearly a stately manor and the home of a very wealthy Catholic family. There were many country houses of this sort in England, which were repurposed during World War II, and which remain in existence as heritage sites today.



"Eight Weeks" is a summer vacation at Oxford in which a university boat race takes place. Charles and Sebastian are clearly separate from the camaraderie of team sports and prefer to spend time alone with each other. Charles's early relationship with Sebastian is associated with the revitalization and liveliness of spring and summer because they are both young and new to university, which represents that start of a new life for them.



During the Eight Weeks, the college is in a state of chaos because a large group of young women have come to visit the campus. A ball is held for them on the quad, outside Charles's dorm, and Charles's servant, Lunt, is very annoyed about this disturbance. He tells Charles that, if he does not have a girlfriend, he should eat his meals out. Charles confirms that he does not have a girlfriend and agrees. Lunt complains that this sort of thing never happened at Oxford before the war.

While Lunt talks, Sebastian arrives, and Lunt shuffles off to continue his chores. Sebastian asks Charles what all the fuss is about and says that there are women all over the campus. He tells Charles that they will go on a day out, to stay "out of danger," and visit a friend named Hawkins, whom Charles has never met. Sebastian has borrowed a motorcar from a "gloomy" man named Hardcastle, who claims to know his father. Sebastian says that this cannot be true because his father is a "social leper." The pair set out in Hardcastle's car with Sebastian's **teddy bear**, Aloysius, propped up between them.

They park the car midmorning and sit on a grassy verge under the shade of a tree. Sebastian has brought wine and strawberries. Charles sits with him and he feels as though he is floating on air. Sebastian says that he would like to bury a pot of gold under the tree. He would like to leave something in every place he has felt happy, so that when he is old and sad, he can come back and uncover them to remember his youth.

Although Charles has been at Oxford for several terms, he views his first meeting with Sebastian as the beginning of his university life. They meet by accident one evening because Charles has a ground floor room on the quad. Charles's cousin Jasper (who is also studying at Oxford) warned against this room and told Charles to change his lodgings.

Women were not allowed to attend universities in 1920s England, including Oxford. Universities were male-dominated spaces and the presence of women is a breakdown of the usual order. As a result, Charles likely has little romantic experience with women at this point in his life. Lunt's annoyance at the ball suggests that he, too, views the women's permission onto campus discomfiting and foreign—a presence that connotes change and modernity. He looks back on the period before World War I as a better time and is nostalgic for the past.



Sebastian's teasing of Charles shows that they clearly have a close, flirtatious relationship. Although it is implied that they are romantically attracted to each other, it is not specified whether their relationship is sexual or not. Sebastian is an aristocrat and, therefore, considered socially important. His comment that his father is a social pariah therefore suggests there is a scandal in his family.



Charles's joy in the company of Sebastian suggests that he is in love with him. Waugh's choice of language here—"floating on air"—aligns the experience of youthful innocence with another world, closer to Heaven than Earth. Sebastian's comment, by contrast, is ominous and foreshadows his own decline as the novel continues. Although Sebastian and Charles are happy now, the reader already knows that Charles becomes disillusioned and miserable later in life, and Sebastian may experience a similar fate given their close bond as young men.



When Charles meets Sebastian, he feels as though it is the start of a new life, an obvious exaggeration that makes it clear to the reader just how much he idealizes his relationship with Sebastian. In contrast with Charles and Sebastian's carefree spirits, Jasper serves as an older and more rational counterpart. His advice suggests that Charles, despite his strong emotions, is still relatively young and naïve.



Charles's father has been no help at all, and has not told him anything about Oxford except that he should "always wear a tall hat on Sundays." Jasper, however, has a long list of rules for Charles on how to behave at Oxford. He is an older student and very involved in university societies and committees.

Charles's father's advice is clearly useless and does not tell Charles anything about what to expect at university—he is likely speaking from an antiquated perspective when wearing a top hat may have been legitimate advice. Jasper is a conventional person and believes in conformity, and thus represents the more conservative, traditional side of British culture that Charles and Sebastian resist. He likely views extra-curricular activities as important ways to network and build a career for oneself, highlighting the importance of personal effort and a self-made mindset in the "new money" class of Britain during this time.



Among his advice to Charles, Jasper tells him to keep away from "Anglo-Catholics" and to get a new room because, with a room on the ground floor, people will call in all the time. Charles does not change his room, however, because there are wildflowers which grow beneath his window and give the room a beautiful scent.

Jasper thinks that Charles must know the right people to get on well at Oxford, and in English society, which generally places a strong emphasis on conformity and dislikes people who do not fit in. He feels that Anglo-Catholics (English Catholics) are the wrong type of people because they do not conform to the predominantly Protestant culture in Britain. Charles does not listen to Jasper's advice because he wants to experience life (to literally stop and smell the flowers) rather limit himself to purely rational or sensible experiences.



Charles makes friends with a group of respectable, middle-class students, who work hard and are good scholars. However, he feels that there is more than this to discover at Oxford. When he meets Sebastian, he quickly forgets these early friendships and feels that there is more to life than study. Charles notices Sebastian on campus before he meets him. He thinks Sebastian is very beautiful but very eccentric, and notices that he carries a **teddy bear** everywhere with him.

At first, Charles meets people who are like himself. Charles is middle-class and, although he is financially comfortable, he will have to work hard to build a career for himself. He cannot rely entirely on inherited wealth. Sebastian, who is a Lord, faces none of these restrictions. Sebastian's priorities, therefore, are very different from those of his middle-class peers. Charles thus admires Sebastian's carefree eccentricities because Charles desperately wants to believe that there is more to life than work and social advancement.



Charles first sees Sebastian, and his **teddy**, outside the college barber shop. When Charles goes inside to get his hair cut, the barber tells him that Sebastian is the son of the Marquis of **Brideshead** and that he came into the shop to buy a "hairbrush for his teddy bear." The barber clearly thinks Sebastian is very amusing, but Charles finds him strange, and later that term sees him sporting a false beard.

Sebastian's teddy is a symbol of his reluctance to let go of his youth, since teddy bears are usually carried by children. Sebastian wants to prolong his youth and is nostalgic for his childhood. He pretends that he believes the teddy is real, just as a child believes their stuffed toys are alive. His habit of bringing the teddy bear in public also suggests that he is an exhibitionist and likes to draw attention to himself.



One evening, in March, Charles invites his friends to his room for drinks. They make dreary conversation, and Charles can hear drunken laughter outside. It is warm in the room, so he goes to open the window. As he does this, he is surprised to see Sebastian standing outside on the quad. Sebastian looks drunk and pale and, a moment later, he leans in through the window and vomits into Charles's room. Sebastian's friends rush up and drag him away. One of them explains that Sebastian has not drunk too much wine, but too many different types. Charles is too shocked to reply and wonders what to tell Lunt.

The next morning, Lunt arrives, and Charles guiltily pays him to clean up the mess before he leaves for lectures. When Charles returns home, he finds that his room is full of flowers and that there is note of apology from Sebastian inviting Charles to lunch. Charles hurries out to Sebastian's room. He is hopeful about this surprising turn of events and is eager "for love" and new experiences.

Sebastian is alone when Charles arrives. He is eating plover's eggs, and tells Charles that he is very hungry and has taken a mixture of cures for his hangover. Charles is, again, struck by Sebastian's beauty and notices that the room is strangely decorated. Three young men from Eton arrive and greet Charles and Sebastian coolly. The last person to arrive is Anthony Blanche, a young foreign student. He is dressed extravagantly, and Charles realizes he has seen and noticed him before.

Charles contrasts the boring conversation inside the room to the drunken hilarity outside, and clearly wishes he was out there and not inside. He symbolically opens the window to new experiences, beyond his own small circle, and this leads to his friendship with Sebastian. Given that Sebastian is drunk to the point of sickness when Charles first meets him, this foreshadows hedonism, and the potential for trouble and dissolution, in Charles and Sebastian's future relationship. The fact that Lunt, Charles's servant, must clean up the mess the next day implies that neither Sebastian nor Charles will have to face any real consequences for their future irresponsibility.



Sebastian's extravagant gesture further emphasizes the eccentricity that Charles observed in him earlier. Flowers are associated with freshness, new life, and summer, which are also associated with the early honeymoon phase of Charles and Sebastian's relationship. Charles is pleased that something out of the ordinary has happened and is keen to try new things.



Plover's eggs are a delicacy and associated with the very wealthy, further highlighting Sebastian's affluence compared to Charles and his other peers. Sebastian's odd taste in décor matches his eccentric personality and his desire to stand out. This supports the ways in which architecture and aesthetics mirror the internal states of the characters throughout the novel—particularly the grandiose style of Brideshead, Sebastian's family home. Eton is a prestigious private school, which was traditionally attended by the very rich. Like students at Oxford, those at Eton are likely relatively reserved and conservative due to their social consciousness. Anthony clearly does not fit in with this group, as he is eccentric and unconventional like Sebastian.



Anthony is as an “aesthete” and is known for “challenging conventions” on campus. Charles likes him and finds him entertaining. After lunch, Anthony goes to the balcony and recites a verse from T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* through a loudspeaker as a group of young men pass by. He leaves soon after this and, on his way out, playfully tells Sebastian that he would like to pierce him with arrows. The other young men leave, and Charles thinks that he should go too.

When Charles tries to leave, however, Sebastian says they must go to the Botanical Gardens together. Charles returns to his room after their visit to the gardens and, for the first time, is unhappy with the way he has decorated. The only thing in the room that seems “real” to him is a print of Van Gogh’s painting of sunflowers. From that day on, Charles and Sebastian are very close, and this is how they end up on an outing together one summer morning, in Hardcastle’s car.

That day, after Charles and Sebastian have stopped under the tree at the roadside, they drive toward their destination and arrive midafternoon. They drive through a pair of large, iron gates and along a winding path through trees, until the house at **Brideshead** comes into view. It is a huge, ancient manor, with a large domed roof. Charles is amazed and asks if this is Sebastian’s home. Sebastian says it is his family’s house, and Charles thinks this is a strange way to phrase it. The family are away in London, Sebastian says, so Charles will not be able to meet them.

An “aesthete” is a person who is interested in art and visual beauty. Anthony does not try to fit in at Oxford and, instead, plays up his unconventionality. The verse Anthony reads is narrated by Tiresias, a Greek prophet who was both male and female, and makes a reference to the Trojan war. The young men who listen below will go on to fight in World War II, and this suggests that Anthony is somewhat of a symbolic prophet figure of the future’s misfortunes. Here, he represents modern culture, in which many of the boundaries around sexuality and gender will dissolve: Anthony’s parting comment is a playful reference to homosexuality (Anthony is heavily implied to be gay). It also refers to Saint Sebastian, a Catholic martyr who was killed with arrows, foreshadowing that Sebastian Flyte, who shares this saint’s namesake, will experience similar judgment and persecution.



Nature and gardens are associated with youth and spring throughout the novel because of their connection to growth and fertility. These concepts are not only associated with childhood and birth, but also with God and the idea that God made the world fertile and life-giving for humanity. It also suggests that Charles and Sebastian’s relationship is in its first spring-like bloom, but that their bond, like the seasons, is subject to change. As an artist, Charles is clearly drawn to aesthetic beauty and wants to capture it. Since he finds Sebastian beautiful, he wants to emulate him and is therefore unsatisfied with his own room compared to Sebastian’s. The Van Gogh print looks “real” to Charles because it now seems to be the only truly aesthetically beautiful thing in the room—having met Sebastian, Charles seems to view his surroundings with a fresh perspective. With this, the novel suggests that youthful love is a source of beauty, as well as mental clarity, renewal, and rebirth.



Brideshead Castle symbolizes the Catholic Church. The dome is a reference to the dome of St Peter’s, the Catholic Church in the Vatican in Rome, where the Pope lives. Sebastian seems detached from his family home and does not view himself as part of the family because he does not conform with their religious views. Sebastian is not Catholic, although his family is, and he is therefore detached from his family as well as the grandeur presence of Brideshead itself.



They park the car and enter the house through the servant's corridor. Sebastian takes Charles upstairs to his old nursery to meet Nanny Hawkins, who raised Sebastian when he was a boy. They find the old lady asleep, but she is delighted to see them when she wakes up. Nanny tells them that Julia, Sebastian's sister, is on her way to **Brideshead** and will arrive shortly, but Sebastian says that they cannot stay.

Nanny shows Charles and Sebastian a newspaper cutting which announces Julia's "coming out ball," and Charles looks around the room while Sebastian and Nanny chatter. Nanny tries to persuade them to stay for tea with Julia, but after a short time Sebastian insists they must go. On the way out, Charles asks Sebastian why he doesn't want him to meet his family. Sebastian replies that his family are "madly charming" and always take things away from him. He doesn't want them to meet Charles and take him away too.

Charles follows Sebastian but begs to see some more of the house before they go. Sebastian irritably agrees and leads Charles around some of the rooms. He takes Charles to see the chapel and, when he enters, dips his fingers into a basin of water and crosses himself. Charles copies him, but Sebastian seems offended by this and snaps at him. The chapel was a wedding present from his father, Lord Marchmain, to his mother, Lady Marchmain.

As they drive away from the house, they pass Julia being driven towards the entrance, and Sebastian is relieved that they have missed her. He sulks on the way home and asks Charles why he is so interested in his family. Charles says that he is interested because Sebastian is so mysterious about them, and Sebastian apologizes for his bad mood. Charles tells Sebastian that he hardly has any family: only his father. His mother was killed in World War I after she joined a missionary group in Bosnia.

It was common for children of wealthy parents to be raised by a servant or nanny. Sebastian is attached to his nanny, both because she is a mother figure to him, and because he wants to feel like a child again and return to his nursery. He is nostalgic for the childhood bond with Nanny and wishes to prolong it into adulthood.



It was common among wealthy families to formally introduce their daughter's into society when they were old enough to be married. Sebastian clearly resents his family and wants to have his own life separate from them. He does not wish to conform to their worldview and dislikes the idea that they have authority over him. He is therefore possessive over Charles, because Charles represents his relatively carefree, independent life at university separate from his family.



Sebastian makes the sign of the cross, which is a Catholic prayer. Charles does not take Sebastian's religion seriously and thinks that Sebastian only does this out of habit—he copies him because he thinks it is polite. Sebastian is offended because, although he clearly does not align with all of his family's views, he does feel that Catholicism is a serious belief system and not something trivial or fashionable. Charles, who has not grown up around religion, does not understand this.



Sebastian's secrecy about his family makes Charles more interested to meet them. This suggests that forbidden things are tantalizing, and ties into the Christian idea that sin is more appealing to humans than goodness because it is forbidden. This relates to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, who lost their innocence because they could not resist their curiosity to try the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Charles's curiosity reflects this biblical idea, and foreshadows his inability to resist a closer connection to Sebastian's family despite Sebastian's warnings. Despite Charles's lack of religious upbringing, his mother died for a religious cause, and, in this sense, is like a martyr.



Sebastian's mood lightens as they drive farther from the house. Eventually, they leave Hardcastle's car in Godstow and walk back to Oxford along the river. Looking back, Charles thinks that, at the time, he had no idea that he would remember this day years later and weep over the memories.

Sebastian is happiest when he is separate from his family because he is free from their authority, which he finds restrictive. This suggests that he needs independence and wants to build a life for himself beyond their influence. In the present day, Charles cries over these memories because this is one of the happiest times in his life and he likely has not been as happy since, suggesting that the carefree innocence of his youth cannot be resurrected even though he has come back to Brideshead in the midst of World War II.



PART 1, CHAPTER 2

Not long after Charles and Sebastian's outing to **Brideshead**, Jasper comes to visit Charles and rebukes him for keeping the wrong sort of company. Jasper complains that Sebastian is from a strange family. Sebastian's parents are wealthy Catholics but are separated. Lord Marchmain left Lady Marchmain when he went to fight in World War I, and never returned. Lady Marchmain is a strict Catholic and will not get a divorce. Lord Marchmain now lives abroad. Although Jasper thinks Sebastian may be alright, he really dislikes Anthony Blanche and is embarrassed that Charles spends time with him.

Jasper is a conventional member of British society and dislikes people who differ from the norm. Catholics take marriage very seriously as a religious sacrament and cannot get divorced. Although divorce among Protestants, the dominant religious group in Britain, was uncommon in this period, it was becoming more socially acceptable. Jasper looks down on Lady Marchmain because she is a Catholic and has been involved in a public scandal. Lady Marchmain would rather go through a public scandal, and metaphorically martyr herself, rather than compromise her beliefs. Jasper also likely dislikes Anthony because Anthony is flamboyant, nonconformist, and is heavily implied to be gay. Therefore, he does not fit into conventional British society.



Jasper complains that Charles spends a fortune and that he is always drunk in the middle of the day. He points out that Charles's room is full of new things and picks up a **skull** which has "*Et in Arcadia Ego*" written on its forehead. Charles says that he "paid cash for the skull" and offers Jasper a glass of champagne, which he says he always has at this time of day. Jasper refuses indignantly and leaves.

Charles imitates Sebastian's extravagant lifestyle, which Jasper frowns upon because luxury and excess were associated with vulgarity and impropriety among the British middle class. Charles rebels against his middle-class upbringing and cultivates a fascination with the aristocracy, rather than a conventional respect for hard work and propriety. "Et in Arcadia Ego" means "And in Arcadia I am." The skull is a symbol of death and suggests that death exists even in Arcadia: a Greek term for an earthly paradise. This implies that, although Charles feels like he is heaven when he is with Sebastian, this phase of his life must inevitably end.



Charles has arranged to spend the Easter holiday with his friend, Collins, but hopes that Sebastian will invite him somewhere instead. When Sebastian does not, Charles goes with Collins to Ravenna and spends a dismal holiday looking at historical ruins. He writes long letters to Sebastian but only receives two vague notes in return. Collins works hard all through the vacation and, later, becomes a well-known academic. Charles wonders, later in life, if he could have been a professor if he had not met Sebastian. However, he thinks he would have rebelled against the restrictions of academic life.

Ravenna is a province in Northern Italy which is famous for its elaborate mosaics and beautiful Catholic churches—being here likely reminds Charles of the extravagance of Brideshead and the Marchmain family. The past feels dead and uninspiring to Charles as a young man because he is more interested in his present with Sebastian, which is where he feels alive. This is contrasted with the older Charles in the present day (who narrates the story)—when he looks back on these events, sees them as superior to his present. Charles recognizes that he is undisciplined and cannot be satisfied with a career, which is ironic considering he later joins the military, the epitome of discipline and structure. He clearly wants more from life than conventional, middle-class security and wants to stand out from, rather than fit into, British society.



During the next term, Charles abandons his studies entirely. Although, outwardly, he seems to be making a failure of himself, inside he is happy for the first time. He had a lonely childhood and a serious, public school education. Now, with Sebastian, he feels as though he has a second chance at youth, and that there is a “nursery freshness” to their days together.

The strict public school education Charles has undergone, and likely the death of his mother, have made him feel like he has grown up very fast and missed out on a childhood. Childhood is associated with carelessness, irresponsibility, innocence, and play, and this is what Charles experiences with Sebastian. In this sense, he feels as though he is reborn and has a new lease on life. The idea of rebirth links to the Christian idea of resurrection after death, implying that Charles may find comfort in religion later on, just as he finds comfort with Sebastian now.



Although Charles does make some effort to study, and passes his exams at the end of term, he does not care about Jasper’s warning because he is in love with Sebastian. He feels that this love is the true meaning of life and that it protects him from all worldly cares, although, of course, he does not tell Jasper this.

Charles is a romantic and believes that nothing in the world is as important as love. This is because he associates love with youth, vivacity, and life, all of which are more appealing than death. He feels that people like Jasper are cold and do not have the capacity to feel—they are willing to bypass emotional experiences, like love, for the sake of conventionality and for their careers.



During this period at university, Charles also sees a lot of Anthony Blanche. Anthony spent his childhood and teenage years travelling, and is rumored to have had love affairs in various parts of the world. He was also briefly attended Eton with Sebastian. Charles notices that Anthony likes to shock the English students and that he acts out for attention. Charles finds him a little “cruel” and immature, and is worried when Anthony invites him out to dinner.

Anthony has not gone through the British education system, which encourages rigid conformity, and has had a much broader cultural education. This means that Anthony does not fit in at Oxford. Anthony is a very strong character and, rather than try to fit in, he flaunts his unconventionality and uses it to challenge authority and make people uncomfortable. This suggests that Anthony would rather stand out and be himself than succumb to the implicit authority of British conventional values. Although Charles likes unconventional people, Anthony makes him nervous.



Anthony meets Charles at the student bar, the George, and orders four cocktails. Charles does not like the mixture, so Anthony drinks them all in a row, to the amazement of the students who surround them. Anthony takes Charles outside and the pair drive to a restaurant in the town. On the way, Anthony tells Charles that a group of students, led by Boy Mulcaster, arrived at his room the night before and tried to throw him in the **fountain**.

Anthony explains that, before Boy and the others could grab him, he got into the **fountain** himself and posed provocatively for them. He overheard Boy say that, either way, they had put him in “Mercury,” and disdainfully remarks that Boy will still tell that story in 30 years’ time. Although he brushes it off with bravado, Charles notices that Anthony mentions the incident several times during the evening.

While they are at dinner, Anthony says that he cannot imagine Sebastian being thrown in a **fountain**. Anthony monologues spitefully at Charles throughout dinner and complains that, at Eton, Sebastian never got beaten, although Anthony was often whipped for trivial things. Anthony observes sarcastically that everybody likes Sebastian and that, when he used to go to mass with him at school, Sebastian used to spend hours at confession, even though he never seemed to do anything wrong.

Anthony says that Charles is a natural artist. He has seen Charles’s sketches in his room and can tell that, underneath his reserved exterior, Charles is a passionate man. He claims he has tried to draw this to Sebastian’s attention, but Sebastian brushes him off with playful comments. Anthony asks Charles if he wishes Sebastian were with them and answers for him that, “of course,” he does.

Anthony likes to draw attention to himself and to shock the other students. The boys have tried to throw Anthony in the fountain because he is different and, therefore, is a target. Anthony is persecuted by the other boys, because he does not fit in and will not compromise his behavior to do so, and this makes him, metaphorically, like a martyr.



Fountains are associated with baptism in the novel, however, Anthony’s baptism in the fountain is ironic. Anthony is persecuted by the other boys, like a martyr—but unlike a martyr, Anthony refuses to submit to his tormentors, and instead, takes control of the situation. This is the opposite of a martyr, who submits passively to suffering. Anthony, therefore, is portrayed as an unholy character who rejects religion and will not submit to God. Although Anthony has seemingly stood up for himself, Boy and the others’ bullying clearly still upsets him.



Anthony is jealous that, although Sebastian is also a social outsider (he, too, is Catholic who behaves eccentrically) people do not pick on him. Anthony feels that Sebastian sucks up to authority to avoid being ostracized. Although Anthony thinks that Sebastian wants to appear innocent, Sebastian’s time at confession suggests that, inside, Sebastian feels guilt and shame about who he is.



Anthony tries to ingratiate himself with Charles by flattering him about his work. In doing so, Anthony is likely trying to tempt Charles away from Sebastian by suggesting that Sebastian does not appreciate Charles’s talent the way he would. And, by giving Charles knowledge about Sebastian’s family, he is seemingly trying to sabotage their budding relationship. This mirrors the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, in which a snake tempts Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge, which destroys their innocence. Charles and Sebastian’s relationship is associated with innocence, and Anthony is the outside force which tries to corrupt this. However, before the end of the night, Anthony knows that he has failed, which suggests that true love is powerful and can withstand temptation.



Anthony remarks that it is amazing Sebastian is so charming when he “comes from such a sinister family.” Anthony describes the Marchmain’s to Charles; he dislikes Julia, and Sebastian’s older brother, Brideshead, and knows nothing of the younger sister, Cordelia, except that her governess committed suicide. Lady Marchmain is a very beautiful, almost saintly woman, and Lord Marchmain is aristocratic and “Byronic” but cannot go out in public because of Lady Marchmain.

Anthony tells Charles about the Marchmain family to scare him away from Sebastian: he thinks Charles will want to avoid the scandal because he assumes that Charles, like his cousin Jasper, is conventional and likes to fit in with British society. Anthony assumes Charles will not risk his reputation to be associated with them. “Byronic” figures, like Lord Marchmain, are usually emotionally intense, misanthropic, and lead debauched and extravagant lives filled with luxury and excess. Knowing that Sebastian has a taste for luxury and extravagance for himself, this could perhaps mean that he will grow up to be similarly brooding and emotional like his father. This is something which Charles glamorizes and tries to emulate to a degree in later life.



In Venice, Anthony says, Lady Marchmain made a show of being very pious and Lord Marchmain could not go out when she was in the city. He left Lady Marchmain for a dancer in the war: something that, Anthony says, is not at all unusual. Still, Lady Marchmain refuses to get a divorce and acts as though her husband has treated her appallingly. She has a hoard of loyal followers, however: she is a bloodsucker, Anthony says, and leaves these stragglers with no life in them at all.

Anthony suggests that Catholic society takes Lady Marchmain’s side over Lord Marchmain’s. Catholics cannot get divorced, because marriage is a holy sacrament, and most Catholics feel that it was wrong for Lord Marchmain to leave his wife and break this religious vow. It was common, however, for men who fought in World War I to leave their families. Many were emotionally unable to return home after the life changing experience of war. Anthony suggests that Lady Marchmain uses and controls her followers and persuades them to do her bidding, which could perhaps suggest that Lord Marchmain left her because he felt too stifled in her presence.



Anthony thinks that, because of his background, Sebastian tries very hard to seem good and “insipid.” He isn’t very clever, Anthony says, so what else can he do? When Sebastian speaks, he says, it reminds him of a painting called *Bubbles*. On the drive home, Anthony says that, in the morning, Charles will tell Sebastian everything that he has said and that it will not make any difference to how Sebastian views Anthony. That night, Charles is left alone but sleeps badly and has “hagridden” nightmares.

Bubbles is a painting by John Everett Millais, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, and depicts a young child who watches bubbles rise into the air. This associates Sebastian with an infant and suggests that his childish demeanor is an affectation rather than something genuine. It is implied that Charles is under a demonic spell, cast by Anthony, which he must resist. This suggests that Charles is engaged in a battle for his soul: he is caught between the innocent and pure Sebastian and the corrupt and experienced Anthony. This deliberately links the novel to religious stories about saints and martyrs, who battled with demons to resist spiritual corruption.



The next morning, Charles walks across the campus to Sebastian’s room. It is Sunday and nearly everyone else is on their way to church. He tells Sebastian about his evening with Anthony and asks him if Anthony knows his family. Sebastian says no, but that Anthony and Lady Marchmain may have met in Venice. Charles tells Sebastian that he thinks Anthony is “devilish” and nearly turned him against Sebastian. Sebastian brushes this off, however, and the pair are interrupted by the arrival of Boy Mulcaster.

Charles’s love for Sebastian is pure and heavenly: it is his version of worship. God is associated with love in the novel, and does not care how people worship so long as they feel love and have faith. Anthony is “devilish” because he has tried to tempt Charles away from Sebastian, who is angelic, the way a demon tempts its victims.



PART 1, CHAPTER 3

Charles goes home for summer vacation. He has no money left in his allowance for the year and cannot afford to make other plans. Sebastian, too, must go stay with his family and seems to have no money. Charles is forlorn and gloomy at home. There is no one there but his father, who is middle aged but who acts like an old man and spends all day studying history.

Charles's father, Mr. Ryder, seems surprised to have him home and insists that students must spend their summers doing activities. Charles tries to explain that he has no money, but his father evades this issue and tells him that he has never run out of money himself. Charles thinks his father is rather pleased and amused at his misfortune. His father takes a book to meals with him and ignores Charles while they eat.

Charles sees little of his father during the days and is very bored at home. He only sees his father at dinner, and, at these times, the dining room is their "battlefield." On the second night of his stay, Charles tries to read during dinner, but his father is offended by this and reprimands Charles for ignoring him. His father complains that it is not good for Charles to spend every night at home, to which Charles insists that he has no money. His father, again, evades the subject.

Mr. Ryder says that he only eats a large dinner because, after his wife's death, his sister, Charles's aunt, moved in with them for a time and insisted upon proper meals. Mr. Ryder says smugly that he "got her out in the end though." Charles remembers his aunt and understands that his father means this as a challenge.

The next evening, Charles invites an old school friend, named Jorkins, to dinner. Mr. Ryder confuses Jorkins throughout the meal by pretending that he thinks Jorkins is an American. Mr. Ryder explains everything to him as though he is foreign and does not understand. Later that night, as Charles shows Jorkins to the door, Jorkins asks Charles why his father thought he was American. Charles tries to explain that his father is a strange man, but Jorkins seems baffled by the whole evening.

Charles and Sebastian have lived extravagantly all term and now must face the consequences. This suggests a return to reality and to the limiting and authoritative forces which are at work in the world. It's clear that Charles, like Sebastian, feels alienated at home. Charles's father prefers the past to the present and would rather spend time alone with his history books than participate in modern life. The fact that Charles takes on the same distaste for the present and romanticized view of the past later in life suggests that he may be more like his father than he currently assumes.



Mr. Ryder's passive-aggression toward Charles represents the broader worldly authority, suffering, and inconvenience which Charles and Sebastian are able to escape from while at Oxford. Mr. Ryder will not directly refuse Charles money, but instead pretends that he does not understand Charles's hint that money is what he needs to leave home.



Mr. Ryder's harsh treatment of Charles is likely a form of punishment for Charles spending all his money. He will not be honest with Charles about this, however, and is passive-aggressive instead. His overbearing authority is a stark contrast to Charles's life at Oxford, which essentially acts as a safe space where Charles and Sebastian can be free of their familial expectations.



Charles and Mr. Ryder make up two sides in a metaphorical war. They fight over their right to be in the house, which represents the disputed territory, and Mr. Ryder implies that he is more experienced in this type of battle than Charles because he has done it before and won.



Mr. Ryder wants to discourage Jorkins from another visit, and to discourage Charles from bringing any more friends around. He makes the evening unpleasant for Jorkins on purpose, which represents another way that Mr. Ryder symbolically makes war on Charles while he is at home.



A few nights later, Mr. Ryder launches his “counter-attack” on Charles and announces that he will give a dinner party. When Charles meets the guests, he knows his father has deliberately invited people he will dislike and who will not enjoy themselves. It is a “gruesome evening” and, when the guests have gone, Mr. Ryder talks about how dull they all are. Still, he says, so long as Charles stays with him, he must make the effort to invite people round.

Over the next few weeks, things do not improve at home, and Charles wonders if his father really wants to drive him away, or if he just likes to irritate people. Charles only receives one letter from Sebastian. It is short, written on “late-Victorian mourning paper,” and only says that Sebastian is mourning for his lost innocence and that he will go to Venice to stay with his father in his “palace of sin.” Charles is frustrated by the note and tears it up. He remembers that Anthony called Sebastian insipid.

After this note, Charles feels that he despises Sebastian. However, when a telegram arrives from Charles’s friends with the news that Sebastian is badly injured, Charles immediately prepares to leave for **Brideshead**. His father is not disappointed to see him go, though he pretends to resent Charles for it.

Charles catches the train out to **Brideshead** and, on the way, agonizes about all the possible accidents in which Sebastian could have been involved. He is afraid that Sebastian will be dead by the time he arrives. Julia waits for him at the train station in her car and, when he gets in beside her, she asks him if he has had dinner. Charles is confused and asks about Sebastian’s accident. Julia tells him that Sebastian tripped while playing croquet and broke a tiny bone in his foot.

Mr. Ryder takes revenge on Charles because he has invited someone there and thus disturbed his peace. He wants to persuade Charles to leave but, instead of saying this, he uses passive-aggressive methods to ensure that Charles is unhappy at home. He wishes to drive Charles out of the house the way one drives out an enemy in battle.



Although Sebastian intends this letter as a joke, it foreshadows Sebastian’s real decline and time abroad as the novel goes on. It also refers to the idea that, even though Charles and Sebastian are young and innocent, death, decay, and experience inevitably await them in their mortal state. Lord Marchmain lives with his mistress abroad—in Catholicism, it is considered sinful to have a sexual relationship with someone to whom one is not married. In going against the authority of the Church, Lord Marchmain has become a pariah, or an outsider, in this community. It makes sense, then, that Sebastian wants to go stay with his father, since he, too, feels alienated and ostracized by his family at Brideshead.



Charles feels rejected because Sebastian does not seem to miss him over the holidays. He temporarily sees himself as Sebastian’s enemy, rather than his friend, as though they are on different sides in a conflict. Although Charles has been hurt by Sebastian’s coolness, he immediately forgives him when he hears that Sebastian has been hurt. This again demonstrates that love has the capacity to overcome pride and interpersonal conflict.



Julia’s reaction seems strange to Charles because he believes there has been a terrible accident, whereas her question about dinner is mundane and suggests that everything is normal. Julia is very cool and conventional in comparison to Sebastian, who is eccentric. Like most of Charles and Sebastian’s peers at Oxford, it seems like Julia likes to fit in, rather than stand out. Sebastian has greatly exaggerated the severity of his wound in his usual dramatic fashion.



Julia tells Charles that Sebastian cannot walk and, therefore, cannot go away for the summer. He begged her not to leave him alone at **Brideshead** and, when she refused to stay, he asked for Charles to be sent for. As they drive along, Charles notices that Julia looks very much like Sebastian. She asks Charles to light a cigarette for her, and he feels attracted to her for a second as he does this.

Julia asks why, when Charles and Sebastian visited **Brideshead**, they didn't stay to see her. Charles says that Sebastian insisted. Julia says that Charles obviously lets her brother push him around, and she leads Charles into the house. Sebastian appears in a wheelchair with his leg in a cast, and Charles is relieved to see him but slightly annoyed because he has been so worried. He is almost disappointed that there hasn't been an accident because he has prepared himself for bad news.

Sebastian asks Julia if the servant, Wilcox, will let them have champagne. Julia tells him that she doesn't like champagne and that Charles has eaten already. Sebastian replies indignantly that Charles will drink champagne at any time, and the three go together to have dinner. During the meal, Charles gets the impression that Julia doesn't really like him. She gets up to leave after the meal and wishes the boys a brusque goodbye.

Sebastian tells Charles that he loves Julia because she is very like him, but Charles does not see the similarity, except in the way they look. Sebastian jokes that he would never love anybody with a personality like his and Charles wheels his chair through the house and to the library, where they can look out at the lakes in the garden. Sebastian says they will have a "heavenly" summer together.

The next morning, while Charles shaves in the bathroom, he sees Julia leave in her car and feels a sense of peace and relaxation. In the present day, as an older man, this reminds him of the feeling he had at the end of World War II.

This exchange and momentary attraction between Charles and Julia foreshadows the development of their relationship in future. It also suggests that Charles is attracted to Julia merely because she looks like Sebastian, suggesting that Charles's intense love for Sebastian has clouded any other potential affection he feels for others.



Sebastian's injury does not require a wheelchair, but this theatricality is part of his eccentric persona, which helps him stand out and is used by Waugh for comic effect. This suggests that Sebastian, unlike Julia, does not like to conform to conventional expectations. Charles has emotionally prepared himself for a tragedy and is disappointed when he finds everything is normal because it is an anticlimax. This harks back to the idea that conflict, and even war, often does not live up to its glorious and dramatic reputation.



While Charles is enamored with Sebastian's lifestyle, Julia thinks it is silly and childish. This strengthens the idea that Charles and Sebastian are innocent and naïve, like children.



Charles does not think Sebastian and Julia are alike because Sebastian is warm and radiant, while Julia is cool and a little sharp. Sebastian's self-deprecating joke conceals real self-hatred, which implies that he may turn out to be similar to his "Byronic" father as he grows older. The reference to a "heavenly" summer reflects the idea that this period in Charles's life is a time of innocence and happiness, a stark contrast to his disillusioned present as a soldier.



Beards are associated with adulthood, and Waugh depicts Charles shaving to suggest that, during this summer, he and Sebastian return to a childlike state of innocence that is separate from the rest of the world. This period of respite for Charles and Sebastian also subtly parallels the period of peace in Europe between the two World Wars during this time.



PART 1, CHAPTER 4

Charles believes that, although other youthful emotions come and go throughout life, there is a specific feeling of relaxation, or “languor,” which only exists in young people. During his summer at **Brideshead**, he feels like he is in paradise and wishes he could stay there always. Sebastian says that he would too, but that the place is usually full of “ravaging beasts.” Charles asks why Brideshead is called a “castle” and Sebastian tells him that it is made from the stones of a nearby castle, which was moved and turned into a house.

Charles likes to think about Sebastian and remember how he was that summer. They have free reign of the house and spend time with Nanny Hawkins up in the nursery, where they play with Sebastian’s old toys. Nanny is pleased to have the boys there but makes fun of them for being childish. Charles is amazed by the house’s architecture and feels like being there is an “aesthetic education.”

The boys like to sit on the terrace, which looks out over the lakes and the gardens, and from here Charles tries to sketch the **fountain**. The fountain is originally from Italy but was taken apart and relocated to **Brideshead**. Charles struggles with the drawing but is pleased with the final product. He asks Sebastian if he should give it to Lady Marchmain, but Sebastian tells him to give it to Nanny. Although Charles has always loved medieval architecture, he finds, living in Brideshead, that he begins to understand Baroque architecture as well.

One day, they find a box of paints in a cupboard and Charles begins a landscape painting on the wall of a disused office in the house. He feels inspired, as though someone invisible helps him paint, and the picture turns out very well. Sebastian then gives Charles a subject to paint on another wall, but it is too elaborate and does not come out as well.

Brideshead is a retreat from the outside world and other people, which are depicted as monstrous. This suggests that Charles and Sebastian (as well as their relationship) are innocent, while the rest of the world is corrupt. While they remain at Brideshead, they are safe from this corruption. This draws a parallel between Brideshead and the Garden of Eden from the biblical story of Genesis. The Garden of Eden was a paradise which God created for Adam and Eve, the first humans. They were forced out of this paradise when they disobeyed God. Their dismissal from the Garden also meant that death and sin entered the world. Charles and Sebastian are metaphorically protected from these things for a time because they are young, happy, and in love—but this parallel suggests that their bliss cannot last forever.



The boys are not only literally young, but emotionally young and immature. They are innocent, like children, and are not experienced in the ways of the world. Charles is open minded and longs for new experience. Given Brideshead's symbolic representation of the Catholic Church, Charles's amazement and fascination with the house suggests that he may similarly be drawn into Catholicism in the future.



The fountain symbolizes Catholic religion, which has been exported from Rome to England by families like the Marchmains. Nanny has raised Sebastian and, although Lady Marchmain is his mother, he clearly has a closer bond with Nanny. Baroque architecture was famously lavish and extravagant. Modern architecture, which Charles grows to dislike, tended to favor efficiency and austerity over these more luxuriant elements.



Artistic inspiration is linked to divine inspiration in the novel. When Charles paints, it is implied that he receives God's grace. Charles is agnostic and does not understand at the time that it is God's influence that he feels. It is implied, that because he is in love this summer, he is blessed and receives inspiration as a result. This further connects the power of romantic love to the power of God. Sebastian's attempt to inspire Charles is forced and does not surrender to inspiration but tries to control it; it is dissimilar to God's gentle authority in this way, which is why it does not work out.



Charles and Sebastian also discover the wine cellar beneath **Brideshead**, and ask Wilcox to bring up bottles for them to drink. The wine is very old and fine and will go to waste otherwise, as no one drinks wine in the house since Lord Marchmain left. The boys get very drunk together every evening and then go out and lie by the **fountain** under the stars. One night, Charles asks if they should get drunk every night, and Sebastian thinks that they should.

The only other person they see regularly at the house is a priest, Father Phipps, who comes to perform mass in the chapel. Sebastian always attends mass and seems quite religious, although Charles does not think much about this at the time. His own father was not religious, although his mother was “devout,” and Charles was not brought up with religion at home. His mother was killed after she left the family to volunteer abroad with a Red Cross faith mission.

Charles does not realize that Sebastian is serious about his religion until one morning when Charles asks him about it. Sebastian tells him that being Catholic affects every aspect of his life, and Charles is confused and says that he has not noticed this. Charles says that religion is “nonsense,” but Sebastian says it seems obvious to him that it is true, and that he believes in the power of the saints. Charles is amazed by this, but Sebastian says he does not want to talk about it.

A few mornings later, Charles and Sebastian hide on the roof to watch an Agricultural Show that is taking place on the grounds. Sebastian’s older brother, Brideshead, is there, and Charles thinks he has an old-fashioned face. Sebastian says that Brideshead is the strangest one in his family. He wanted to be a Jesuit priest, but the family persuaded him to go to Oxford first and then decide. Brideshead was very badly affected by their father’s decision to leave home. Sebastian was sent to Eton instead of Stonyhurst, the Catholic school which Brideshead attended.

Charles asks if Sebastian was upset when his father left home, and Sebastian says yes. He says that he is the only child in the family who does not despise his father, apart from Cordelia, who was very little when Lord Marchmain left. He thinks his mother wants him to hate Lord Marchmain, even though she pretends that this isn’t the case. Sebastian says that he would like Charles to meet his father, and invites Charles to Venice with him.

Lady Marchmain is a devout Catholic and views drunkenness as sinful. Waugh suggests that pleasure is not sinful. Rather, God is interested in love (like the love between Charles and Sebastian which inspires them to drink and enjoy their happiness), not in prohibitive rules and unnecessary authority like those which Lady Marchmain exerts over her family.



Charles underestimates the influence that religion has on Sebastian and the guilt which he feels because he has left the church. Charles’s mother died like a martyr, on a religious mission for the sake of her spiritual beliefs. This could explain Charles’s dismissal and resentment of religion, since he may blame it for his mother’s death.



Although Sebastian is no longer a Catholic, he has been raised as one, and his early experience of religion informs his perspective on life. Charles cannot understand this, and feels that religion is only a negative thing. As a result, he feels that Sebastian is gullible rather than enlightened.



Brideshead has embraced the family’s Catholicism, whereas Sebastian has rejected it. Brideshead’s suffering, due to his father leaving home, has caused him to become more religious and to side with his mother, who is very pious. It is implied that Sebastian’s education at Eton has made him different to Brideshead: he has experienced something of the world outside of Catholic circles and, therefore, is not as innocent and sheltered as Brideshead. This also suggests that there are inherent social differences between Catholics and other members of British society, which may not be obvious at first glance.



Sebastian clearly prefers his father to his mother, whereas Cordelia is too young to remember Lord Marchmain at home and was not affected by his departure. Lady Marchmain wants people to think that she is very good and saintly, so she cannot admit that she wants her children to hate Lord Marchmain, as this would seem bitter and spiteful. This concern for public appearances suggests that she may be more invested in the social propriety necessitated by Catholicism than in the faith itself.



Sebastian says his family are “mixed” in terms of religion. Brideshead and Cordelia are devout Catholics, while he and Julia are not. His mother is widely “believed to be a saint” and his father is excommunicated from the Church. Sebastian says that being religious doesn’t make a difference to how happy one is. Charles says that Catholics seem just like everybody else, but Sebastian says this is not true at all, and that Catholics have totally different priorities from other people.

Charles and Sebastian are disturbed when someone else appears on the roof and calls Sebastian’s name. It is his sister, Cordelia, who picks her way between the chimney stacks towards them. Sebastian tells Charles to cover up, as they are both naked. Sebastian tries to send Cordelia away, but she is very friendly and pleased to see them. She asks who has painted the study, and is delighted when Sebastian tells her that it was Charles. Cordelia says that she has persuaded Brideshead to stay for dinner with them that evening.

At dinner, Charles finds Brideshead very strange and serious. He seems much older than Sebastian even though he is not really. Cordelia tells them that she is in trouble at school because she will not do what the nuns say. She says that “our Blessed Lady” does not care about these stupid rules, but Brideshead contradicts her. Sebastian tells Brideshead not to preach because Charles is an atheist, but Charles quickly says he is agnostic. Brideshead seems surprised that there are so many agnostics at Oxford.

Charles notices that the family always bring the conversation back to religion. Brideshead tells them that the Bishop wants to close their chapel because it does not get enough use, and Cordelia becomes upset. Brideshead asks Charles if the chapel is “Good Art” and Charles is confused and says that he does not like it much but that it may be admired in the future. Brideshead is confused and thinks that if something is good, then it is always good. Charles realizes that he and Brideshead will never understand each other, and the conversation grinds to a halt.

Happiness is not important in Catholicism because suffering is considered holy. Catholics are different from the rest of British society in this period, because Britain was predominantly Protestant. Therefore, Catholics feel ostracized and that they are not like everybody else.



Cordelia is an open-hearted and naturally loving child. She adores Sebastian, even though she does not see much of him, and even though he keeps himself separate from the rest of the family. This again highlights the power of love in overcoming interpersonal conflicts. Despite the fact that Sebastian does not conform with the rest of the family, Cordelia’s her love for him is unconditional and does not depend on his obedience to certain rules the way that Lady Marchmain’s approval does.



Brideshead seems old-fashioned and out of touch with the modern world, which further highlights the rift between Catholic families like the Marchmains and modern British society. Cordelia is very religious but does not believe that piety is about following arbitrary rules. Instead, Cordelia’s faith is based in love. Brideshead, on the other hand, is pedantic and theological in the way he approaches his faith. By portraying Cordelia as a sweet and lovable to Brideshead’s strange, cold behavior, Waugh thus suggests that Cordelia’s faith in God’s love and forgiveness is the correct approach to spirituality.



Catholicism is not popular in England, and there are not many Catholics in the community nearby, suggesting that the Marchmain’s are both physically and socially isolated in their country setting. Charles understands that perceptions of art and culture are subjective and change over time, whereas Brideshead cannot comprehend this. This suggests that Brideshead views things in totalizing, moral terms and thinks that things can only be “good” or “bad”—a common critique of religions like Catholicism.



After dinner, Brideshead takes Sebastian aside on some business, and Cordelia sits up with Charles. She asks him if he is genuinely agnostic and says that she will mention him in her prayers when he says yes. Cordelia says that she has a lot of people to pray for, and that she often sends money to missionaries abroad so that they will christen foreign children after her. When Sebastian returns, he sends her to bed and laughingly tells Charles that she created a “novena for her pig.”

Cordelia assumes that, because Charles does not believe in God, he needs religious redemption. Although this is presumptuous, it demonstrates Cordelia's optimistic nature, as she believes that even an agnostic might receive divine grace and be converted. This supports the Catholic idea that anyone, especially someone who has sinned, can be redeemed at any time, so long as they repent for their sins. Sebastian says that Cordelia also prays for her pig, though animals are not traditionally believed to have souls in Catholicism.



Charles begins to think that there is a large part of Sebastian's life that he knows nothing about. He is confused by all the talk of Catholicism. He feels as though he and Sebastian made friends on board a ship and that they have now returned to shore and to their old lives.

Charles feels that Sebastian has hidden his real life from him. This description of their relationship suggests that it does not feel connected to reality, or to everyday life. They have so far lived separately from the rest of society and avoided the pressures, rules, and temptations of the outside world, and having to confront these things may eventually threaten their relationship.



When Cordelia and Brideshead leave, Sebastian repeats his offer for Charles to come to Venice with him. Charles says that he has no money, but Sebastian offers to trade his first-class tickets so they can travel third-class together. They travel by boat and then by train and enjoy their journey together through the landscape of Europe. They are met in Venice by Lord Marchmain's valet, Plender, and set off along the canal.

Sebastian looks up to his father and wants Charles to meet him. This is contrasted with the way that Sebastian tries to keep Charles away from his mother, and suggests that Sebastian feels as though he has more in common with the “Byronic” and scandalous Lord Marchmain than with the strict, religiously devout Lady Marchmain. Although Lady Marchmain wants to be seen as a martyr who has been mistreated by her husband, Sebastian seems to believe that his father is the one who has been treated unfairly and metaphorically martyred through social ostracization.



Lord Marchmain's house is a narrow apartment built alongside the water. The boys are shown up to their rooms, and Charles is amazed by the view. Sebastian, however, thinks the room is drab. There is the noise of an explosion and the boys enter their bathroom—the boiler has just overheated and Plender is trying to get hot water for them. Another servant begins to shout up the stairs at the butler and, at last, a small bowl of hot water is produced.

Lord Marchmain's house and lifestyle are clearly more rustic than the rest of the family at Brideshead. This suggests that Lord Marchmain wished to escape from comfort and to experience life instead. This supports the idea that he has been martyred and has been cast out of the comfort and security of the Catholic community because of his behavior.



They greet Lord Marchmain on his balcony and Charles is struck by how normal he seems. After a while, however, Charles realizes that Lord Marchmain works hard to maintain this normal façade to disguise something “Byronic” in his character. Lord Marchmain takes them out for dinner and asks how they want to spend their time in Venice. Charles says that he would like to see the sites, and Lord Marchmain is pleased and says that Cara, his mistress, will take them. Charles is surprised that he talks about her so casually.

Lord Marchmain asks about life in England, and tells Charles and Sebastian that he hates it there and pleases the “Socialists” by ignoring his political party. He complains that they have probably got an English cook at **Brideshead** now. They move on to a café for coffee after dinner, and Lord Marchmain tells them that, although the city is full of political Anarchists, an American woman was driven away from the café the previous night for wearing a dress that revealed her shoulders. An English party enter the café and deliberately avoid Lord Marchmain.

Cara arrives the next day and Charles, who knows nothing about women, is secretly fascinated by the idea of her because she is a mistress. He is surprised by how respectable and mature she seems, and that people seem to know and like her in the city. Cara says that they must attend a ball and says that she knows some women with daughters who, she can invite for Charles and Sebastian to meet. Lord Marchmain says that the boys are not interested in this and would rather see the sites. Cara is delighted and says they can be tourists together.

Charles almost feels like he enjoys himself too much and that life is too luxurious in Venice with Sebastian. One afternoon, while looking at a famous statue, Sebastian says that it is sad that he and Charles will never fight in a war. One afternoon, when they have taken in as many sites as they can manage, Sebastian goes to play tennis with his father, and Charles finds himself alone with Cara.

“Byronic” heroes are associated with characters created by the poet Lord Byron. These characters were often wild, intense, passionate, and disdainful of the world and other people. Lord Marchmain has hidden these traits to blend in with English society, and to conceal his pain and disappointment with life. It was unconventional in Britain to live with a woman who was not one’s wife—Charles is shocked by their mundane dynamic because he has assumed that affairs are very secretive and romantic. Charles views forbidden love as exciting because it is prohibited by mainstream society. As with his later experience of war, Charles learns that the reality of something is often very banal compared with the fantasy.



Lord Marchmain is a conservative but does not maintain his political seat in the district. The Socialist party opposed the conservatives and hoped to overthrow them. Lord Marchmain feels he does this job for them because he has no interest in English politics. Lord Marchmain thinks it ironic that anarchists support a society with no rules but do not want a woman to publicly show her shoulders. This suggests that, despite the apparent lawlessness of their philosophy, they still comply to certain outdated social rules, such as the idea that women should be strictly modest.



Charles expects Cara to be dangerous and glamorous, because she has engaged in taboo and the forbidden behavior of having an affair with a married man. Instead, he finds her very ordinary. This suggests that Charles has a romantic view of relationships and does not understand their more mundane elements. This is like his approach to war later in life, which also leaves him disillusioned when it does not live up to its heroic depictions in art and literature. It is ironic that Cara wants to introduce Charles and Sebastian to girls, as they are clearly only interested in each other.



It is ironic that Sebastian thinks they will never fight in a war, since World War II will break out 20 years later and Charles will have to fight. Like Charles, Sebastian is naïve about warfare and thinks that it is glorious and heroic, rather than frightening and unpleasant.



Cara asks him if he is fond of Sebastian and Charles replies that, of course, he is. Cara says that “romantic friendships” between young men are particularly English, rather than Latin, and that it is better to fall in love for the first time with a boy than a girl. She thinks these relationships should not go on too long, however, and that Charles and Sebastian do not know what their love means. She says that Lord Marchmain fell in love that way with Lady Marchmain and that, although he pretends to be very cool and reserved, underneath he despises Lady Marchmain. Cara thinks Sebastian hates his mother, too, though Sebastian does not know it.

Charles says that Lady Marchmain drove Lord Marchmain out of society, but Cara says that it is not possible for a woman to do that to a wealthy, handsome man and that he has driven people away himself. She tells Charles that Lord Marchmain hates himself and that she sees this same trait in Sebastian. Cara thinks that Lord Marchmain is mad and that he is obsessed with Lady Marchmain. She feels that she knows Lady Marchmain, through him, and that she is a good woman who has been “loved in the wrong way.”

Cara says that women love in more straightforward ways than men. She says that Sebastian is infatuated with his childhood and that this will make his adult life sad. She also says that he gets drunk too often. Charles replies that he does, too, but Cara says that it is different: Sebastian drinks to escape, and she believes he will become an alcoholic if he does not stop. Lord Marchmain was nearly an alcoholic when he met her, and Cara says it runs in the family.

Charles and Sebastian return to their separate homes before they start the next term at Oxford. Sebastian seems glum about the return to his family, and Charles’s father rebukes him for spending so little time at home.

Cara implies that Charles and Sebastian’s relationship should not develop into anything long-term or explicitly homosexual. Homosexual relationships were socially unacceptable in this period, and homosexuality was illegal in Britain. This suggests that to live openly as a gay person would lead to persecution in this period. Cara predicts that they will be disillusioned and fall out of love with each other. She thinks it is better for this to happen in a relationship which can have no future (as they cannot legally marry) because it will not have repercussions later in life.



Cara recognizes that it is much easier for a man to retain his reputation in British society, than for a woman—people are more likely to believe Lord Marchmain than Lady Marchmain. Lord Marchmain has destroyed his own reputation because he is self-destructive. Lord Marchmain has not loved her unconditionally, and this has caused him to become disillusioned, and to hate her unfairly when she cannot live up to his unrealistic standards. This suggests that Lord Marchmain idealized his love for Lady Marchmain, just as Charles idealizes his love for Sebastian. Thus, Cara implies that, at some point, Charles too will lose his innocence and become disillusioned with Sebastian.



Cara observes that Sebastian is afraid of adult responsibility and wishes to escape from it by prolonging his childhood. She can see that Charles drinks for fun, but that, for Sebastian, it satisfies a deeper psychological need. Cara is much older than Charles and much more experienced: she has seen many of these things happen before. The fact that she has seen the same behavior in Lord Marchmain suggests that Sebastian indeed takes after his brooding, self-destructive father, and will likely struggle with alcohol dependency himself in the future.



The excitement of the summer evaporates, and Charles and Sebastian are brought back down to Earth and to their everyday lives, to which they must return. This foreshadows the gradual decline of their relationship, as outside forces begin to encroach upon the perfectly sheltered, insular, idealistic life they led together in the summer.



PART 1, CHAPTER 5

It is autumn when Charles and Sebastian return to Oxford, and the season makes them feel old and sad. They meet up as soon as they are back, and Charles notices that Sebastian seems miserable. He says that he has been given a talk by some of Lady Marchmain's friends, Mgr. Bell and Mr. Samgrass, and that, if he does not change his ways, he will be expelled. He also tells Charles that Anthony Blanche has been expelled and has moved to Munich where he is in love with a policeman. Charles feels that he will miss Anthony.

Sebastian tries to cheer them both up, but his attempt fails, and their bleak mood continues into the new term. Charles realizes that he misses Jasper, who has now graduated, because Charles's antics were more fun when there was somebody to be shocked by them. Charles resolves to study more and live more frugally so that he doesn't have to spend another summer at home with his father. He enjoys history and does well academically without much effort. He begins to draw seriously as well, and attends a life drawing class with a female model.

Charles is quite happy with this new turn of events and begins to enjoy his new, more mature life. However, Sebastian begins to fall behind, and Charles realizes that Sebastian needs his drinking and escapades as a diversion from reality. Without it, Sebastian grows sad and sullen, and even seems unhappy with Charles.

Charles and Sebastian spend all their time together and lose contact with their other friends. Many of the circles they moved in have broken up since Anthony left, and Charles feels that Anthony has taken some of the life away from Oxford. Anthony's peers, who always tormented him, seem bored and boring without his influence and provocative behavior. Charles and Sebastian no longer spend time with these men, and instead drink in local working men's pubs nearby. Sebastian does not want to socialize with anyone else from the college.

Charles and Sebastian's relationship follows the pattern of the seasons. It begins in spring, blossoms in summer, and begins to decline in autumn. Sebastian's decline at school is related to death and decay because it represents the death of love in Charles's life. Although Anthony makes Charles uncomfortable, Charles will miss him because his fearlessness made their social life exciting, suggesting that Charles, like Anthony, is bored of the stuffy, conservative culture at Oxford and longs for experiences like his exotic summer in Venice.



Charles and Sebastian cannot get their youthful enthusiasm back despite their efforts, reflecting the pattern of human life as it moves from youth to old age, and the pattern of the seasons as they move through warm and life towards coldness and death. However, although the end of the year has the outward appearance of death, it is really a phase in a repetitive cycle of death and rebirth. This reflects the novel's underlying religious message, which suggests that death is not the end. Charles does not want to live extravagantly just for his own sake—he only enjoyed this lifestyle when it was taboo and there was some authority figure to rebel against.



Charles begins to settle into adult life after his brief, adolescent rebellion. For Sebastian, however, this rebellion represents a deeper psychological need, and he uses alcohol to avoid adult life because he is deeply unhappy.



Charles and Sebastian are still very close and do not drift apart when their lifestyles change. This shows that even innocent, youthful love can be very strong and withstand periods of unhappiness. The boys who picked on Anthony are not imaginative enough to entertain themselves now that he's gone, suggesting that they need someone to ostracize because they lack individual personality and can only function in a group which is united by the persecution of others.



Around Christmas, Lady Marchmain visits Oxford to see Mr. Samgrass, a professor at Oxford, and comes to visit Charles and Sebastian. In hindsight, Charles views this as the beginning of the end for his friendship with Sebastian. Lady Marchmain has enlisted Mr. Samgrass's help to put together a memorial book for her brother, Ned, who was killed in World War I. Mr. Samgrass has many projects of this sort and seems to have connections with everyone important and influential. He is extremely interested in royalty and studies the history of English monarchs. He is also a Catholic.

Although Charles does not notice that he is overly-friendly with Lady Marchmain, Sebastian is annoyed that Charles likes his mother. Lady Marchmain invites Charles to **Brideshead** for Christmas, and Charles agrees to come. A few days later, Charles bumps into Julia and a man named Rex Mottram in Sebastian's room while he waits for Sebastian to come home. Julia and Rex have stopped by on their way back to Brideshead and hoped to have lunch with Sebastian. Charles invites them to dine with him, and Sebastian joins them.

Rex is a confident man with a large personality who talks all the way through lunch. He is Canadian and has made his fortune through good luck and hard work. He is also involved in politics. During lunch, Rex announces that he never went to university and thinks that studying is a waste of time. He is only 30 but seems much older than Charles and Sebastian. He seems to *belong* to Julia, although it is unclear if they are a couple or not.

A few weeks later, to Charles's surprise, he, Sebastian, and Boy Mulcaster are invited to a party with Rex and Julia in London. They set out for London in Hardcastle's car and arrive at Marchmain House (the family's townhouse) before the party. They pass Julia on the stairs when they arrive, and she says that she will be late to the dinner. The party is a charity ball that she has helped organize, and the dinner is Rex's idea.

Lady Marchmain interferes with Charles and Sebastian's dynamic. She represents the outside world, which must inevitably encroach upon their solitary paradise together. Mr. Samgrass is a social climber and is always keen to ingratiate himself with people who can provide him with money, work, or prestige. He represents the shallow, ambitious aspects of British society, which Charles despises.



Charles does not realize that Sebastian expects him to take his side against Lady Marchmain. He cannot do this because she is kind to him, and he has no reason to dislike her. He does not understand that there is an emotional war between Sebastian and Lady Marchmain, much like the war that Charles's father waged against him over the summer. As time goes on, Sebastian's family encroach more and more on his life and he becomes less able to avoid them—another external force that threatens the stability of Charles and Sebastian's relationships.



Unlike the Marchmains, Rex is "new money" and is not from a wealthy background. He has earned his wealth in business, rather than inherited it. This was a common life path during the 20th century, as technological progress and industry allowed people from ordinary backgrounds to rise through the ranks of business and make their own way in the world. Rex is insensitive and cannot understand that just because he did not need university to succeed, education is not necessarily a waste of time. He is more worldly and experienced than Charles and Sebastian, who have never had jobs or been independent. Julia is very confident and treats Rex like her property, which suggests they will become a couple if they aren't already.



Charles assumes that Julia has many fashionable friends. Her life seems to be filled with glamorous social events, which Charles rejects and views as a shallow aspect of modern society.



Sebastian, Charles, and Boy go downstairs, where Rex and the guests are waiting. Rex opens some wine and flirts with a woman named Mrs. Champion, and Boy tries to ingratiate himself with some of Julia's friends who are already at the party. Charles and Sebastian sit apart from the rest and get drunk together.

After dinner, Boy suggests that he, Charles, and Sebastian sneak out of the party and visit "Ma Mayfield's" on the "Old Hundredth." Boy claims he has a girlfriend there, named Effie, whom he must go and see. Charles and Sebastian, already very drunk, agree to go with him. The three slip out at the first opportunity they get. They take Hardcastle's car, and Boy drives.

They arrive in a dingy side street and see the entrance of a club. There is a middle-aged man slumped over outside. He warns them not to go inside because they will be "poisoned." Boy tells the doorman that he is a member, and leads the others inside. Once through the door, they are asked to pay by a woman in a booth. Boy protests and demands to speak to Mrs. Mayfield, but the woman says she is Mrs. Mayfield, and Boy sulkily pays for them to enter.

The bar is very crowded. A woman brings them champagne and Boy asks her where Effie is. The woman does not know who he means and shrugs his questions off. Boy sets off to look for Effie, and a couple of girls sidle up to Charles and Sebastian. They seem about to approach but then decide that the boys are "fairies" and move off again.

Charles and Sebastian are outsiders in this setting because they are not interested in the more adult pursuits which the others gravitate towards. Instead, they wish to remain isolated in their own private, innocent world.



The Old Hundredth is an area of London, and Ma Mayfield's is a gentlemen's club. This setting suggests that the boys will soon lose their innocence and move ever closer to the adult world, in which, if they want to belong in conventional society, women and sex must play a role.



The grisly description of the club implies that the place is morally as well as physically impure, and will corrupt the boys if they go inside. In entering the club, they move gradually away from their innocence and enter the adult world, which it is suggested is rife with temptation and low morals. The man's claim that he has been "poisoned" refers back to the idea of the "poisoned" fruit which Adam and Eve eat in the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, which ends their time of innocence in paradise. Boy pretends that he knows the place and makes a fool of himself because he obviously does not. He wants to appear older and more experienced than he is, whereas Charles and Sebastian only want to cling to their youth.



It is clear that no one in the club recognizes Boy or thinks he is Effie's boyfriend. The girls think that Charles and Sebastian are gay, and use a derogatory term to imply this. This suggests that Charles and Sebastian stand out and do not easily blend in with the adult clientele of the club, who are mostly there to meet women. Instead, Charles and Sebastian are set apart and give the impression that they cannot be tempted by the women, further insinuating that there is a romantic element to their close relationship, if not a sexual one.



Boy returns with Effie and seats her at their table. The waiter immediately brings her a plate of food, which she eats hungrily, and the waiter charges Boy for it. Effie wonders if she has seen Charles before, and he assures her she has not. She says that she recognizes Boy but cannot place him, and Boy says that she must be teasing. Effie seems confused and is relieved when Boy does not want to dance because her shoes rub her feet.

Effie works at the club, either as a dancer or an escort. Her profession is not glamorized, and the mundane aspects of her job are emphasized instead: she gets hungry at work and her shoes hurt her feet. This suggests that things which appear glamorous or romantic, like sex (and, later, war) are not always what they seem in reality. Effie entertains a lot of men and has forgotten Boy, with whom it is implied she once spent the night. This makes Boy look naïve and foolish—he wants to appear more worldly than he is, but emotionally he still lives up to his namesake of being only a “boy.”



The two women who approached earlier return, and Sebastian invites them to join the table. They, too, are brought food which the boys pay for. Charles thinks they are very unattractive, and that one looks like a **skull** and the other looks like an ill child. They invite the boys to a party at their house, and Sebastian agrees to drive them. The doorman tries to persuade them to leave the car, but Sebastian insists.

The women are associated with death and decay, as relationships with women are additional realities of adulthood which will inevitably come between Charles and Sebastian and spell the death of their relationship. The doorman does not want Sebastian to drive because he is drunk, and Sebastian’s insistence is further evidence of his alcohol problem and self-destructive nature, which Cara warned Charles about in Venice.



They have not driven far when Sebastian almost collides with a taxi. The women beg him to stop the car and Sebastian pulls up abruptly, right in front of two policemen. The girls and Boy try to persuade the policemen to let them off, but the policemen arrest them and put them in cells. Charles takes it quite calmly, but he can hear that Sebastian is in a panic, pounding on the walls of his cell next door.

The women are afraid that Sebastian will crash the car, and they do not want to be caught by the police because they may be arrested for being prostitutes. The policemen are willing to cooperate with the women, who have clearly been in this situation before, but Boy, who is naïve and arrogant, offends the policeman with his offer of bribery. Sebastian is afraid of being trapped or confined once he’s in his jail cell, which, in a sense, reflects the way in which he feels trapped by his looming adult responsibilities. His desire to get out further emphasizes his general dislike of authority and responsibility.



Sebastian shouts through the wall that they ought to call Rex Mottram, who arrives promptly and persuades the police to let them go. They must appear in court the next day, however. Rex takes them back to his house for the night. The next morning, Rex seems to have the whole business planned out. He says that Sebastian may get jail time, but that Boy and Charles will only have to pay a small fine. Rex is worried that the papers will be involved. He advises Sebastian to tell the court that he is not used to alcohol, and that that is why he was so drunk.

Rex is good at getting his own way and is confident and persuasive because of this. He is used to dealing with legal situations (it is implied that Rex has links to organized crime) and knows how to handle the court and the press. The ease with which Rex navigates the world implies that he represents modernity itself, which Charles views as seedy, vulgar, and corrupt. Despite Rex’s efforts, the fact that Sebastian is from a prestigious family may mean that his arrest will cause a scandal.



At court, Charles and Boy get off with fines, while Sebastian's trial is set for the following week. After the hearing, Charles and Sebastian sit forlornly on the courthouse steps. Sebastian says that he wants to go abroad to avoid all the hassle: he knows his mother will make him feel guilty about the incident. Charles suggests that they call Julia, and she tells them to meet her. Julia seems vaguely impressed with them because they were out with women, and has told her mother, whom she says took the news very well.

Lady Marchmain asks them to lunch and does not seem angry at all. Her only complaint is that her extended family will be disappointed: half of them will blame her for raising Sebastian Catholic, and the other half will feel that she has not raised her children Catholic enough. Charles is in a good mood after lunch, but Sebastian seems morose. Charles asks him what is wrong, but Sebastian cannot explain.

The following week, Sebastian is let off with only a fine. The newspapers *do* get ahold of the story and run the headline: "Marquis's son unused to wine." Mr. Samgrass testifies at Sebastian's trial and implies that Sebastian is an excellent student. Mr. Samgrass also talks to the Dean of the college and makes it so that Charles and Sebastian are not expelled, but, instead, have a 9:00 curfew. Although this is helpful, Mr. Samgrass makes a nuisance of himself and visits their rooms after 9:00, when he knows they cannot escape.

When Charles arrives at **Brideshead** for Christmas, he finds Mr. Samgrass is there as well. Mr. Samgrass tells Charles that the other guests, and Julia, will leave Brideshead the next day, but that he will stay to work on Lady Marchmain's book. Sebastian is out fox hunting with the others, and Charles waits with Mr. Samgrass for their return. Sebastian comes back early and says he lost the rest of the party. When the others return, Mr. Samgrass eats a second lunch with them.

Sebastian does not want to face the consequences of his actions, and wants to run away instead. He is afraid of responsibility and of disappointing his family, who make him feel guilty and increase his self-hatred. Julia sees her brother as an adult for the first time because she thinks that he has solicited an escort, suggesting that sexual experience with women is linked to people's perceptions of manhood.



Lady Marchmain makes Sebastian feel guilty, but pretends that this is not her doing. Instead, she blames her family, who she says will be disappointed. However, to Sebastian it is all the same: he has caused trouble for his mother and she has let him know this, which makes him feel guilty and ashamed. This could be why Sebastian has gravitated away from religion in young adulthood: he likely associates the guilt and judgment he feels from his devoutly-Catholic mother as a representation of Catholicism itself.



It is ironic that the newspapers use this headline, as Sebastian's regular drinking habit is what got him in this situation, not his unfamiliarity with alcohol. Mr. Samgrass lies for Lady Marchmain so that Sebastian can stay at Oxford, suggesting that Lady Marchmain's morals are not as strict as they appear, as she is willing to let someone else be dishonest on her behalf in order to save face. This makes Sebastian feel obliged to, or reliant on, Mr. Samgrass: something which he hates because he wishes to escape from all authority and obligation. Mr. Samgrass's surveillance of Charles and Sebastian for Lady Marchmain shows that she has an oppressive authority over her son. Sebastian's erratic behavior and desire for freedom, then, makes even more sense in this context.



Mr. Samgrass has made himself indispensable to Lady Marchmain because she is a fashionable figure and because she funds his research. He is a greedy, parasitic figure, who is associated with modern social climbing and takes advantage of the Marchmain's hospitality.



That night, before dinner, Lady Marchmain invites the party to attend chapel. Sebastian declines and goes to have a bath instead. Charles goes with him, and Sebastian complains that Mr. Samgrass annoys him. As time goes on, Charles realizes that Mr. Samgrass irritates everyone in the house.

Sebastian does not attend chapel because he is not a practicing Catholic, much to the disdain of his religiously-devout family. Yet, despite the rift between Lady Marchmain and Sebastian over his loose adherence to Catholicism, Lady Marchmain is not morally superior to Sebastian in practice. She is essentially taking advantage of Mr. Samgrass, only keeping him around to spy on Sebastian, which suggests that she is not above using others or being dishonest—certainly not Christlike qualities.



Throughout his stay, Charles notices that Lady Marchmain organizes many “little talks” with him. He thinks she is trying to convert him to Catholicism, and Sebastian is annoyed by this. Charles is often invited to visit her study and he is startled by the difference between this room, which is neat and pleasant, and the stately grandeur of the rest of the house. During one of their religious talks, Lady Marchmain tells Charles that she used to feel guilty for being rich, but then she remembered that the poor are lucky because they are closer to God. Charles says that it is hard for rich people to get to Heaven and Lady Marchmain replies that religion is about unexpected things.

Lady Marchmain tries to bring Charles around to her point of view. Her modest room is different because it is her own, and under her influence, whereas the rest of the house belonged to Lord Marchmain and represents his lavish, sensual personality. Lady Marchmain is neat and austere rather than extravagant, and the room’s parallel to her demonstrates the way in which architecture can outwardly reflect people’s personalities and emotional states. Lady Marchmain wants to feel like a victim or a martyr, and views her wealth as a form of suffering because it keeps her at a distance from God—her comparatively minimal room, then, is an outward representation of her desire to reject her own good fortune.



Charles notices that Sebastian starts to withdraw from him. As Charles gets to know Sebastian’s family, Sebastian begins to see Charles as part of the world that he tries to escape. Although he still loves Charles, he does not feel secure with him. Charles perceives this but cannot understand why at the time. He thinks that Mr. Samgrass is the problem, and agrees when Sebastian asks if they can go to stay with Charles’s father, who seems to like Sebastian a lot.

Sebastian wants to be independent from his family, and feels that he must stand alone against them. He used to feel that Charles was his companion, but now feels that Charles will side against him. Charles is not emotionally mature enough to understand this, and only realizes later, after the events. Sebastian is extremely lovable, and even the curmudgeonly, passive-aggressive Mr. Ryder warms to him. This supports the idea that Sebastian is blessed, or angelic, and that his suffering does not detract from this.



After Christmas they return to Oxford, and Sebastian grows more depressed and even starts to avoid Charles. He continues to drink heavily. Charles realizes that when *he* drinks it is a celebration, but when Sebastian drinks it is a refuge for him. Sebastian becomes obsessed with tormenting Mr. Samgrass, who still follows him around, and Charles begins to worry that Sebastian is in real danger.

Again, Cara’s warning to Charles proves correct: Sebastian uses alcohol as an escape. It likely allows him to hide from the outside world and helps him forget the things that make him unhappy. Sebastian is in danger of doing something foolish and self-destructive, which may threaten his future and encourage his family to remove him from Oxford.



Charles and Sebastian go to **Brideshead** for Easter and, for the first time, Sebastian gets extremely drunk in front of his family. Charles knows that Sebastian has been drinking all week, but there are a group of guests at the house, so no one notices Sebastian's behavior. When all the guests leave, it becomes obvious to Charles that Sebastian is drunk. He finds Sebastian before dinner, when he is looking for the cocktail tray downstairs.

Charles asks Sebastian where he has been, and Sebastian says that he has been with Nanny and that he has a cold. Sebastian pours himself a drink and leaves the room. Charles follows him upstairs to his room, but Sebastian slams the door in his face and locks him out. Julia passes him in the hall, and Charles tells her that Sebastian is drunk. Julia seems perturbed by this and says that her brother is a "bore."

Charles goes to have a bath and, when he comes back, finds Sebastian's room unlocked. Sebastian sits at his dressing table, drinking whisky. Charles tries to take the bottle from him, but Sebastian snaps at him to put it back. He accuses Charles of spying on him for Lady Marchmain and says that he will not go down for dinner. He admits he has been drinking all day, and Charles says that he will tell the family that Sebastian's cold is worse.

Charles goes downstairs and finds the rest of the family assembled. Charles tells them that Sebastian is ill, and Cordelia rushes upstairs before anyone can stop her. When she returns, she announces that Sebastian is drunk. Lady Marchmain is shocked, but the subject is not discussed anymore over dinner. After they have eaten, Lady Marchmain reads to the family, and is about to go to chapel when Sebastian bursts into the room.

Sebastian is pale and haggard, and says that he has come to apologize to Charles. Charles takes Sebastian up to bed but, on the stairs, Sebastian collapses in tears. Again, he asks Charles why he spies on him for his mother. Charles is deeply hurt, but eventually persuades Sebastian to go to bed.

This incident blurs the line between Sebastian's university life, in which he drinks and acts as he likes, and his family life, in which he feels that he must control himself and suppress who he really is. This suggests that Sebastian is losing control of his life and can no longer keep these two sides separate or use one (his university life) as an escape from the other (his home life).



Sebastian no longer takes Charles into his confidence and locks him out, both literally and emotionally. This suggests that Sebastian feels alone and that Charles is now his enemy, as though they are on different sides in a war. Julia does not want to show that she is concerned about Sebastian, using her cool bravado to brush the idea off.



Sebastian develops traits associated with alcoholism: he becomes secretive and gets aggressive when Charles tries to take his drink away. Sebastian assumes that if Charles likes his family then he is Sebastian's enemy and must work against him. Charles, however, is still prepared to lie for Sebastian. Although their love is strong, it is human, they therefore cannot avoid problems entirely because conflict and warlike behavior are pervasive human traits.



Lady Marchmain exercises a great deal of control and authority over the family: they will not discuss something that will upset her or that she will find improper. This suggests that Lady Marchmain keeps up a façade, even when things are not alright. Everyone is, of course, preoccupied with Sebastian, but must not mention it. Their avoidance of the problem likely contributes to Sebastian's feelings of shame, which lead him to drink in the first place.



Sebastian drinks because he is unhappy, yet his drinking only exacerbates his unhappiness. This vicious cycle suggests that Sebastian will only descend deeper into his dependency, since he now requires alcohol to regulate his emotions. He still loves Charles, but he thinks that Charles has formed an alliance with his family against him. He dislikes himself, and therefore rejects and tries to escape from those who love him and want to help.



Early the next morning, Sebastian wakes Charles up and says that he is going to London. He asks Charles if he can stay with Mr. Ryder, and Charles says yes but that he wants to say goodbye to Lady Marchmain before they leave. Sebastian seems peeved and tells Charles that he will leave before him. He says goodbye abruptly and goes downstairs where a car is waiting.

Charles goes to find Lady Marchmain a few hours later. She is upset because Sebastian seemed so unhappy the night before. Lady Marchmain says that Mr. Samgrass told her that Sebastian often drinks like that, but Charles explains that he has never seen him that way before. Lady Marchmain says that Sebastian has nothing to be ashamed of, but Charles says Sebastian is ashamed because he is depressed. Lady Marchmain laments that she has been through this before with someone else, and that he, too, ran away.

Lady Marchmain says she does not understand this—the men she knew as a young woman did not run away from things. She begs Charles to help Sebastian, as she says that Sebastian prefers Charles to anyone else. Before Charles leaves, she gives him a copy of Mr. Samgrass’s book, about her brother Ned, and says that Charles will understand when he reads it. Charles realizes that Lady Marchmain has prepared this meeting in advance and that she has planned to give him the book. He realizes that she does want him to spy on Sebastian. As Charles leaves, Cordelia asks him to give Sebastian “her special love.”

On the train, Charles reads Lady Marchmain’s book, which tells the story of her three older brothers, who were killed in World War I. They came from a large family of Catholics, who were separate from most of English society, and viewed their deaths as sacrifices to a cause. When Charles arrives at his father’s house, Sebastian already there, and is in a good mood. He asks Charles if he is now on Lady Marchmain’s side, and Charles answers, “No, I’m with you, ‘Sebastian *contra mundum*.’”

Sebastian sees Charles’s desire to say goodbye to Lady Marchmain as evidence that Charles takes his family’s side and not his. Charles does not understand Sebastian’s point of view and does not realize that it may be better to humor Sebastian so that he does not feel alone. Charles does not realize that Sebastian sees his family as his enemies and that, if Charles sides with them, he will see Charles in this way too.



Charles tries to explain to Lady Marchmain that, when they are in Oxford, Sebastian drinks because he is happy rather than as an escape. Lady Marchmain does not believe this. Lady Marchmain keeps up appearances and maintains a façade of being pious and grateful. As a Catholic woman, she views it as her duty to be grateful, even for her suffering, as she believes that God sends obstacles to test her and make her better. This makes Sebastian feel worse because, like his father, he is unable to be happy and please his mother.



Lady Marchmain implies that her brothers were better men than her husband. However, her brothers died in World War I, and Lady Marchmain does not know how they would have changed in the aftermath of the war. Lady Marchmain can see that Charles and Sebastian have a strong bond, but she does not understand or respect it. She asks Charles to use it against Sebastian so that he can spy on Sebastian for her. Although she does not say this explicitly, she implies that, if Charles reads about Ned, he will see the type of man that Sebastian should aspire to be, and will help Lady Marchmain achieve that. In contrast to her mother, Cordelia genuinely loves Sebastian for who he is.



Lady Marchmain views her brothers as martyrs because she believes they died heroically, for a good cause. Martyrdom is an important concept in Catholicism because Jesus died for humanity’s sins, and Catholics are supposed to emulate this. Charles now realizes that Lady Marchmain wants to change Sebastian and that she holds him to an unfair standard. He sees that they are on different sides and commits to being Sebastian’s accomplice.



They return to Oxford for the spring, but Sebastian is still depressed. He and Charles arrange to rent a flat together. One day in the bookshop, Charles meets Mr. Samgrass, who asks him about this. When Charles tells Sebastian, Sebastian says that his mother plans to make him live with Mgr. Bell. He says that Charles failed his mother's test when she gave him the book about Uncle Ned, and that she knows he is not on her side.

A few weeks later, Charles receives a letter from Lady Marchmain which says that she will come to Oxford soon and wants to speak to him alone. She asks Charles if Sebastian has been drinking and Charles truthfully says no. That night, however, Sebastian is found drunk on the campus lawn and is taken before the Dean. Charles is furious with him the next morning, and although Sebastian clearly needs sympathy, Charles storms off and leaves him alone.

Lady Marchmain comes to see Charles again and gently berates him for lying to her. Charles insists that he did not lie, but Lady Marchmain says that she cannot allow Sebastian and Charles to live together and that he must live with Mgr. Bell instead. Charles insists that this will make Sebastian worse, and that Sebastian must feel free to be happy, but Lady Marchmain says that Charles is biased against Catholics and that she knows how to handle drunks.

Sebastian is resigned when he hears the news, and he and Charles get extremely drunk together that night. The next day, Lady Marchmain takes Sebastian home, and Charles and Brideshead clear out his room. Charles is distraught and close to tears, but Brideshead cannot understand why Sebastian does not want to live with Mgr. Bell. Charles says that Sebastian would be better off with no religion, but Brideshead seems bemused by this.

Lady Marchmain uses Mr. Samgrass to spy on Charles and Sebastian, wanting to increase her influence over Sebastian. Lady Marchmain expected Charles to write to her and confirm that he would spy on Sebastian for her after reading the book about Ned. However, Charles was adamant in his allegiance with Sebastian. Lady Marchmain wants to separate Charles and Sebastian because she views Charles as an outsider who will lead Sebastian further away from Catholicism and from her control—in reality, it is likely her own overbearing behavior that is pushing Sebastian away.



Sebastian is better when he is with Charles and does not feel the need to drink heavily all the time. When he is around his family, however, he feels trapped and this encourages him to drink as a means of escape. Charles knows that Sebastian has sabotaged their chance to live together. He later realizes that he has done the wrong thing because Sebastian's depression is worse when he feels alone.



Charles has been truthful with Lady Marchmain, but she assumes the worst and does not listen to him. She assumes that Sebastian drinks all the time when he is with Charles, even though this is not true. Charles understands Sebastian better than Lady Marchmain does, but Lady Marchmain believes that Charles's concern comes from a place of prejudice. This suggests that she feels persecuted, like a martyr, even when she is not.



The worst has already happened for Charles and Sebastian (they will not be allowed to live together), so they naïvely seem to think getting drunk will do no harm despite Sebastian's former mishaps. Brideshead has no empathy and cannot understand Charles or Sebastian's position. Much like Lady Marchmain, Brideshead is extremely set in his ways Catholic and sees no value in anything which does not relate to his religion.



After Sebastian has gone, Charles goes to visit Collins and hears that there is a room available in his house. Charles cannot bring himself to ask Collins about the room, however, and goes away forlornly. Not long after this, Charles goes to see his father and tells him that he wants to leave Oxford and become a painter instead. Charles's father agrees to this and suggests that Charles should go abroad.

Charles has nowhere to live now that his arrangement with Sebastian has fallen through. He is too proud to ask Collins for help because he abandoned Collins for Sebastian. Without Sebastian, Oxford loses all allure for Charles. It no longer seems like a lively place where love is possible because Charles and Sebastian have lost their innocence and freedom. They have been metaphorically cast out of the place which they once considered a paradise on Earth, reflecting the difficult truth that even the most innocent, genuine, and joyful experiences must eventually come to an end.



Before his departure, Charles receives a letter from Lady Marchmain. She writes that Sebastian has gone to stay with his father and that, after this, he will travel abroad with Mr. Samgrass. He may return to Oxford after Christmas if he agrees to live with Mgr. Bell. He was not happy during his time at **Brideshead**, and Lady Marchmain says she is very sorry about the way that things worked out.

Charles knows that Sebastian will never agree to live with Mgr. Bell and will never return to Oxford. Being forced to stay with his family will make Sebastian unhappy because he will feel trapped at Brideshead and want to escape. Lady Marchmain is genuinely sorry and wishes to help Sebastian, but her close-mindedness and unwillingness to let him make his own choices make her efforts backfire.



PART 2, CHAPTER 1

At **Brideshead** during Christmas time, Mr. Samgrass tells a story about his and Sebastian's trip into the Turkish mountains, and how they were nearly attacked by "a band" of brigands. Lady Marchmain thinks he means a musical band, and Cordelia desperately stifles giggles beside Charles. Everyone is bored with Mr. Samgrass's stories. Sebastian sits in a shadowy corner, away from the family group. Julia asks Sebastian if he was frightened, and Mr. Samgrass quickly says that Sebastian was ill that day.

The slideshow is clearly very awkward, and Mr. Samgrass's stories are tedious and unimpressive. Cordelia recognizes this and struggles to maintain a façade of politeness, suggesting that she, like Sebastian, struggles to maintain the strict public persona that Lady Marchmain demands. Sebastian deliberately separates himself from the family—he is in shadow to represent his separateness, his isolation, and his position as an outsider.



Mr. Samgrass gives them a slideshow of his photographs from the trip, and Cordelia complains that there are none of Sebastian. Mr. Samgrass says the Sebastian took the photos. At last, Mr. Samgrass finds one from Beirut which features Sebastian. Charles also recognizes Anthony Blanche in the photo, and Mr. Samgrass says that Anthony travelled with them for a while.

Sebastian's absence in the photos is suspicious, but Mr. Samgrass quickly dismisses Cordelia and Charles's concerns. It seems strange that Mr. Samgrass has not told the family that he and Sebastian met Anthony on their trip. This suggests that he has something to hide and that, if this secret was revealed, it would compromise his position inside the family's inner circle.



When Charles arrived at the train station for **Brideshead** two nights ago, he bumped into Sebastian and Mr. Samgrass. He was surprised because he thought they were already at Brideshead. Charles asked them how they'd been delayed, and Mr. Samgrass tells an elaborate story which Charles knows is a lie. When Lady Marchmain greeted them at the house, Charles could tell that Mr. Samgrass felt guilty about something. After dinner, Lady Marchmain took him away for a "little talk."

The next day, Charles, Sebastian, and Cordelia visit the nursery, and Cordelia remarks that Sebastian seems unhappy. Nanny Hawkins thinks he looks thin. Charles also thinks that Sebastian looks ill and notices that he is very on-edge. He does not want to ask Sebastian what has happened since Easter, and instead tells him about Paris and the art school. Cordelia says that she thinks all modern art is rubbish, and Charles agrees with her.

Cordelia leaves for her supper, and Charles and Sebastian go downstairs to have cocktails. They find Brideshead downstairs, but have only been in the room a few minutes when Wilcox enters and tells Brideshead that Lady Marchmain wants to see him. Wilcox follows Brideshead upstairs, and Sebastian asks another servant for a cocktail. The servant replies that all the alcohol is locked away and that Wilcox has the keys. Sebastian impatiently agrees to wait.

Wilcox never returns, and Charles goes to dress for dinner. He meets Brideshead in the corridor and Brideshead tells him that there will be no drinks left around the house while Sebastian is there: these are Lady Marchmain's orders. He explains that Sebastian disappeared over Christmas and that Mr. Samgrass only found him the previous day, just before they arrived. Brideshead says that if Charles wants a drink, he can order one privately from Wilcox and asks if he would like one now. Charles says that he cannot stomach it.

Charles goes upstairs to bathe and then goes into Sebastian's bedroom, which is next to his own. Sebastian has found a drink and seems annoyed to be interrupted. Charles protests that he does not need to lie to him, and asks him what happened with Mr. Samgrass. Sebastian will not tell him and is vague and evasive.

Charles knows that something has delayed Mr. Samgrass and Sebastian's arrival at Brideshead, and that Mr. Samgrass does not want Lady Marchmain to know what it is. Lady Marchmain clearly suspects something, too, and takes Mr. Samgrass away to question him. This places Lady Marchmain in the role of interrogator and authority, not dissimilar to a Catholic priest who asks for confessions, or even an inquisitionist.



Charles is afraid to hear about Sebastian's life since he last saw him—he can tell that Sebastian has been unhappy but feels too awkward to bring this up, not wanting to acknowledge that they have grown apart. Charles prefers art from the past to modern art because he believes that modernity is shallow and soulless, and that the past is superior to the present.



Everything is done secretly in the Marchmain family, and issues are not openly spoken about. This clearly plays a role in Sebastian's substance abuse, since he feels he must cope with his problems in secret rather than being open about them with his family. Sebastian struggles to wait even a short time for a drink, implying that he has now fully become an alcoholic. His drinking, which was once used as an escape from unhappiness, has now made him even more unhappy.



Having coaxed the truth out of Mr. Samgrass, Lady Marchmain's decision that Sebastian must not be allowed to drink while he is at Brideshead does not effectively address Sebastian's problems. Rather, it simply cuts him off from the thing he is dependent on. Charles feels that he cannot drink with Brideshead behind Sebastian's back, because this would be a betrayal to his friend.



The secrecy and caution in the house make Sebastian even less likely to open up and be honest. This atmosphere also makes him more likely to rebel because it makes him feel trapped and restricted. This suggests that, although she is motivated by love for Sebastian, Lady Marchmain's prohibitive actions only worsen his behavior.



Disappointed, Charles goes downstairs and finds Julia, who complains that her mother wants everyone “under surveillance.” She wishes that Sebastian could just behave normally and assures Charles that she, too, has been in trouble and is being watched by Lady Marchmain. She asks Charles if he thinks Mr. Samgrass is a fraud, and Charles says absolutely.

Julia also finds Lady Marchmain’s methods controlling, yet she similarly views Sebastian’s problem selfishly and is only worried about how it affects her and her family’s reputation. She is also jealous because Sebastian gets all the attention. She wants Charles to know that she, too, is interesting and rebellious. This suggests that there is a glamor in being seen as a rebel and that forbidden things are associated with bravery, character, and adult experience, which Julia wishes to emulate. Her interest in Charles here also foreshadows a potential relationship between the two of them in the future.



The family sit down to dinner. Sebastian is late. They are all very tense, but when he does appear, he is quite composed and orders a glass of whisky. Wilcox looks at Lady Marchmain, who nods, and brings Sebastian a decanter with a small shot of whisky inside. Sebastian peers at it pointedly but drinks it without complaint.

Lady Marchmain will not directly address the issue of Sebastian’s alcoholism, although it is obvious to everyone what is going on. Sebastian and Lady Marchmain are locked in a silent, emotional battle in which Lady Marchmain sets the rules and Sebastian pointedly defies them.



After dinner, they go to the library as usual, and Lady Marchmain asks who will go out on the fox hunt the next day. Brideshead and Cordelia say they will, but Julia says she must stay in to meet Rex when he arrives. Sebastian says suddenly that he would like to go. Everyone is surprised and pleased, and Brideshead orders drinks to be brought in, although they are still served in small measures under Lady Marchmain’s supervision.

Fox hunting was a common pastime among the British upper classes. The family is pleased that Sebastian wants to join in, as they see this conformity as a sign that he will soon return to normal. This suggests that his family is in denial and wishes to pretend that there is not a problem, rather than to face up to it.



Charles and Sebastian go upstairs. Sebastian gets into bed while Charles sits by the fire. Sebastian tells Charles that he will not join the hunt the next day but will ride to the pub in the village and get drunk. He says that if his family treats him like a “dipsomaniac,” he will behave like one. Charles says that he cannot stop Sebastian, and Sebastian says that Charles must give him money because he has run out of things to sell and the family has frozen his allowance.

Charles learns the truth from Sebastian: he has no desire to fit in with his family, and instead will use this opportunity to spite them and have revenge. Lady Marchmain has done all she can to remove Sebastian’s freedom, but this does not stop him from trying to shake off her authority.



Charles says that he will not give Sebastian money, and Sebastian says he will find another way. He tells Charles about his trip with Mr. Samgrass and explains that they did not travel together for very long. Mr. Samgrass wanted to visit historical sites and was paid by Lady Marchmain so long as Sebastian was with him. This allowed Mr. Samgrass to travel in great style and he was placed in charge of Sebastian’s money.

Mr. Samgrass takes advantage of Lady Marchmain. He is paid to take Sebastian around Europe, but he does not tell Lady Marchmain when Sebastian runs off, and continues to use her money to fund his own travel and research. This demonstrates that, because Lady Marchmain has such high expectations of people, and sets such high standards of behavior, they go to great lengths to avoid her knowledge of their transgressions. However, this does not mean that they behave; they simply rebel in secret. This suggests that people cannot be perfect, because they are predisposed to make mistakes, and that Lady Marchmain is wrong to expect perfection of people.



In Constantinople, however, Sebastian managed to escape Mr. Samgrass and win some money at cards. The next day, he bumped into Anthony Blanche, and Anthony lent him some more money. Mr. Samgrass “recaptured” him and took him to Athens, but, in Athens, Mr. Samgrass was distracted, and Sebastian escaped again. He befriended an American sailor and caught the boat back to Constantinople, where he moved into Anthony’s house, which he shared with a young Jewish man.

Sebastian sent Mr. Samgrass a note from Constantinople and arranged to meet him again, three months later, in Syria. Meanwhile, Mr. Samgrass continued his tour without Sebastian. Sebastian knew that Mr. Samgrass could not have him arrested, or tell Lady Marchmain, without ruining his own holiday. Sebastian was going to run away for good, but Anthony convinced him to contact Mr. Samgrass and go back with him for Christmas.

The next morning, the family get ready to go out for the hunt. Cordelia complains that Sebastian isn’t wearing proper hunting clothes, but Sebastian claims that he could not find any. Before Sebastian joins the others, Charles slips him some money. When the hunt has gone, Mr. Samgrass immediately joins Charles and follows him to the drawing room. He complains to Charles about the tension in the house because of Sebastian, and Charles is irked by this. He tells Mr. Samgrass that he knows what happened on their foreign tour.

Mr. Samgrass seems pleased to be able to talk about the trip, and says that he has only told Lady Marchmain about Sebastian’s escape at Christmas. He dislikes the strict rules on alcohol in the house, because it interferes with his ability to drink, and thinks the day’s hunt will cure Sebastian. Charles tell him not to count on that, and they are interrupted by Julia.

Julia is on-edge and says that they cannot have a repeat of the evening before, because Rex will be with them. She asks Charles if he is going to paint a panel in the study: something he has done on every visit to **Brideshead**, since his first summer with Sebastian. The study is a refuge for Charles during family parties, but, because his style and ability have changed over time, the paintings on the paneled walls are each very different.

Sebastian views himself as a prisoner and constantly tries to escape, suggesting that the more his family try to control him, the worse his behavior will become. Unlike Sebastian and Charles, who are only implied to have romantic feelings for each other, Anthony seems to live an openly gay life abroad with the young Jewish man.



Mr. Samgrass is pleased to get rid of Sebastian and does not care if something happens to him. He uses the opportunity to please himself and to have an all-expenses-paid trip. This suggests he is shallow and self-interested, like modern society, and that he is unwise despite his interest in learning about the past. Anthony, who once tried to lead Charles astray, has become a voice of reason for Sebastian, suggesting that he, unlike Sebastian, has become more mature and level-headed in his time away from Oxford.



Charles wants to show Sebastian that he is still on his side. Mr. Samgrass is parasitic and wants to be entertained by Charles and to gossip about Sebastian, which is particularly unsavory given that he, like Lady Marchmain, is supposed to be a strict Catholic. Instead of exhibiting Christlike behavior, he is callous and does not care about any of the Marchmains, but only about himself, which exposes the underlying hypocrisy and self-interest that can befall even those who purport to be devoutly religious.



Mr. Samgrass wants to bring Charles into his confidence, as though they are on the same side because they are both outsiders. But he does not genuinely care about what happens to Sebastian, only about his own comfort and pleasure. Mr. Samgrass represents the downfalls of modernity, which Charles is skeptical of throughout the novel, in the sense that Samgrass’s shallow, conventional side will sacrifice morals and decency in order to get ahead.



Charles taking refuge in his art suggests that he uses it as an escape from real life, just as Sebastian uses alcohol. His changing style and skill-level over time reflects art and architecture’s ability to capture fleeting emotions and states in people’s lives. It also parallels the fact that he and Sebastian’s have changed significantly (both in their relationship and as individuals) since their first summer together at Brideshead.



Charles goes to the study to begin work on a new panel. Julia follows him and begins to complain about Sebastian; she cannot see why everyone makes such a fuss of him. She wishes that her mother would not make a “skeleton” of him and that, if he is going to drink all the time, he might go abroad where no one knows him. Charles says that Julia is only thinking of herself and does not want to be embarrassed by Sebastian. He warns her that Sebastian is in a “bad mood” and that they may not have a pleasant evening.

Julia implies that her mother will make a family secret of Sebastian: a skeleton in the closet. This associates Sebastian's decline with a symbol of death, and thus with a loss of youth and life itself, which is how Charles views Sebastian's breakdown. However, although Julia complains about this, she thinks it is best if Sebastian goes abroad where he will not embarrass them or create a scandal. This reflects Lord Marchmain's own shame-ridden escape abroad, and Lady Marchmain's subsequent ostracization of him from the family.



Later that day, Lady Marchmain comes to see Charles. She finds it funny that everyone believes the hunt will cure Sebastian, but admits that she secretly believes it herself. Charles tells Lady Marchmain about Paris and says he looks forward to Sebastian's visit. Lady Marchmain says this is impossible and that Sebastian cannot go to stay with Charles in London either. She says that he will easily escape there and that he must stay at home and get well. She reminds Charles that she has done this before, and Charles wants to say that she failed the first time as well, and that he also ran away because he hated her.

The Marchmains are so used to keeping up a public front and burying their internal issues that they almost believe that, if everything looks alright on the surface, then it is alright underneath. Their attitude to the hunt epitomizes this. Lady Marchmain does not trust Charles and cannot see that freedom makes Sebastian better, whereas distrust and surveillance make him worse. Charles refers to Lord Marchmain and suggests that Lady Marchmain drove her husband away because she tried to control him, implying that the same thing will happen with Sebastian if Lady Marchmain continues to infringe on his freedom.



Brideshead comes back early, and Charles talks to him about Sebastian. Brideshead says that he hopes Sebastian cannot help getting drunk and that he does not only drink for the fun of it. Charles says that this is how Sebastian used to drink and that, if the family leaves him alone and lets him live with Charles, he will be fine again. Brideshead says it doesn't matter and that there is no “moral obligation” to be well, but Charles is astounded and tells Brideshead that he talks religious nonsense. Brideshead is not offended and says he has heard this before. It is something about the way his mind works, he says.

Brideshead thinks that it is better to drink because one has a disease, rather than to drink for fun. He sees alcohol as sinful and feels that, if one drinks for no reason, then one chooses deliberately to sin. Brideshead can only think about things in terms of religion and moral purpose. He does not see that Sebastian might like to be happy just for the sake of happiness. This reflects the difference between Charles and Brideshead: Charles believes that things like happiness, art, and beauty can exist purely for their own sake, whereas Brideshead can only see the purpose in things which relate directly to Catholicism.



Rex arrives that afternoon and brings Julia a present: a live tortoise with diamonds encrusted on its shell in the shape of Julia's initials. Charles finds the gift obscene, but Mr. Samgrass is fascinated. They tell Rex about Sebastian, and he suggests that they send him to a rehab center in Zurich which is run by a man Rex knows. Cordelia returns from the hunt and is horrified by the tortoise. She thinks it must be in pain, but Rex says that they do not feel.

Rex and Mr. Samgrass are both very unempathetic and shallow, and thus associated with the negative side of modernity. Rex likes the tortoise because it shows off his wealth, and Mr. Samgrass likes the spectacle of it. Charles and Cordelia, who are both empathetic, immediately feel sorry for the creature because they understand that it is a living thing that can feel pain. They have a general respect for life, which, Charles believes, the modern world lacks.



Sebastian does not come back with the hunt and, a little later, calls from a nearby village. When he returns, he is clearly drunk, and Lady Marchmain offers him drinks at dinner and tells him to help himself. They eat quickly and in silence before Brideshead sends Sebastian to bed. Charles goes upstairs early, too, and the next morning asks Sebastian if he wants him to stay. Sebastian says no, and that Charles's presence is "no help." Charles goes to tell Lady Marchmain that he must leave.

Lady Marchmain asks Charles if he gave Sebastian money, and Charles admits that he did. Lady Marchmain is horrified and asks Charles why he would do something so "wicked." She asks if he secretly hated them all along, but Charles feels nothing during her lecture. As he leaves **Brideshead**, Charles tells himself that he will never go back. Still, he feels that he has left a part of himself behind and will search the world hopelessly for this missing piece from now on.

Charles goes back to Paris and, three weeks later, receives a letter from Cordelia. She writes that she misses Charles and that she has also got into trouble for secretly giving Sebastian whisky. She tells Charles that Rex will take Sebastian to Zurich, and that Rex and Julia are very fond of each other, of which Cordelia strongly disapproves. A week later, Charles is surprised when he returns home one afternoon and finds Rex in his apartment.

Rex asks Charles if he is hiding Sebastian, and Charles is amused to discover that Sebastian has escaped Rex too. Rex tells Charles that they arrived in Paris the night before, on their way to Zurich, and that he went out to play cards. Rex won a large sum and returned to the hotel room, where Sebastian was still awake. While Rex was asleep, Sebastian stole the money and disappeared.

Charles assures Rex that he does not know where Sebastian is, and Rex suggests they dine together that night. He says that he will pay, and that Charles can pick the place. Charles meets Rex at the restaurant that night and orders an expensive meal. Rex has never heard of the place and is a little suspicious. Charles asks Rex if he was mentioned at **Brideshead** after he left, and Rex says that Lady Marchmain felt guilty about what she said to Charles. Charles says that it doesn't matter what people say about you, so long as they don't "call you pigeon pie and eat you up," an expression which confuses Rex.

Lady Marchmain believes that she needs to restrict Sebastian's drinking in order to control him and to help him to control himself. She cannot see that the more she tries to control his behavior, the more he will rebel against her and damage himself in the process.



Lady Marchmain sees Charles's act as spiteful and deliberately intended to hurt her. She takes Sebastian's behavior personally and feels persecuted by him. This supports the idea that she sees herself as a martyr and a victim. This shows, however, that she does not think about Sebastian's wellbeing as much as she thinks about how the situation affects her.



Cordelia loves Sebastian in the same unconditional way that Charles does. Although Sebastian is an alcoholic, Cordelia allows him to indulge in his vice because it brings him peace, whereas trying to monitor and control his behavior will drive him to act out and drink to excess. Cordelia realizes that sending Sebastian abroad will not help him and will only allow the family to feel better because it will protect them from public embarrassment.



The more restraints are put on Sebastian, the better he becomes at lying to escape and evade them. Although the family thinks they want to help Sebastian, Charles does not want them to succeed because he knows that their controlling methods will not make Sebastian happy.



Charles has picked a refined, unfashionable place because he knows that Rex, whom he considers vulgar and uncultured, will not have heard of it. He even imitates Anthony: his comment about pigeon pie is reminiscent of Anthony's language on the night that he took Charles to dinner. This shows that Charles is still rebellious at heart and wishes to flout social expectations.



Charles steers the conversation toward the Marchmains again, and Rex tells him that, in the end, Julia gave Mr. Samgrass away. Rex says that Lady Marchmain finally crumbled when she discovered that Cordelia gave Sebastian whisky every night. Rex also tells Charles that Lady Marchmain is very ill, dying in fact, but that she will not allow herself to be treated. He says it is probably because of her religion.

Rex is impressed with the food but finds the restaurant small and quiet. Over dinner, he tells Charles that the Marchmains are in a bad way financially. They are in debt and have not invested their money wisely. Rex tells Charles that he wants to get a marriage settlement with Julia sorted before their financial situation reveals itself. Charles thinks Rex's conversation is grim, but finds relief in the good wine and food, which, he thinks, proves that there are other types of knowledge in the world.

Rex says that Lady Marchmain does not like him or think him a suitable husband for Julia, but he doesn't care. He says that he will convert to Catholicism if it will keep them happy. He has had a mistress, Brenda Champion, for over a year, and everybody (including Julia) knows. Rex planned to visit Lord Marchmain after he'd been to Zurich, to ask his permission to marry Julia, but now that he has lost Sebastian he does not know if he can do this.

The waiters bring them brandy, but Rex complains that it is not old enough and asks them to bring a large, archaic looking bottle. The waiters obey but seem rather embarrassed. Charles enjoys his own brandy, and lets Rex think that he does not appreciate the spirit. Rex talks about Julia and, not long after, Charles hears that they are engaged. Years later, Charles hears Julia's side of this story.

Rex likes to get his own way. This is typical of Rex's brash, boisterous personality, which Charles sees as explicitly modern. Rex feels that he has won, or ground Lady Marchmain down. He sees everything in terms of dominance and competition, like a war. War, therefore, is explicitly linked to modernity and reflects the fact that, in the early phase of the 20th century, the main focus of society was on the major global conflicts of World War I and World War II. Lady Marchmain intends to die like a martyr: without protest and with complete surrender to her fate.



Rex prefers crass things to subtle ones, and is heavily focused on money and advancing his business prospects. In contrast, the Marchmains, who have always been rich and have not had to think about wealth, have not adapted to modern capitalism. Rex's obsession with wealth is indicative of "new money" rather than "old money," which aligns him more with modernity than with tradition. Charles views Rex as distasteful, and therefore implies that modernity itself equally corrupt and shallow. He revels in the idea that money is not everything.



Rex is determined to win Julia through his competitive and dominant attitude. He views Catholicism as a means to an end, and not as a spiritual pursuit. Rex intends to go over Lady Marchmain's head and marry Julia with Lord Marchmain's permission, because he knows that she dislikes him.



Charles is a snob and enjoys the fact that, although Rex thinks he is being refined, the waiters look down on him because of his tastes. The brandy Charles drinks is older and more expensive, but Rex is taken in by the appearance of the other bottle and the façade of refinement and age, rather than the real thing. Charles believes that Rex's attitude represents the limitations and shallowness of modernity in general.



PART 2, CHAPTER 2

Charles does not notice Julia much when he first meets the Marchmain family. He notices that she is beautiful, and that she looks very like Sebastian, but he is not very interested in her. She feels the same about him and is preoccupied with her own life. She is surprised at how beautiful she is and realizes that she can use this to get what she wants. However, she is also nervous because she may not be able to control the way in which this happens.

On the night that Julia collects Charles from the station, to take him to **Brideshead**, all she can think about is who she is going to marry. This is what all her friends, and most young women her age, think about. Julia knows she is from a good family but worries about the scandal that surrounds her father. She is also Catholic, which means she will not marry an “eldest son” or a “young prince,” and she does not want to marry a Catholic or a foreigner. She dreams up a sensitive widower as the type of man she’d like to marry.

Eventually, Julia does meet a man like this, but she rejects him because she has also met Rex Mottram. Julia is seduced by the dangerous glamor she sees in Rex. She knows he is socially notorious: he is not from a good family and she feels there is something even a little “criminal” about him. She knows this will make her friends jealous. She also knows that he is the lover of Brenda Champion and views the older woman as a rival, which makes Rex more interesting to her.

During that summer, Julia goes to stay with an aunt abroad and finds that Rex and Brenda Champion have taken the villa next door. Unknown to Julia, Rex has grown bored of Brenda and wants to find a wife. He knows Julia by reputation and tries to get to know her that summer. When they both return to London, Rex does everything in his power to ingratiate himself with her.

As a wealthy young woman in this period, Julia is expected to prioritize marriage over other plans. Julia realizes that her beauty gives her an advantage in this sense, and gives her a certain type of power. However, this power is limited because, as woman, Julia has fewer rights than men and will not necessarily be able to protect herself if her husband is unkind. This suggests that Julia is subject to a social authority outside of herself and must conform to this if she wishes to fit in and be socially acceptable.



Young women from wealthy backgrounds were not expected to have careers or go into higher education—it was considered their duty to focus on marriage. Catholics were not popular in Britain, which was a predominantly Protestant country, and were generally looked down upon. An eldest son will inherit his family property and is a sought-after prize among young women Julia’s age, but coming from a Catholic family means that she will not be viewed as a desirable choice by most traditional Protestant families.



Rex is “new money,” and it is therefore assumed he got some of his wealth through devious means. There were deeply-ingrained class divides in Britain during this time, which meant that, although there were more opportunities for people from different classes, the “old money” passed down through aristocratic families was still considered more noble and proper than the wealth produced by businessmen. Julia views Rex as glamorous because she knows her family would disapprove of him, and he is therefore a temptation for her, like the biblical idea of forbidden fruit.



Rex is ambitious and knows that Julia is from an important family with many social connections. He sees that these may be useful to him in his future career. This suggests that Rex is shallow and views everything in terms of personal advancement. Rex is a representation of modern society, which Charles views as corrupt and vulgar.



Rex is very charming and forceful, and uses the qualities which have helped him make his fortune to woo Julia. He puts himself in Lady Marchmain's way, helps Brideshead out politically, and even pretends to like Catholicism. Although she is not sure if she likes him at first and is sometimes a little embarrassed to be seen with him, Julia eventually falls in love with him.

Julia realizes she is in love with Rex when, one night, she sees him leave Brenda Champion's house and is overcome with hurt and rage. She ignores him for several days until he pursues her and turns up at the house. Julia does not want to see him, but Lady Marchmain tells her that she must "be kind." When she finally agrees, Rex proposes, and Julia accepts.

Lady Marchmain is disappointed and does not think Rex is an appropriate husband for Julia. Julia says that she must marry him to save him from Brenda Champion, and that she couldn't be angry with him for seeing Brenda if she did not admit that she loved him. Lady Marchmain says that nothing will come of the affair and that Julia must not go out in public with Rex. They remain secretly engaged for a year, however.

During their engagement, Julia gets angry with Rex because she hears he has been with Brenda Champion again. Rex tells her that this is her fault because she "gives him so little" and Julia thinks, for the first time, that she may have to commit a sin to keep Rex. She asks her priest about this and he tells her that she must not do this. Julia then renounces her religion, and Lady Marchmain takes this very badly, almost as a personal slight.

Rex approaches Julia as though she is a conquest over which he will ultimately triumph, which is a warlike attitude. His association with modernity thus suggests that the modern era is preoccupied with domination and conflict. Rex is clearly looked down upon in upper-class circles because he is not well-bred by traditional standards, and has made his money in business rather than coming from an aristocratic family.



Julia does not realize how she feels about Rex until she thinks that he has lost interest in her. She is very confident, however, and makes him chase her until she is ready to forgive him. Lady Marchmain, unlike Julia, is willing to make herself a victim or martyr. She feels that Julia should see Rex, even if she doesn't want to, because accepting his mistreatment is what she would do.



Lady Marchmain disapproves of the match between Julia and Rex, so it's ironic that she ends up pushing them together. This mirrors Sebastian's rebellion against his mother and the fact that her controlling methods drive him towards the behavior which is forbidden. Julia inverts the idea of the "fallen woman"—a woman who has sex outside of marriage. She suggests that Rex is a "fallen man," although, of course, men were not held to the same standards as women in this period. This reflects the inconsistent societal standards and expectations placed upon men and women during this period.



Rex emotionally blackmails Julia: he insinuates that it is her fault that he still sees Brenda, because Julia will not have sex with him. He suggests that, as a man, he cannot be expected to wait for sex and will, naturally, go elsewhere. This was a common misogynistic belief (that men could not control their sexual appetites) in this period. Julia is worried she will lose Rex and feels pressure to give in to him. If she has sex before marriage, however, she commits a sin according to Catholicism.



After a year of engagement, Lady Marchmain tells Julia that she cannot marry Rex and threatens to take her abroad. This is around the time that Rex tries to take Sebastian to Zurich and, after he fails at this, Rex goes to see Lord Marchmain and receives *his* blessing to marry Julia. The couple begin to prepare for the wedding, and Rex is frustrated that Julia's lawyers will not let him invest her inheritance for her. Julia is fascinated by him and all he knows about money.

As a man, Lord Marchmain's permission is more important than Lady Marchmain's despite the fact that Lady Marchmain is much more involved in Julia's life on a daily basis. Rex knows that if he invests Julia's money in business, their wealth will increase. This understanding of business and investment was a large cultural difference between old and new money, and many old families found themselves bankrupt as their wealth ran out, while new money invested in industry.



Rex wants a large religious wedding, but Julia explains that they cannot have that because it is a "mixed" marriage. Rex says that, in this case, he will convert to Catholicism, and Lady Marchmain agrees to "have him instructed." Rex says that this is unnecessary and that he will agree to everything now. Lady Marchmain explains that this is not how it works and that it can take a while to convert.

Julia and Rex's marriage will be "mixed" because Rex is Protestant and Julia is Catholic. Rex does not understand Catholicism and thinks that he can sign a contract or pay a fee to be inducted into the church. Rex's businesslike attitude is not compatible with the Marchmain's spiritual outlook and represents a clash between modernity and tradition.



The priest who instructs Rex reports back to Lady Marchmain that Rex has no natural flair for religion, and that he simply agrees with everything the priest says. He also says that Rex has some very odd ideas about what Catholicism involves. It becomes clear that Cordelia has told him these things to tease him. Eventually the priest deems Rex converted, and preparations are made for the wedding.

Rex does not think it is necessary to be religious to become a Catholic—he is prepared to put on a false persona and do whatever it takes to get ahead and marry into the wealthy Marchmain family. His views on conversion, then, are just another social stepping-stone.



However, three weeks before the ceremony, Brideshead tells Julia, Rex, and Lady Marchmain that the wedding cannot go ahead. Brideshead has discovered that Rex has been married before and that the woman is still alive. Rex doesn't understand what the problem is: he is divorced, and the marriage took place when he was very young, before the war.

Catholics are not allowed to get divorced. Although Rex has been instructed in Catholicism, he has clearly not taken it seriously and does not see why he must follow the rules of the religion. Rex is old enough to have fought in World War I, a revelation that further emphasizes the power imbalance between him and Julia, since he is much older and more experienced than her.



Julia explains to him that a Catholic cannot be divorced and can only separate from a spouse in the case of an annulment. Rex says he will pay for an annulment, but Julia says this is not how it works. The family have a long discussion about it, and Rex suggests that they keep his previous marriage a secret and just get married anyway. Julia agrees to this, but Cordelia tells Julia she hates her and storms out of the room.

An annulment suggests that a marriage was never made official (through sexual intercourse) after the ceremony took place. Since Rex presumably had sex with his wife during their marriage, this makes his suggestion that he can pay for an annulment nonsensical. He clearly thinks that he can buy his way out of any obstacle and is prepared to use money to bend the truth. Rex is a symbol of modernity, and this suggests that the modern world is materialistic and views intangible things, like morality or spirituality, as commodities that can be bought and sold. Rex has no moral scruples and does not think it is important whether he tells the truth or not, so long as no one finds out. He clashes with characters like Cordelia, who is very principled and who takes her religious vows extremely seriously.



Rex loses his temper and says that he will marry Julia in a Protestant church. Lady Marchmain says she will stop him, and Julia tells her mother that it is too late: she is already Rex's lover. Rex says that this is not true, but Lady Marchmain turns faint and is helped to bed by Brideshead.

Julia tells her mother that she is a "fallen woman." In Lady Marchmain's eyes, the only way for Julia to be redeemed is to marry the man with whom she had sex. This is clearly a painful idea for Lady Marchmain: it suggests that Julia is now completely outside of her authority, as well as outside of God's because she has sinned.



Charles, who is listening to Julia's story, suddenly stops her and asks why she said this. Julia says that she thought it was true at the time and that she was young and naïve. Although the family still plotted to stop the wedding, Rex telegraphed her father and received his consent for them to marry in a Protestant church. The wedding took place as scheduled, but Rex was irritated because all the important people he hoped would attend were not there.

Julia implies that she had not, really, had sex with Rex, but she felt emotionally that she was his lover (she was innocent and did not know much about sex), and she wanted to get her own way. It's clear that Rex did not really care about Julia—he viewed her as a way for him to improve his social station and is disappointed at their wedding because it was not the public spectacle for which he hoped.



Julia explains that Cordelia forgave her and agreed to be her bridesmaid. Everyone felt sorry for Lady Marchmain, who attended the wedding, but acted "like a martyr" throughout. Julia says that it was a bad start to the marriage because Rex had banked on the social connections which he thought Julia would make him. But Julia was still madly in love with him. She remembers that the priest who taught Rex once said to her that he didn't think Rex was a whole person, but was a tiny, "undeveloped" piece of one. Julia realizes now that Rex was "absolutely modern" in this sense.

Cordelia is very loving and does not hold grudges or try to control people—her behavior, as opposed to Lady Marchmain's, is genuinely Christlike. Lady Marchmain, on the other hand, gains public sympathy by acting like a martyr. Even though she is against the wedding, she goes anyway. People believe she is there for Julia's sake, but Julia feels that her mother used this to make Julia look bad and to make herself look good, like a saint who accepts her suffering. As an "undeveloped" and "absolutely modern person," Rex represents the idea that the modern world is materialistic and immoral.



Charles listens intently and tells Julia not to worry because it is “all over now.” They are on board a ship, in a storm in the middle of the Atlantic, and it is 1936, 13 years since they first met at **Brideshead**.

Julia’s marriage with Rex is clearly at an end. She has told Charles the story of her life since the last time he saw her, and the fact that they are together on a ship over a decade later implies that she and Charles have developed a significant connection in the meantime.



PART 2, CHAPTER 3

After his time as a student in Paris, Charles goes back to London for the “General Strike” in 1926. He has heard rumors in France that England is undergoing a violent revolution, but when he returns, he is disappointed to find this is not the case and that the situation is rather subdued. Charles goes to see a band in a jazz club in London and runs into Anthony Blanche and Boy Mulcaster. Boy seems out of his element in the club, and Anthony tells him that he should go back to the Old Hundredth and takes Charles to a table.

The General Strike was a large-scale protest among working-class miners against mine closures in England. Charles goes back to fight on the side of the conservatives, who do not support the strike and want to suppress the workers. Charles wants a cause to fight for and does not really care what the cause is. This demonstrates his yearning to go to war with something, even though he has no experience of what real warfare is like.



Anthony tells Charles that Sebastian has recently been to stay with him and that he still drinks very heavily. Anticipating Charles’s reaction, Anthony tells him that he did everything he could to stop Sebastian, but Sebastian stole from him and pawned his belongings for drink. They travelled to Tangier together, and here Sebastian formed a relationship with a German soldier, who had shot his own toe off and who now had a wound which wouldn’t heal. Anthony found the pair depressing and left them together to return to England. He looks around sarcastically as he says this.

Anthony assumes that Charles will blame him and think that he corrupted Sebastian. This is because Anthony, who does not fit in or conform, expects to be ostracized and persecuted in conventional society. Anthony has grown up, however, and no longer lives to shock people. Unlike Sebastian, he has seemingly accepted his adulthood and grown up gracefully, rather than resisting this transition or trying to suppress his problems through substance abuse. He is a very strong character and seems to be very comfortable with his lifestyle, which would have been considered unconventional in this period.



Boy Mulcaster grows bored of the club, where he does not fit in and does not know anyone. He decides to set off a fire alarm. Anthony humors him and then tells Charles that Sebastian and the German went to Morocco together. Firemen begin to arrive, and Charles leaves the club with Boy, who tells him that he finds Anthony odd and that he threw him in “Mercury” once at Oxford.

Boy disrupts the evening because he does not understand it. The prank he plays is childish and unamusing, and this suggests that Boy is like a child and will protest if he is not the center of attention. Anthony’s prediction has come true: Boy’s life is now very dull and conventional, and he remembers trivial incidents from university as high points in his life.



Charles and Boy go to several clubs and get drunk together. Charles complains that he and Boy missed the war and that he wants to do something for his country. Boy convinces him to join “Bill Meadow’s” and, over the next few weeks, Charles takes on work with this group. They go out to look for “battles” among the strikes but find very little except a few brawls. The strikes are called off a week later and no one is seriously hurt.

Charles has a romanticized idea of warfare and feels that he and Boy missed out because they were too young to fight in World War I. The group Charles joins is a vigilante activist group, which sides with the police to help put down the protesters. Charles finds it silly and banal—not at all like his heroic ideas about glory and warfare.



Julia hears that Charles is in England and calls him to say that her mother wants to see him. Lady Marchmain is dying and is too weak to see Charles when he arrives. Julia is at the house, and she and Charles sit together for a while. Julia tells Charles that Lady Marchmain wants to apologize to him, and Charles tells her that all is forgiven. Julia also wonders if Charles could bring Sebastian to see their mother, as they have been unable to contact him. Charles tells Julia that he will try.

Charles flies to Casablanca and telephones the British Consul when he arrives. The British Consul meets with him and explains that, although he likes Sebastian, he worries about him and wishes that someone would take him out of Morocco. He lives in the local area, but the Moroccans do not like his drinking and the French think he is a spy. He also warns Charles that there is a German man who uses Sebastian for his money.

The porter leads Charles through the old town, and Charles is struck by the beauty of the place. The porter is dismissive of it and makes racist comments, but Charles does not expect him to understand. They reach the house, and Charles is shown in by a servant. Inside is the German man Charles has been warned about. He sits listening to jazz music and drinking beer. Charles asks him where Sebastian is, and the man, whose name is Kurt, tells him that Sebastian is ill and in the hospital.

Kurt asks who Charles is, and Charles says he is Sebastian's friend from university. Kurt tells him that Sebastian is very kind and asks if Charles knows Sebastian's mother. He has heard she is rich, and says that she should give Sebastian more money. Charles asks what is wrong with Sebastian, and Kurt says he is a drunk. Kurt gives Charles the name of the hospital, and Charles leaves him alone.

The next morning, Charles goes to the hospital to see Sebastian. The hospital is run by French Franciscan monks. Charles finds a doctor who tells him that Sebastian is an alcoholic and that he has developed a lung disease because he is run-down. One of the monks says that Sebastian is a very good patient and very kind. He takes Charles along to see him.

Lady Marchmain seems to realize that Charles acted out of love for Sebastian, rather than to spite her. It is unclear whether Lady Marchmain genuinely believes this or whether she feels that Charles's dislike of her, and his suspicion of her motives, will interfere with her desire to die like a martyr: totally blameless and without sin.



Casablanca was part of a French colony in Morocco. It contains a mixture of cultures, both French and indigenous people, and is a popular destination for tourists and exiles. The fact that Sebastian chose to flee to this place suggests that he views himself as an outsider to the traditional British culture into which he was born and raised. The British Consul clearly cares about Sebastian. This shows that Sebastian is still very charming and likable, despite his flaws, supporting the idea that Sebastian is somewhat of a blessed or holy figure.



Although Charles is conservative (in that he prefers the past to the present), he is open-minded and curious when it comes to other cultures and lifestyles, and thinks that the old town is beautiful and should be respected. The porter, by contrast, is a French colonial, and does not respect the local people.



Kurt is quite open about the fact that he uses Sebastian for money, even implying that Charles should ask Lady Marchmain to send him more. This shows that Kurt clearly does not love Sebastian in the unconditional way that Charles does, and adds an additional layer of tragedy to the end of Charles and Sebastian's relationship.



The Franciscan order are a group of Christian monks who live secluded from the world in monasteries, and who believe in principals of charity and help for the poor. The monks have also been charmed by Sebastian, which further supports Sebastian's characterization as somewhat of a martyr figure. He is holy because he suffers.



Sebastian is very thin and seems to have shriveled because of his alcoholism. He is surprised to see Charles and listens patiently as Charles explains that Lady Marchmain is dying. Sebastian asks if Charles has met Kurt, and Charles says yes. Sebastian says that everybody hates Kurt but that he couldn't manage without him. Charles stays in Morocco for a week and visits Sebastian every day.

As Sebastian recovers, he begins to ask for brandy. He manages to get some and is drunk the next day when Charles arrives. On Charles's last day, they hear that Lady Marchmain has died, and Charles asks Sebastian if he plans to return to England. Sebastian thinks about this but wonders if Kurt would agree. Charles is shocked and cannot believe Sebastian plans to stay with Kurt.

Sebastian says that he likes Kurt because it is nice to have someone who needs him and whom he can care about. Charles, later in his life, wishes he had listened more closely to this. Instead, he goes to the bank and fixes Sebastian's finances for him so that he will receive a monthly allowance. Charles makes sure that the money can only be withdrawn by Sebastian, and Sebastian says this is a good idea because otherwise Kurt will steal it all when he is drunk.

The next day, Sebastian is strong enough to go back to his house, and Charles helps him move. Sebastian is pleased to see Kurt, and the two men sit comfortably opposite each other in the little house. Kurt asks Sebastian to get him his cigarettes and, even though Charles offers to help, Sebastian insists that this is "his job." Charles leaves them together and takes the ferry back to England.

Charles goes to **Brideshead** to tell the family what has happened. Brideshead accepts Charles's suggestion that Sebastian must be given his allowance. He asks Charles if he would like to paint some pictures of the rooms in Brideshead, as it is about to be torn down and he knows that Charles likes to paint architecture. Charles says yes and begins work on a painting of the drawing room. Although he usually works slowly, he finds the work effortless and does not have to think about it.

Sebastian seems to like Kurt because he is an outcast, which shows Sebastian's kind and sympathetic nature. It also suggests that Sebastian empathizes with Kurt because he, like Sebastian, is also an outsider from conventional society.



Sebastian's alcoholism has progressed and is now very severe. Although Sebastian wishes to escape from his family, he does not want to avoid all relationships and feels beholden to Kurt, although he generally runs from commitment and obligation. His willingness to rely on this relationship, then, highlights just how restrictive his relationship with his family was by comparison.



Sebastian has always been dependent on other people, having no financial freedom as the son of a wealthy family. He is also clearly dependent on alcohol. It comforts him to have Kurt, then, because he views Kurt as dependent on him. This gives Sebastian a sense of power and responsibility which he does not have anywhere else in life. Charles does not understand this and cannot sympathize. He regrets that he did not tell Sebastian that he needed him. Sebastian knows that Kurt takes advantage of him, but forgives Kurt for this because he feels Kurt cannot help it.



Charles sees that Kurt and Sebastian have built a life for themselves, although he finds it depressing. Sebastian needs Kurt to need him so that he feels he has some use and purpose in the world. Sebastian feels that he is bound to Kurt and has a responsibility towards him, although Sebastian has severed most of his other personal connections.



Brideshead does not want to control Sebastian or deprive him of his income. It is implied that Brideshead Castle will soon be sold and then demolished. Charles feels extremely inspired as he paints—the place is emotionally-charged for him (he was, after all, deeply in love during much of his time here) and this translates to artistic and even divine inspiration because love of any kind, including romantic, is connected with God.



While Charles works, Cordelia comes into the room and watches. When he is finished for the day, he takes her out for dinner. Cordelia is 15 now, and knows that Sebastian will not come home. Still, she says, she loves him “more than anyone.” She tells Charles that Lord Marchmain will sell **Brideshead** to get out of debt and that it will be replaced by a block of flats. Rex suggested that he and Julia buy the “penthouse” at the top and could not understand why Julia was upset by this.

Charles asks Cordelia where she will live, and she says she doesn't know. Lord Marchmain will not return to England, and Cordelia says they have closed the chapel at **Brideshead**. She begins to talk of Catholicism, and Charles jokes that she is trying to convert him. Cordelia refers to a chapter from *Father Brown* that says God can bring people back to him with a “twitch upon the thread.” Charles says that Lady Marchmain read this to them on the first night that Sebastian got drunk at home.

Cordelia says that she loved her mother but “not in the way she deserved.” She thinks that sometimes, when people were angry with God, they took this out on Lady Marchmain. Charles says that he has heard someone else say something like this. Cordelia speaks of Julia's “coming out” ball (something she will not have now) and says that she hopes she has a “vocation.” Charles asks what this is, and Cordelia says that it means you can become a nun. She says that Brideshead wanted a vocation but had none, whereas she suspects Sebastian had one and didn't want it.

Charles dismisses the idea of Cordelia as a nun and tells her that she will “fall in love” instead. He is tired of talking about religion and is still enthralled with the inspiration he felt during his painting that day. Cordelia says that she hopes she will not fall in love and orders more dessert.

Cordelia accepts Sebastian's reasons for staying away, even though she does not understand them. This suggests that she loves him unconditionally, unlike the rest of her family's judgmental treatment and efforts to control him. The sale of Brideshead represents the modern world as it encroaches on the old world, which Charles feels is full of beauty and grandeur. Rex is insensitive to Julia's attachment to her family home, as seemingly nothing is sacred or important to Rex the way Brideshead is important to Julia.



“The twitch upon the thread” relates to the idea that God lets people sin because he can redeem them at any time, through the intervention of divine grace. People like Sebastian can stray from God and seem to be lost, but they are always connected to God and can be brought back to Him.



Lady Marchmain was extremely pious and, in Cordelia's view, always did her best for everyone. Cordelia feels that people were jealous of how good Lady Marchmain was and felt that she made them look bad compared to her. Cordelia refers to a religious calling which, she feels, comes from God rather than from inside oneself. It is impossible, then, to control who has one and who does not.



Charles feels that Cordelia's love for God will be replaced by love for another person. Charles's love for his art has seemingly replaced his love for Sebastian: it is something he cannot control and to which he can only accept and surrender. This is also a metaphor for God's permissive love for humanity, which allows people to stray, love, and worship in any way they see fit.



PART 3, CHAPTER 1

For 10 years after his dinner with Cordelia, Charles appears to live an eventful life. However, on the inside, he feels that nothing really changes, and he never feels alive in the way that he did with Sebastian. Charles becomes an architectural painter and develops a reputation for painting English country houses. He thinks these buildings are underappreciated and that they improve with age. Many of them are on the “brink of extinction.” Although many painters are out of work, because of the recession, Charles is given work *because* he paints houses which are symbols of a wealthier time.

After several years of critical success, Charles begins to feel that his work, which began when he painted **Brideshead**, has lost something. He travels to South America and paints ruins in the jungle, then returns to New York with his new collection of work. His wife, Celia, meets him at the dock. They have dinner in a hotel together and Celia tells Charles about his son, “Johnjohn,” and his baby daughter, Caroline, whom Charles has never met. He does not show much interest in the children. When they return to the hotel room, Celia asks if she should “put her face to bed” and is relieved when Charles says no.

That night, they lie awake together and Celia says that Charles has not changed. She is pleased about this because, she says, that if he changed, he might stop loving her. Charles says that change is the only proof that one is alive. Celia asks if Charles is in love with anyone else and Charles says he is “not in love” which comforts her.

Celia has been a large influence on Charles’s career. Although she won’t admit this openly, she has helped him build his reputation. Charles has been given money by his father and bought himself and Celia a house in the country. Celia tells him that, while he was away, she has had the barn converted into a studio for him. It has been photographed for *Country Life*. Charles is secretly disappointed, however, because the old “smell of the place” will be lost.

Charles feels emotionally dead, and although externally his life is exciting, he never feels this internally. Sebastian is associated with youth, life, and love, and with his departure, these things have also vanished from Charles’s life. Charles begins to feel that he, himself, is an omen of death to country houses. He watches over and documents the death of a way of life: the decline of the upper classes in Britain. His art is popular because there is a widespread nostalgia for things which have passed.



Charles is hungry for new experiences because he cannot feel anything. He looks for something that will inspire him and bring him back to life. Like many painters in this period, Charles looks for this in locations which are far away from “civilized society.” Charles is an absent father to his children, just as his father is emotionally distant with him. This also suggests that God, who is an authoritative father figure, is absent in Charles’s life.



Celia does not like change. Charles views this as a denial of life, as life is in constant flux, and finds her outlook stifling. She is pleased that things stay the same, but he finds their relationship stagnant. When Charles says that he is “not in love,” he really means that he is not in love with Celia, though she does not seem to realize this. His disinterest in his wife, as well as his life, suggests that while Charles’s relationship with Sebastian ended many years ago, he is likely still trying and failing to find the same sense of love and fulfillment their bond gave him.



Charles has used Celia to progress professionally. She wants him to feel like this is his doing, but he knows that she has made his career what it is. Charles is dependent on others for everything he has, and, like Sebastian, he feels trapped. Likely due to his lingering emotional attachment to Brideshead Castle, Charles feels that by converting the old barn, Celia has destroyed something old and beautiful for the sake of modernity.



Celia says that she has a lot of work lined up for Charles when he gets back (all English country houses), and she hopes that his South American work has not ruined him. Charles says no and that it is “just another jungle.” Celia tells him that her brother, Boy Mulcaster, has called off his engagement and has had to pay his fiancée off in the dispute. She says that Boy is great friends with Johnjohn, and that it is like they are the same age when they talk.

Charles and Celia fall asleep in the early hours and are woken early by the hotel’s alarm call. Charles gets up to shave, and while he is in the bathroom, Celia says that this feels just like old times. She tentatively suggests that they are like they were before. Charles asks Celia what she means, and she says she means before he went abroad. Charles says he thought she might mean something else, and Celia grows frustrated and says that this is “all forgotten.” Charles coldly agrees, and Celia begins to cry.

Celia and Charles board the boat back to England. Celia is very popular in America. Charles thinks she is neat and friendly, like an American, and her cabin is full of gifts from friends she made in New York. Celia immediately checks the passenger list and is pleased to find that she knows a lot of people on board. Julia’s name is on the list. Charles has not seen Julia for several years. She is married to Rex, but he has heard it is not a happy marriage. Sebastian, Charles knows, still lives abroad.

Rex is involved in politics but has not had the success that he hoped for. He has “flirted” with fascism and communism. Although Charles and Julia have often lived in London at the same time, England is made up of separate worlds in which people may live very near each other but never interact. Celia begins to call people on the passenger list to make social plans. Charles goes to look at the crowd on deck, who wave to the people below, and thinks that they look an odd bunch.

Although Celia means her comment about Boy as a compliment, it implies that Boy is immature and has the emotional range of a young child. This suggests that modern, fashionable society, which Charles feels he has married into, is childish and trivial in its values.



Celia has been unfaithful to Charles. She clearly regrets her behavior and hopes that they can forget it and go back to the way they were before, but Charles makes it obvious that he has not forgiven Celia. He is passive-aggressive with her, and she cries because although he has agreed that it is forgotten, he does not really mean it and still holds it against her. Although Charles hates the modern world because he views it as callous and unfeeling, his attitude towards Celia is somewhat cruel, suggesting that perhaps he has begun to fall into the same trappings of modernity he once despised.



The journey by boat across the Atlantic takes around six weeks. British culture is notoriously reserved in comparison with American culture, which Charles views as open and extroverted. Rex and Julia are both well-known in social circles, and there is clearly gossip about their marriage. Sebastian serves as a reminder of Charles’s past life and provides a stark contrast with his present, which Charles views as filled with shallow, false relationships rather than loving, meaningful ones. This supports the idea that Charles has been cast out of his earthly paradise: his youthful time with Sebastian.



The political tension between fascism, under the Nazi party, and communism, in the Russian Soviet Union, contributed to the division and instability which led to World War II. Charles associates the 20th century with destruction, instability, and political extremes. Thus, he dislikes the conventional, fashionable society which he views as aligned with the modern world. Although they are the cultural mainstream, Charles feels they are the strange ones, which highlights Charles’s position as an outsider.



Charles walks around the ship. It is vast and luxurious, but Charles thinks it looks childish and that it lacks grandeur because it is too modern. As he moves through the lounge, he passes Julia, who calls him over. Julia tells him that she is waiting for her room to be made up. She is pleased to see Charles and says she never meets anybody she likes anymore. Charles sits down with her.

Charles immediately feels comfortable and intimate with Julia, as though they have always been good friends. He remembers that he used to find her arrogant, but she seems kind and genuine now. Julia says that Charles has changed and that he is much “harder” than when she first met him. Charles says that Julia seems much “softer” and “more patient.” Charles thinks that she seems sad but that her sadness makes her beautiful, although she has lost the fashionable beauty of her youth.

When Charles returns to his cabin, he finds Celia preparing for a party. They have been given very large rooms because the “quartering master” likes Celia. She has been sent an ice sculpture in the shape of a swan to store the caviar for her party. Charles tells Celia that he met Julia, and Celia says she remembers her “dipso brother.” Celia asks how the room looks, and Charles says that it looks suitable for a movie actor. Celia has recently decided that Charles could have a career painting movie sets and has invited several directors to the party.

The chief purser, who has sent Celia the swan, arrives, and the party gets underway. The purser says that there will be a storm, but Celia thinks that he is teasing. Charles knows many of the guests but is not friends with any of them. One woman says that she feels she knows him because of Celia’s descriptions. What she does not know is that he is secretly thinking about Julia.

Charles dislikes modernity’s focus on comfort and efficiency, rather than beauty and grandeur. He thinks that this approach to aesthetics is limiting, and feels that it is evidence that modern society is childish and soulless because it sacrifices beauty for convenience. Julia socializes for the sake of convention and propriety, not because she likes the people in her social group, essentially validating Charles’s belief that fashionable society is cold and devoid of genuine connections.



Charles has a lot of common history with Julia, and this contributes to their intimacy. As a young woman, Julia was extremely confident and a little selfish, but time and life experience have mellowed her. Sadness is associated with beauty, holiness, and virtue in the novel, and this reflects the Catholic idea that suffering leads to these very things.



Celia uses her ability to make friends to her advantage. Celia’s comment refers to Sebastian, and shows that Celia knows nothing about Charles’s life before her. It is implied that Celia would not understand Charles’s love for Sebastian even if he told her, because she is shallow and incapable of this type of love. She reflects modernity and the shallowness Charles equates with modern society. As further proof of this, Celia always thinks ahead to improve Charles’s career, not unlike Rex’s ongoing obsession with improving his business prospects.



Unlike Celia, Charles does not make emotional connections with people easily. He is cold and reserved, and has been emotionally-deadened since the loss of Sebastian. Sebastian represents youth and love for Charles, and without these things, Charles feels that life is incomplete. People do not really know Charles, and only know the public persona that Celia has created for him. This façade is based around his work and his conformity to social rules and values, rather than his real self.



Midway through the party, Charles notices a strange, shabby-looking man who stands by the swan and stuffs himself with caviar. He goes to speak to the man, who tells him that he has counted the drips which fall from the swan's beak. The man introduces himself to Charles as Mr. Kramm. He says he is a film director, and the two have a strange, awkward conversation. When the party is over and most of the guests have gone, Charles remarks that Julia never turned up. Charles says that he spoke to Mr. Kramm, and Celia says that she never invited him and does not know who he is.

Celia and Charles have been invited to dine at the captain's table and make their way there after the party. Julia is at the table, with several other fashionable people, and she tells Charles that she missed the party because of her maid, who went to play ping pong and forgot to bring Julia her dress. Conversation at the table is stilted and uncomfortable. Charles sits beside a missionary who is on his way to Spain. He tells Charles that the age of words is over and that, although he does not speak Spanish, he will speak the language of "reason and brotherhood."

Charles feels as though he is going mad. It feels surreal to him to be here after his time in South America and he is reminded of [King Lear](#). He wishes there could be a storm and, immediately, the ship begins to sway. The people round the table begin to look nervous, except Julia, who looks relieved and says to Charles that it reminds her of "King Lear." People start to leave the table, and soon only Julia, Celia, and Charles are left.

After dinner, they struggle across the rocking ship to the ballroom. It is deserted, however, and the stewards have tied down most of the furniture. Soon, Celia complains that she is tired, and that the movement of the ship gives her a headache. She goes to bed, and Julia leaves too. Charles walks around the ship and watches the waves crash against the windows, then he too goes to bed.

Mr. Kramm stands out at the party because he does not have the same social veneer as the other guests. He is like Charles in this sense, and reflects Charles's own discomfort in this social realm. Mr. Kramm is implied to be a fraud who has pretended to be someone he is not. His likeness with Charles, then, supports the idea that Charles lives a lie in his everyday life. He pretends that his life is vital and exciting, but really, inside, he feels that he is dead and has lost his sense of joy and hope.



Charles is clearly quite a celebrity, as only the most important passengers are invited to eat with the captain. Julia is from an aristocratic family, and is therefore socially important. Julia's unreliable servant demonstrates the breakdown of traditional class barriers because servants are now less obedient to their masters. This suggests that modernity will bring about significant changes to established ways of life. As someone who venerates the upper classes and dislikes the new social mobility available to the lower classes, Charles disapproves of this type of change and sees it as evidence of modern corruption. The missionary is a communist and implies that all humans are the same regardless of language. Charles dislikes this idea because it disregards individuality in favor of the collective. Charles prefers people who stand out, rather than people who blend in with society and conform to its rules.



[King Lear](#) is a play by Shakespeare in which the main character, Lear, famously goes mad. Since Charles's own life reminds him of this play, it's clear that he feels disconnected from society and everyone around him, and that this alienation feels like madness. It is implied that Julia feels the same way as Charles, and they share this emotional connection.



The veneer of sociability and glamor on board the ship is disrupted by the reality of the storm. This suggests that nature triumphs over civilization, which Charles views as something exclusively modern. Charles feels out of touch with civilization, and the storm reflects his alienation and his hope that modern society will be destroyed.



When Charles gets back to his cabin, he finds that Celia is seasick. She complains bitterly about it, and Charles thinks she is like a woman who has booked into a luxurious hospital to give birth and is offended when her labor still hurts. In the early hours, he calls a servant to bring her medicine, and gets little sleep himself because the ship throws him around in bed.

The next morning, the wind has gone down, but the ship is still rocked fiercely by the swell. While Charles has breakfast, more gifts for Celia arrive. One of them is a large bunch of roses, and Charles removes the label and has them sent to Julia. Julia phones him and teases him about this. She says she will meet him later. Charles stops in to see Celia and then heads down to Julia's cabin. They stagger around the ship together once, but Julia grows tired and they head towards the lounge.

The heavy, bronze doors of the lounge have broken loose from their restraints and swing back and forth violently. Charles is impressed that Julia takes his arm and walks through with perfect calmness. There are very few people about, and they subtly congratulate each other on not being seasick. Julia orders champagne to drink, and Charles tells her that the roses were sent to Celia. Julia says that this is alright then. As they sit and talk together, Charles feels that they understand each other perfectly even though their conversation is mundane.

A man approaches them and seems impressed that Julia is not seasick. He thinks they are a couple, and Charles feels this brings them closer to each other. They go back to their cabins to sleep after lunch. When they reunite that evening, they hear that the man they met will throw a party that night. They attend and, at some point, the party moves to Charles's room so that the men can gamble. Julia leaves early, and the host gets drunk and falls asleep in a chair. Charles later hears that, on his way back to his cabin, he fell and broke his leg.

Celia, in contrast to Charles, has faith in modern civilization and believes that it can conquer nature. She is upset by the storm because it destroys the atmosphere of civility on the ship. Charles suggests that Celia wishes to gloss over reality and thinks that money and modern comforts can make life predictable and tame. This is impossible, however, as suffering and pain are inevitable parts of life. This supports the Catholic idea that God allows suffering for humanity's own good because suffering increases holiness and closeness to God. Those who wish to avoid suffering are, therefore, not spiritual. The modern world falls into this category, as many of its social and scientific aims involve the eradication of suffering.



Charles behaves extravagantly when he sends Julia the roses. This links Charles's relationship with Julia back to his relationship with Sebastian, which also began with a grand gesture, in which Sebastian sent Charles flowers. Given that Charles also noticed Julia's striking resemblance to Sebastian when he first met her years ago, this supports the idea that Charles's relationship with Julia is an attempt to recapture his past with Sebastian, which he feels is superior to his present.



Charles is impressed by Julia's calm and detached demeanor because it reflects his own. This suggests that Julia, too, has suffered a level of emotional pain and disillusion, like Charles, and that she is not as vital and vibrant as she was in her younger life. Julia is deliberately extravagant because she and Charles feel like they are rebellious and doing something out of the ordinary, which they could not do in everyday life. This brings a sense of youth and irresponsibility back to them. There is a sense of freedom on the ship—it feels like the usual social rules do not apply.



Charles and Julia do not deny they are a couple, and this suggests that they both acknowledge they will become one. The people on the ship who are not seasick behave extravagantly, and there is a mood of reckless freedom among them. They feel that they are exceptions to the general suffering, and this makes them feel like outsiders from society. Being an outsider brings a sense of freedom, as well as a sense of alienation, and both these feelings are prevalent in the descriptions of Charles's time on board the ship.



Charles and Julia spend the next day together, and Charles thinks about how different he feels with Julia compared to other women. He does not feel that he needs to use “tactics” with her. That night, he follows her to her cabin, but Julia stops him at the door and says she does not want love. Charles says that he doesn’t either, but Julia disagrees and shuts the door in his face. That night, the storm grows worse.

In bed, Charles thinks over everything Julia has told him. She told him about her childhood at **Brideshead** and her fond memories of religion as a child. She is unhappy in her marriage with Rex. They struggled to have a child and, when she did become pregnant, the baby died before it was born. She says that Rex tries to love her but that he is not a complete man and does not understand her. He was still sleeping with Brenda Champion after their wedding and did not understand why Julia was upset by this.

Julia asks Charles why he married Celia, and Charles says that he was lonely and ambitious, and that he missed Sebastian. Julia asks if he loved Sebastian, and Charles says that he did. She tells him that Sebastian has completely vanished, and that Cordelia works for an ambulance in Spain. Brideshead lives in **Brideshead** Castle and is a strange, solitary figure there. Lord Marchmain still remains in Venice and Julia visits him often.

Julia cannot stand Rex’s friends. She says they are obsessed with money and gamble on everything. Rex is disappointed with her and wishes he hadn’t married her. He only grows interested when one of his friends finds her attractive. When she found out she was pregnant, Julia decided to raise the child Catholic. She thinks this is odd, because she is not Catholic herself, but she wanted to pass on “something she has lost” to the child. She believes that she has been punished for her marriage to Rex and wonders if her meeting with Charles is “part of a plan.”

Charles feels emotionally connected with Julia. He does not usually feel this with anyone else, and therefore must pretend and use “tactics” to win people over. This also suggests that Charles usually views romantic love as a competition, or conflict, in which one can either win or lose.



Although Julia is not a Catholic, her religious upbringing has affected her because it was one of the first things she knew as a child. She has lost her faith, which suggests that, like Charles’s relationship with Sebastian, there is an innocent time in her life which she cannot recreate or recapture. Rex is insensitive and emotionally stunted. He does not feel things deeply and, therefore, is quite happy in his marriage to Julia although he does not love her. Rex symbolizes modernity because he prioritizes comfort, efficiency, and material success over emotional fulfillment.



Charles has unsuccessfully tried to recapture his love for Sebastian in his marriage. He has tried to find love in false, shallow things, like professional success, rather than in emotional connection. This is impossible because, according to Waugh’s Catholic perspective, real, lasting love is only available through a connection with God and through love for others.



Rex’s friends are extremely modern, like him: they are shallow and materialistic, and only care about wealth and status. This causes Julia to miss her faith, although she is not a practicing Catholic in adulthood. Like Charles, Julia feels that her youth holds the happiness she has lost as an adult. She has become cynical and disillusioned herself, but wishes her child to have a different experience, and likely wants to recapture her innocence through a child. Although she is no longer Catholic, she still feels that God will punish or reward her depending on her behavior.



The next day, the swell is bad, but the sun comes out towards evening. Charles and Julia walk on the deck and are thrown against each other on the railings as the ship goes over a wave. Charles feels as though he holds Julia prisoner in his arms. She whispers, "Yes now," to him, then leads him to her cabin. They have sex, and Charles knows this will be the first of many times.

The sun metaphorically sets on Julia and Charles's brief, solitary time together, away from the pressures and responsibilities of the outside world. From now on, they must function in the real world and face the mundane and restrictive pressures of this. Charles is, once again, cast out of a temporary, Eden-like paradise, which cannot last because it is on Earth and not with God. Charles feels that this night makes him and Julia officially a couple, who will now stand together against the world. This suggests that Charles views relationships as fortresses in which one can escape from the world.



They have dinner together afterwards and Charles looks at the stars through the windows. It reminds him of his time at Oxford. Julia has heard that the weather will improve the next day, and she and Charles are disappointed because they know that they will not have the ship to themselves for much longer.

Charles finally feels something. He is reminded of his time at Oxford because he feels love and hope again, and these were his main emotions during his first term with Sebastian. This suggests that Charles's relationship with Julia does not bring up new and hopeful feelings of love, but nostalgic and recycled ones, which seek to recapture a lost time.



The next morning, Celia feels better, and Charles tells her that he has spent the storm with Julia. Celia is pleased because she thinks that Charles and Julia get along well. There is a festive atmosphere on the ship that evening and Charles, Celia, and Julia dine at the captain's table. The ship will dock the next day, and Charles and Julia plan secretly to meet in London when they arrive.

There is a festive atmosphere because people are relieved the storm is over and feel that order and conventionality has been restored. This suggests the triumph of modernity over what Charles perceives to be the chaos, disorder, and grandeur of the past.



As the ship arrives, Celia tells Charles that Mr. Kramm has been arrested. Charles tells Celia that he will not come home with her: he must stay in London to organize his new exhibition. Celia thinks that the children will be disappointed but does not protest.

Mr. Kramm is clearly a conman or criminal. This reflects the idea that he is an imposter in civilized society, just as Charles feels himself to be. Charles lies to Celia so that he can meet Julia in London.



PART 3, CHAPTER 2

Celia has organized Charles's exhibition on a Friday. She hopes that the critics will pay attention to his work, which she feels has been artistically overlooked. Charles calls Julia and tells her that he must go to the exhibition, but that he doesn't want her to come. He will meet her afterward on the train.

Celia is a shrewd career woman, although it is not her own career she manages. Charles does not want to be false with Julia, so does not want her to see the fake persona he must adopt at the exhibition. He wishes to make his relationship with Julia a sacred space, in which he can escape from the rules and restrictions of modern society.



Charles meets Celia at the exhibition, and she tells him that she has met an acquaintance of his, a Mr. Samgrass, who says that he knows the “**Brideshead** set.” Charles says that he is going to Brideshead that night but that he didn’t invite Celia because he knew she would not be able to join him. Celia is irritated because the children expect Charles home that night, but she does not want to have a row in public.

People begin to arrive at the exhibition, and Celia talks to several journalists about Charles and his approach to art. Charles hangs back and is “civil.” The exhibit is well-attended, and Charles hears his own work praised as “passionate” and “new.” He remembers that, at a previous exhibition, the same people had criticized his work. It was at this previous exhibition that Charles learned that Celia had cheated on him. This news gave him an amazing sense of freedom.

Celia bids Charles farewell at the exhibit’s end, and Charles can tell that she knows about his affair with Julia. He is about to leave when he hears a voice he recognizes. It is Anthony Blanche: the doorman has tried to turn him away. Charles lets Anthony in, and Anthony glides around the room to examine the work. He does not pass comment, and when he has finished, says that at least Charles is in love. Charles asks if the pictures are that bad, and Anthony says that they must talk about it elsewhere.

Anthony takes Charles to a gay bar nearby, which is garishly decorated but quite dingy inside. A few young men approach them, but Anthony says they are “gold diggers” and sends them away. Charles is reminded of his time at Oxford. Anthony tells Charles that he saw his first exhibition (the paintings of **Brideshead**) and that, although the work is not to his taste, he felt that it showed promise. However, after the next exhibition, Anthony despaired and felt that Charles had succumbed to English charm: something Anthony has always despised.

Mr. Samgrass is clearly still active in fashionable and academic circles, and still namedrops the Marchmain family. Through his affair with Julia, Charles can return to Brideshead, a place he associates with youth, life, paradise, and a refuge from modern society.



Charles’s perspective on art is not necessarily reflected in the publicity which Celia arranges for him. He is not in control of how people receive his work or what the critics write about him, and must surrender to this. Surrender to and acceptance of suffering are related to concepts of Catholicism because humans must passively surrender to God’s authority and accept suffering on Earth in order to emulate Christ’s suffering. Although Charles finds modern art vulgar and shallow, he realizes that his own work is insipid and irrelevant, and that he does not have anything new to say. Charles felt tied to Celia when he believed she loved him. He feels that he can do what he likes now that he knows she has cheated on him. This represents another break with perceived authority.



Celia would rather put on a brave face than cause a scene, suggesting that he cares about others’ perceptions of him despite feeling alienated from them. Anthony obviously does not fit into respectable British society. Anthony suggests that Charles’s art is bad, and that at least he loves his wife, so his life is not a complete failure. Unbeknownst to Anthony, Charles is not in love with Celia, so this comment merely drives home Charles’s feeling that his life is empty and meaningless.



Anthony is openly homosexual, and therefore exists on the fringes of conventional society, since homosexuality was illegal in Britain during this period. Anthony has an eye for art and can tell that Charles once painted because he was inspired to do so. Anthony thinks that Charles has now adapted his painting to please English audiences, rather than because he is inspired, and his work has suffered because of this.



Anthony was excited to hear that Charles had painted abroad and had heard that his new work was like “Gauguin.” His is disappointed again, however, and feels that Charles’s new work is just like his old. He says that it reminds him of the time at Oxford when Sebastian wore a fake beard: “English charm, playing tigers.” Charles agrees, and Anthony explains that he tried to warn him at Oxford. He fears that charm has contaminated and “killed” Charles. A young man approaches them again, and Charles leaves to catch his train.

Gauguin was a modern painter who travelled to Polynesia and painted the local people. His paintings were famous for their bold, bright colors and unusual shapes, and his work was considered shocking by English audiences. Anthony feels that Charles has painted foreign locations in a way that makes them palatable to English audiences. He has removed all the wildness from them and has dressed them up like foreign places, when really, they look like pale, civilized imitations of them. Although Charles despises modernity and its love of comfort, convenience, and order, he has pandered to it by painting a nostalgic version of the past, rather than painting what is new, modern, and real.



Julia meets Charles in the train carriage. Charles tells her about the exhibition, and his meeting with Anthony, while the two have dinner. Rex is at **Brideshead** with a party of friends when they arrive, and they talk about the possibility of war in Europe. Later that night, Julia complains to Charles that love “makes her hate the world.” Charles says it is them against the world for as many nights as they have.

Julia is prepared to have an affair right in front of Rex because Rex does not care about her and will not be jealous. Rex’s friends are all very modern and interested in current affairs. Julia feels that she hates the rest of the world because she compares it to Charles. This is reminiscent of Charles and Sebastian’s solitary attitude to love and their rejection of everything outside their relationship.



PART 3, CHAPTER 3

One night, two years into their relationship, Charles and Julia sit by the **fountain** outside **Brideshead** and reminisce about their meeting on the boat. Charles has been trying to paint her portrait and it has been a blustery summer day. They discuss the history of their relationship. Charles and Celia still pretend publicly that they are married, for the sake of the children, but live separate lives. Lord Marchmain knows that Charles and Julia are together and spent a summer with them in Naples, where they pretended to meet by accident.

Charles and Julia keep up a public façade for the sake of propriety. This suggests that British society is willing to turn a blind eye to infidelity, but thinks it is improper for an unmarried couple to live together openly. Lord Marchmain knows about the affair and does not care, since he, too, has rejected British society and lives openly with his mistress in Italy. This suggests that, although Charles and Julia try to flout social authority, they still exist within its boundaries.



As they watch the sunset on **Brideshead**, Julia tells Charles that she wants to marry him and to divorce Rex. Charles doesn’t want to make plans on such a beautiful evening, but Julia tells him that they must not take marriage and divorce lightly. She wants to marry him now because she thinks there will soon be a war and wants some peace beforehand. While they talk, Wilcox comes outside and calls them in for dinner. They find that an extra place is set, and Wilcox tells them that Brideshead has just arrived.

The fact that Charles does not want to detract from the beauty of the sunset to plan for the future clearly suggests that he feels the same way about his affair with Julia. He believes the beauty of their relationship will be spoiled when they make it official rather than focusing on enjoying what they have in the present moment. Going through processes like divorce and marriage will effectively make their relationship part of the real world, and it will no longer be an escape for them. The intrusion of another person upon their sanctuary at Brideshead further implies the end of their peace and solitude.



Julia and Charles have no idea how Brideshead spends his time. They have several running jokes about him. He has no job and no hobbies, except a fanatical interest in collecting matchboxes. Brideshead does not comment on Charles's relationship with Julia and seems to like Charles and accept his presence. The group sits down to eat, and Brideshead tells them he has "some news." Charles shows an interest, and Brideshead indicates that he must wait until the servants are finished before he can tell them.

While they wait, Brideshead asks Julia if his mother's jewelry is still upstairs and Julia says it is. When they are alone, Brideshead tells them that he is engaged to a widow, named Mrs. Beryl Muspratt, who has three children. Julia begins to laugh when she hears this, and asks where Brideshead met her. He explains that her previous husband also collected matchboxes.

Julia asks why he hasn't brought her to meet them, and Brideshead says that Beryl is a strict Catholic and he does not want her to meet Julia because of Julia's "peculiar" situation with Rex and Charles. Julia begins to cry and storms from the room. Charles is insulted, but Brideshead says that the is only telling the truth.

Charles follows Julia outside and finds her sitting on the edge of the **fountain**, still in tears. He tries to comfort her, but she cries that Brideshead is quite right and that, although she has sinned in the past, she now "lives in sin" and cannot escape from it. Charles cannot understand why her mood has changed so violently because of Brideshead's words.

Julia continues to cry and confesses all her secret pain. She confesses that she has tried to be a good wife to Rex and that she tried to be good when she was a child, when words like "sin" meant something to her. She cries for her mother, who she says died like Christ or like a martyr. She describes a dead body in a cave, wrapped in a sheet, and says that there is "no way back." Charles feels cut off from her as he listens and is unable to understand.

Brideshead is a comic figure because he is so dull. He is not ashamed of his interests, however, and is clearly tolerant of other people's quirks. He accepts Julia and Charles's affair without comment, even though this goes against his own beliefs. Brideshead is old-fashioned because he does not want the servants to know family business. Brideshead seems to feel no pressure to adapt to modernity and does not care that his perspective is irrelevant.



Brideshead intends to give some of Lady Marchmain's jewelry to his fiancée. In a way, Brideshead (although he is old fashioned and separate from the modern world in some ways) is more current and open-minded than Charles because he is willing to marry below his own class, whereas Charles dislikes anything, or anyone, he sees as common.



Although Brideshead tolerates Julia and Charles, he does believe that their lifestyle is sinful, according to Catholicism, and feels that Beryl will be offended by it. Brideshead's tendency to view life in strictly religious terms makes him oblivious to other people's feelings, and he therefore does not seem to understand why Julia is upset.



Although Julia is no longer a Catholic, she feels guilty because she has broken the rules of Catholicism. "Living in sin" suggests she is a fallen woman and that she cannot be redeemed unless she gives up Charles. Even a divorce will not redeem her, as Catholics are not allowed to divorce. Charles, who has never been Catholic, does not understand the nuances of the faith and assumes that, since Julia is no longer Catholic, she no longer believes in any of its ideas.



Although Julia puts a brave face on things, she feels guilty and worries that she is a bad person. She feels that the renunciation of her faith proves she is sinful, and she compares herself to her mother, who was extremely pious. She also feels guilty because she upset her mother before her death. The dead body refers to Christ and his burial in a tomb after his crucifixion—Julia feels that, for her, Christ stays dead and does not rise again because she has forsaken her faith. This suggests that she has no hope of life after death without her faith, and that she may convert back to Catholicism.



Suddenly, Julia recovers. She gets up, says that Brideshead's news is a shock, and walks back into the house. She fixes her make-up and then says that they must go back downstairs to celebrate Brideshead's engagement. Charles watches, amazed, as Julia and Brideshead coolly discuss living arrangements for after his marriage: he and Beryl will take **Brideshead**, and Julia and Rex will move out. Charles feels that Rex will be disappointed and cannot understand how Julia could be so upset one minute and so composed the next.

After their talk with Brideshead, Charles and Julia go outside again. Charles tries to ask Julia about her outburst: he wonders whether she believes what she says about sin. Julia says that she wishes she didn't. Charles says that Sebastian once said the same thing, and Julia says that Sebastian is very religious now.

Julia and Charles walk around the house, and Julia pulls a strip of stiff grass out of a hedge. They stop again by the **fountain**, and Charles thinks this is funny and that the fountain is like a prop in a play. Julia is agitated and asks Charles why everything "must be second-hand" with him.

Charles shrugs at this, and Julia whips him hard across the face with the piece of grass. She realizes suddenly what she has done and is shocked. Again, she begins to cry, and Charles comforts her but holds her at arms-length. Charles takes Julia inside to bed, and she asks him if she is going mad. She is very tired and falls asleep almost immediately. He sees her whisper something to herself as she drifts off, and thinks it is a prayer.

The next night, Rex arrives with his friends and they talk about the possibility of war. They have many competing theories about whether it will go ahead or not. Rex wants to get into politics. Julia and Charles go outside, bored of this conversation. Charles thinks that, in the moonlight, the garden looks like the "Trojan camp." Julia thinks there is not much time left before "the dark."

Julia's behavior is erratic and strange to Charles. She is used to hiding her true feelings, and this makes Charles feel cut off from her. Rex does not appreciate the house aesthetically or emotionally in the way that Charles does. Charles views Brideshead as a symbol of a better time, both in his life and in society, whereas, for Rex, it represents social advancement and nothing more. Rex, who symbolizes modernity, represents a threat to everything that Charles feels Brideshead represents.



Although Julia is no longer a Catholic, she still believes that Catholicism is true and that it is she who is in the wrong. This suggests that even if one leaves the Church, one cannot simply forget one's faith.



Julia finds Charles detached and cold. He does not view things in a personal way and sees everything as though it is art or literature: like it is happening to someone else. Julia is frustrated by this because she wants something tangible from their relationship (a second marriage and children), and she can tell that Charles does not. This suggests that, although Charles believes that he is in the present with Julia and is happy with her, in reality he loves her because she represents a period from his past (his first love with Sebastian).



Charles does not realize the extent of Julia's frustration. Julia is surprised, too, at the force of her emotions. Charles can see that Julia wants to return to the Catholic church, although she does not know it yet. She regrets her loss of faith and has not found a satisfactory replacement for it, even in her love affair with Charles.



Rex is an opportunist and seeks to benefit from the war. He aspires to be a politician and thinks that war will make people more likely to vote for someone radical, like himself. This attitude was reflected in this period in Europe through the rise of extreme political movements, such as fascism and communism. For Charles, these represent quintessentially modern problems. The "Trojan camp" is a reference to the Trojan War in Greek mythology. This demonstrates that Charles thinks of the war as something heroic rather than realistic. Julia has a much more ominous feeling about it: the war is associated with darkness and death for her.



PART 3, CHAPTER 4

Charles and Celia get a divorce, and Celia plans to marry a younger man named Robin. Boy Mulcaster helps Charles draw up the agreement. Boy is rather happy about the whole thing and says that it has worked out very nicely. Celia will take the children, who love Robin. Charles tells Boy that he will marry Julia as soon as the divorce is final, and Boy thinks that this is a waste of time and that Charles should enjoy his freedom.

Rex does not want to divorce Julia and hopes that Charles can talk her out of it. He doesn't mind that she is unfaithful, but he doesn't want the public scandal because his political career is not going well. One afternoon, Julia is invited to lunch with Brideshead's fiancée. Afterward, Charles asks what she is like, and Julia says she is "common" and that her manner is friendly but condescending. Julia thinks her main objective in marrying Brideshead is to find a nice home for her family.

Charles's divorce goes through swiftly and, publicly, everyone takes Celia's side. Julia's divorce is a lengthy process, and Rex moves out of **Brideshead**. He gives a ferocious speech in parliament about the possibility of war and does not yet know how the public will take it. One afternoon at Brideshead, Julia and Charles look out of the library windows at the rain, and Julia says that they will not see spring. Charles says that he left Brideshead once before and thought he would never return.

Wilcox comes in and tells them that Cordelia is on her way home and will arrive that night. Julia is delighted. She tells Charles that Cordelia went to Spain during the war there but did not return with the other nuns when the war ended. Instead, she stayed in Spain to help people who had lost their homes. Charles thinks that this is a waste of her life.

When Cordelia arrives, Charles is surprised to find that she has grown up "ugly." He thinks her manners are coarse because of her time spent away. Charles, Julia, and Cordelia go to visit Nanny, and Cordelia tells them that she recently saw Sebastian. She says that he is ill and is being cared for by monks in Morocco. He is very religious now, she says.

Celia is popular and social, and it is unsurprising that she has already found someone to marry. Boy has a childish approach to relationships and feels that men are forced into them by women. This demonstrates that he has not experienced real love and is, perhaps, incapable of this depth of emotion.



Rex does not care about Julia and only cares about how the marriage makes him look. Beryl patronizes Julia because she knows Julia is a "fallen woman," and so Beryl thinks she is morally superior to Julia. Beryl and Rex are both modern and both lower-class, compared with Charles and Julia. Their prioritization of status and comfort reflects, in Charles's opinion, the degeneration of the modern world. However, it also reflects the fact that people from different classes had more opportunities as these old boundaries broke down.



Julia's divorce is more complicated because she is from a wealthy family with lots of assets. Rex tries to win over the public with an aggressive speech because he knows people want an aggressive leader in wartime. The end of spring represents the end of life and hope. This signifies both the reality which closes in around Charles and Julia as they go through their divorces, and the approach of war in Europe, which will bring about a new period of death and destruction.



Cordelia does not lose her faith as she grows up, and instead puts it to practical use as a nun engaged in charity work. Charles cannot see the value in this because he thinks that the meaning of life lies in romantic love. As a nun, Cordelia can never have sex or get married.



Charles is narrow-minded and can only see Cordelia's lack of refinement, not her kindness or compassion. Charles only appreciates aesthetic beauty and has little interest in the practical side of life. Sebastian's return to God is connected to his suffering because, according to Catholicism, suffering makes one holy and wins God's grace and mercy.



Julia once said to Charles that it scared her how he had completely forgotten about Sebastian. Charles says that Sebastian was the “forerunner,” but inside he knows that he has not forgotten Sebastian; he is reminded of him constantly by **Brideshead** and by Julia. The next day, he asks Cordelia to tell him everything she knows about Sebastian

Cordelia says that she heard Sebastian was dying and so went to Tunis to find him. In Tunis, she found the place where he had stayed, but the owner said that they had not seen him. They were terribly worried about him and had tried to take care of him. He refused to eat and still drank heavily. Cordelia says he is still “loved wherever he goes.” She visited a nearby monastery and was told that he had been there and wanted to become a monk; he wanted to work in a leper colony. The Superior turned him away but told Cordelia that Sebastian was “holy.”

One day, the monks found Sebastian unconscious outside the monastery and took him in. Cordelia stayed with him while he was ill, and the day before she left, he told her what had happened. He and Kurt had gone to Athens and, for a while, they had been very happy together and Sebastian had stopped drinking. Kurt’s foot had healed too, and he became a better, nicer man. However, one day Kurt got into a fight and was imprisoned in Greece. He was then extradited to Germany and forced to be a soldier.

Sebastian went to Germany to find Kurt and found that he was a storm-trooper for the Nazis. However, Sebastian persuaded Kurt to run away with him. They escaped for a short time, but Kurt was recaptured and put in a concentration camp. Sebastian heard later that Kurt killed himself in the camp. Sebastian went back to Morocco and decided that he must travel somewhere away from civilization and become a missionary. Cordelia says that he is too weak to ever do this, but the monks will let him live at the monastery.

Charles asks Cordelia if she has told Julia. Cordelia says that she has but that Julia never loved Sebastian the way that she and Charles do. Cordelia predicts that Sebastian will stay with the monks for the rest of his life. Charles says that he hopes he doesn’t suffer, but Cordelia says that he suffers immensely, and that this is what makes him holy. She knows that Charles will not understand and teases him because she knows he thinks she is plain and has wasted her life. She tells him that she feels the same about him and Julia, and that she thinks they share a “thwarted passion.”

Charles downplays his love of Sebastian to Julia because he does not want to make her jealous or feel that she does not compare. He partly loves Julia because of her likeness to Sebastian, and Charles enjoys his time at Brideshead with Julia because it feels like a return to his first love (the best time in his life) with Sebastian, which was also cultivated at Brideshead.



Despite his flaws, Sebastian is likable and charming. He is vulnerable, and this makes people love him more. This supports the idea that he is loved by God because he suffers more than other people. Sebastian, like Charles, craves extreme experience—his desire to work with lepers mirrors Charles’s trek into the jungle. Leprosy is a wasting disease, and because there was no cure at the time, people with leprosy were kept separate from the general population.



Sebastian’s life has taken a tragic turn and he has lost Kurt, who he obviously loved and with whom he had a solid relationship. However, his suffering increases his holiness and brings him closer to the status of a saint or a martyr. During this period, the Nazis in Germany were preparing for war. Since Kurt has been a soldier before, he is forcibly enlisted.



Kurt has been indoctrinated by nationalistic Nazi ideology, but his experience of real love with Sebastian helps him overcome this. This suggests that love is healing and redemptive, and is more powerful than destruction and conflict. The Nazi party was a totalitarian regime—deserters and people who spoke out against the ideology were imprisoned in labor camps. Later in World War II, these camps were used as death camps for Jewish, homosexual, and disabled people, among other minorities.



Cordelia understands that Charles loved Sebastian unconditionally. Cordelia believes that God loves those who suffer more than those who do not, and therefore Sebastian’s suffering makes him holy. Cordelia is open-minded and feels that there are many different types of love. She knows that Charles truly loved Sebastian and does not feel that he has recaptured this with Julia.



That night, as Charles watches Julia get ready for bed, he thinks that she looks sad: the way she did when he met her on board the ship. As he lies in bed, he sees a vision of a man in a hut on a snowy hillside. An avalanche builds outside the hut and, eventually, the pressure destroys the hut and sends the man tumbling down the mountain.

Charles realizes that he no longer makes Julia happy. He realizes that their affair was just a brief escape from the realities and pain of life and cannot sustain them much longer. He feels that their relationship will be destroyed soon, by the pressures of the outside world.



PART 3, CHAPTER 5

While Charles and Julia finalize their divorces and Brideshead prepares to get married, Lord Marchmain suddenly announces that he will return to **Brideshead**. This dashes Beryl's hopes, as she and Brideshead were meant to take over the family home, and they rent a villa elsewhere. Charles, Julia, and Cordelia remain at Brideshead to greet Lord Marchmain, who arrives after the New Year. Plender arrives before him to ensure household is prepared.

As the eldest son, Brideshead hopes to inherit Brideshead Castle from his father and make it a home for Beryl and her family. Beryl's hopes to transcend social status reflect the gradual displacement of the aristocracy and the upper classes during this period. "True" nobility (those born into wealth) were gradually overtaken, in terms of wealth and social status, by members of the middle and lower classes who either married into noble families or earned their money elsewhere.



When Lord Marchmain arrives, Julia and Charles are shocked to find that he has aged drastically and is very unwell. He walks with a stick, and Cara, who is with him, carries his medicine. He has been unwell, but they did not realize how ill he was. On his arrival, Lord Marchmain tells Wilcox and Plender that he wants to sleep downstairs. The "Chinese drawing room"—an elaborately decorated chamber, which Charles has never seen used—is prepared.

Lord Marchmain has kept the severity of his illness a secret from his children. Lord Marchmain's whim is childish and impractical, and suggests that, as he grows closer to death, he is regressing back to more childish whims. This suggests that death is not the end of life but the beginning of a new life in which one will be redeemed, cleansed of sin, and returned to the innocent state of childhood and purity—a state which many of the characters strive toward throughout the novel.



Lord Marchmain seems pleased that his request has thrown the household into disarray. He complains bitterly about Brideshead's marriage to Beryl, who he finds unbearably common, and brusquely asks Charles what he will do in the war as an artist. Charles finds that Lord Marchmain's bad temper is "new." Later, Cara tells Charles that Lord Marchmain has "come home to die" and that he has a problem with his heart.

Lord Marchmain will not admit he is dying, but Cara knows this is the case. Without his faith, Lord Marchmain has no hope for life after death. This makes him bitter and cruel, as demonstrated by his cold treatment of Brideshead and Charles. Lord Marchmain is elitist, and mirrors Charles's perspective that the prevalence of lower class people in roles and social positions once filled only by the upper classes is a travesty, and a reflection of modern society's degeneration.



Cordelia takes charge of her father's care and sits up with him on the first night. She says that he fell asleep quickly but that, after she turned out the lights, he got up and turned them back on. She says he is afraid of the dark. The doctors visit and say that they cannot do much for him but cannot say how long he will live.

Darkness is associated with death, and Lord Marchmain's refusal to sleep with the lights off suggests that he is afraid to die. He is not religious and does not believe in an afterlife or resurrection, notions that tend to give people a sense of meaning that dispels the darkness and meaninglessness associated with death.



Lord Marchmain complains frequently about Beryl. He does not want her to inherit **Brideshead** and finds her vulgar and crude. Lord Marchmain says he will leave the house to Julia and Charles, but Julia objects that it belongs to Brideshead. As time goes on, they realize that he is serious, and Charles wonders if the beautiful, solitary house (which he once dreamed of sharing with Sebastian) will be his.

Lord Marchmain's illness is slow but progressive. Some days, he seems like his old self, and even once arranges to go out in his car. He changes his mind, however, and remains at home. However, he also has days when he is very ill. When Brideshead and Beryl come to stay, he refuses to see them, and Charles feels guilty because he knows that Beryl thinks that her husband will inherit the house.

Lord Marchmain's health declines further, and two nurses are brought from London. Brideshead is informed that his father is dying, and comes back to the house without Beryl. Brideshead says his father must see a priest, but Charles objects. He tells Julia in private that they should let Lord Marchmain die in peace. Julia thinks the subject will cause a row and says she does not know what is best to do.

Cordelia and Cara side with Brideshead, but Charles still strongly objects. Julia becomes irritated when he complains about it, and seems conflicted about the issue. Charles notices that her bad moods grow more frequent and that she pulls away from him. One morning, at breakfast, Brideshead tells Charles that Cordelia will bring a priest to the house. Father Mackay arrives and eats breakfast with them. Afterwards, he asks to see Lord Marchmain.

Cordelia and Brideshead take him into the room, but the three exit a moment later and Cordelia and Brideshead apologize to the priest. Father Mackay is unruffled and says that Lord Marchmain may still have a "beautiful death." Charles goes upstairs to see Julia and tells her triumphantly that Lord Marchmain dismissed the priest.

Lord Marchmain looks down on Beryl because she is middle-class, and he is upper-class. He is old-fashioned and elitist, and therefore does not believe in marriage between classes. He does not want his ancestors' home passed on to someone whom he does not feel is good enough. Charles seems more interested in the house and what it represents (his time with Sebastian) than he is in Julia.



Lord Marchmain is in denial about his illness. He tries to behave like his old self but cannot. As the eldest son, Brideshead expects to inherit the family home. Charles knows that Lord Marchmain plans to leave it to he and Julia, but he keeps this a secret from Beryl. This suggests that Charles colludes against the middle classes to prevent social change and keep wealth in the hands of the nobility, whom he romanticizes and aspires to join.



Brideshead does not care that his father is not Catholic: this is not important to him because he believes Lord Marchmain can still be redeemed. Charles wants Lord Marchmain's wishes to be respected, but the others feel that Lord Marchmain does not know what is best for him. Julia does not automatically side with Charles, which suggests that she regrets her decision to leave the church.



Julia grows irritated with Charles because, secretly, she thinks he is wrong. She wishes to return to the Church. Charles can see that this will cause a breach between them, as he dislikes religion. They will be on different sides of a conflict for the first time and this suggests that war, as a pervasive aspect of daily life in the 20th century, has even worked its way into their relationship.



Lord Marchmain has clearly been rude to Father Mackay and sent him out of the room. Charles is happy about this because he feels that he has been proven right. He does not really think about other people's beliefs and wishes, but rather sees the issue of the priest as an argument that he wants to win. Charles's attitude has become competitive and warlike, rather than kind and loving.



On Brideshead's last evening, he brings up the subject again and says that, although his father dismissed the priest, he may still change his mind. Charles says that Brideshead is nitpicking and that Lord Marchmain made himself clear, but Cara and Cordelia still hold out hope. Charles asks them to explain exactly why a priest is important, and there is a dispute between Cara and Cordelia over what the sacraments mean.

Charles says that the priest is not necessary because only God will know if Lord Marchmain truly repents. Brideshead says this is true, but still feels the priest is important. Cara says that when she dies, she will have a priest, and Cordelia says this is the best idea. When Charles and Julia go to bed, she complains that he is always starting arguments. Charles says that he just wants to know what Catholics believe, as they all seem to say different things. Julia questions whether Charles is genuinely agnostic since he is so concerned with Catholics.

Charles's divorce is finalized, and his wedding to Julia arranged. However, as it draws closer, Charles begins to feel that Julia does not really think it will happen. Charles signs up at the "war office" so that he will be called up if necessary. As Lord Marchmain's illness progresses, he grows more introspective. Lord Marchmain hates to be left alone but does not pay attention to people when they are there.

As his death approaches, Lord Marchmain talks to himself about his life. He murmurs that he will soon be well and will see the outdoors again. He says that his family live a long time and talks of his Aunt Julia who was alive when **Brideshead** was built and who lived to be 88. He talks of his ancient bloodline and the way the house was built. He complains that he has always lived well and felt young and that, when it is summer, he will be able to breathe again. He does not realize it is summer outside.

Lord Marchmain is given an oxygen tank to help him breathe. He asks Cordelia what happened to the chapel at **Brideshead**, and she says it has been closed. Lord Marchmain asks if she thinks it was a sin for him to leave her mother, and Cordelia says yes. Lord Marchmain wonders if he is being punished.

Charles thinks that Brideshead is arrogant and selfish, because he wishes to force religion on Lord Marchmain. However, Charles is just as egotistical and wants to prove his own point: that Catholicism is pointless and stupid. Charles tries to prove this by picking holes in their beliefs.



Ritual is important in Catholicism, and although the relationship between God and the individual is the most important, the rituals and sacraments directed by priests play an important symbolic role. Cordelia has faith, and therefore does not need to understand logically to believe. Her faith is based in surrender to God's authority and love, which is the result of genuine belief, rather than a need for proof. Julia disagrees with Charles but cannot bring herself to acknowledge this yet.



Julia does not really want to marry Charles but cannot admit this to herself. They are now on different sides, whereas they used to be united against the world. Lord Marchmain links loneliness and death, because without God, death is total isolation with no hope of resurrection.



Lord Marchmain cannot accept the idea of his own death. He is attached to the material world and views himself as too important to die. He wants to be exempt from it, although it is unavoidable. These are very common emotions and, Waugh suggests, religion and belief in an afterlife are the only solutions.



Like Julia, Lord Marchmain is no longer a Catholic, but still views the world according to Catholic rules about sin. This suggests that although people can leave the Church, religion can still have a powerful hold on their beliefs and worldview.



In mid-July, Cordelia goes to London for the day and Lord Marchmain suddenly takes a turn for the worse. Julia says that she will send for the priest, and Charles knows that she has wanted this all along. Cara says that she wants Lord Marchmain to be happy when he dies and does not want to make him afraid, although she does want a priest present. The doctor says that the shock may kill him, and Charles tries to talk her out of calling the priest.

This does not work, however, and Julia fetches Father Mackay. Charles tries to persuade the priest not to go in, since Lord Marchmain rejected him the first time, but Father Mackay thinks it possible that Lord Marchmain has changed his mind. Besides, he says, Christ cares for sinners more than he does “the righteous.”

Julia leads Father Mackay into Lord Marchmain’s room and the others follow. He lies with the oxygen mask on, and the nurse says that he is close to death. Julia kneels to pray, and the priest begins to ask Lord Marchmain if he regrets his sins. Charles watches, horrified. As the priest continues, he begins to hope desperately that Lord Marchmain will make a sign of contrition. Father Mackay anoints Lord Marchmain’s brow with oil and, for a moment, Charles thinks the old man will wipe it off. Lord Marchmain lifts his hand, however, and makes the sign of the cross.

Charles follows Father Mackay out and offers him money for his services. The priest takes three pounds for the church and says that Lord Marchmain had a “beautiful” redemption. Lord Marchmain dies that night, and in the confusion, Julia and Charles meet for the last time, by the stairs in the hall. Julia confesses that she cannot be with Charles because he is not religious, and she must have “God’s mercy.” Charles says that he has known for a year that she feels this way but knows she did not know it herself. He leaves her bitterly and tells her that he “hopes her heart will break.”

EPILOGUE

It is 1943 and Charles’s company discusses what to do with **Brideshead** now that they have taken it over for army purposes. The other officers complain that there are not many facilities nearby but that the lawns may be turned into a training ground. Charles does not tell them that he has been there before, and they send him to look the house over. Charles sets off with Quarter Commander to do this.

It is ironic that Charles and the doctor worry about Lord Marchmain’s death, as it is inevitable that he is going to die. It is implied that the Catholic characters are more sensible in this case, because they worry about his life after death rather than prolonging his material life, which now only consists of pain and suffering.



Whereas religious people are often stereotyped as being close-minded, the Catholic characters in this passage seem more open-minded than Charles. They have hope and faith, whereas Charles has closed his mind to these things. In Catholicism, it is believed that God loves sinners more because they are the ones who need love and forgiveness most.



This deathbed scene represents a struggle for Lord Marchmain’s soul. According to Catholicism, he will be saved if he repents, but if not, he will be damned. Deathbed scenes like this were extremely common in devotional art in the Middle Ages. Charles hopes Lord Marchmain will repent because he knows that the family will be heartbroken if they believe he is damned. Lord Marchmain’s sign suggests that he does repent, accepts God’s forgiveness.



Father Mackay is pleased with this outcome because he feels that the harder the struggle of repentance is, the greater the reward there will be for the person in Heaven. This is because suffering is a sign of godliness and reflects Christ’s suffering on Earth for the redemption of mankind. Julia finally admits that she regrets leaving the Church and acknowledges that Charles must become a sincere Catholic for them to be together. She already knows that Charles will not do this, and Charles thus feels that she has betrayed their love and hates her for it.



Charles knows that the army will desecrate Brideshead, a place which is sacred to him because it reminds him of his past loves. This represents the desecration of the Catholic Church, which, in Britain, largely fell into the background during the 20th century. Waugh also opposed many of the changes that were made in the Church around this time.



As they walk around the house, the Quarter Commander tells Charles that there is no one in the house but some servants who live upstairs and an old priest who has survived the Blitz and reopened the chapel. He tells Charles that the house belongs to Lady Julia Flyte, who now works abroad with a women's party.

Many of the rooms have been destroyed by the soldiers. The Quarter Commander leads Charles to the painted study and notes that the soldiers have made a mess of it. He likes the pictures on the walls, though and says the house has plenty of space for offices. The Quarter Commander leads Charles outside onto the terrace and shows him where a road has been built through the grounds. They reach the **fountain**, and the Commander says that the landlady loves this spot and will not have it removed. The soldiers, however, have thrown rubbish and cigarette butts into the fountain.

The Quarter Commander leaves Charles, and he wonders alone through the house. He bumps into a servant who recognizes him. She is carrying tea for Nanny and Charles offers to take it up for her. Nanny is very surprised to see Charles and does not recognize him at first. She tells him that Brideshead and Beryl's home was bombed, and their other house seized for offices, so they are staying in a hotel.

Nanny asks Charles if he heard Rex's speech on the radio: he was very unpleasant about Hitler, and Nanny is pleased by this. She never really liked Rex, she says, but she has been proven wrong now. Charles asks if Nanny has heard from Julia, and she says that Julia is in Palestine. Charles promises to visit Nanny again and leaves.

Charles finds Hooper downstairs and asks for his orders. Hooper says he doesn't know them, and Charles says that it is his fault for disappearing. He tells Hooper to begin work quickly and organize the house. Hooper asks how Charles knows the place and Charles says that it belonged to friends of his. It reminds him of his first visit with Sebastian, when Sebastian said that **Brideshead** was where his family lived.

The Blitz was a period of prolonged bombing in London carried out by the Germans in World War II. The legacy of Catholicism survives here, through the chapel. Julia has followed in Cordelia's footsteps and taken up charity work. This shows that, although Julia once left her faith, this has not prevented her from returning to it. Thus, this suggests that God is permissive and allows people to stray as far as they want from him before they return. Catholicism holds out hope for redemption through the practice of confession or through sacramental rites, like baptism.



This is the room Charles painted when he stayed with Sebastian. Julia (the landlady) loves the fountain because of her memories of it. This suggests that, although she no longer tries to recapture her happiness through worldly things, her love for Charles was still important to her. It is sad and ironic, then, that this has been desecrated and treated disrespectfully. Through this, Waugh suggests that modernity has no respect for the past.



Nanny has stayed the same and still lives in her own calm world, and concerns herself with the fortunes of the Marchmain children. The news of Brideshead and Beryl's house suggests that war is a levelling experience, and that people of every class are affected by it.



Rex has become a successful politician and is popular in the war effort. Nanny supports him because he hates the Germans, who attacked Britain during World War II. Rex is a symbol of modernity and thrives in wartime because, Charles suggests, modernity is intrinsically destructive. Rex is based on a real politician from this period: the grandson of the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.



Charles's company is very disorganized. This suggests that the army itself is disorganized, and that Charles does not view his duty as important or worthwhile. He has lost faith in the organization and purpose of army life. Charles no longer feels connected to Brideshead because it has changed so much. He has lost touch with the Marchmains and is now an outsider among them, because he is not Catholic.



Hooper thinks it is strange that one family lived in such a large house. Charles says that it is handy now, but Hooper says this was not its purpose. Charles says that, perhaps, this is the joy of building: one never knows what will happen to the thing that one builds. It is like having a child, he says. He adds that he has lost the right to watch his own son grow up and that he has no one, nowhere to go, and no love in his life. Hooper laughs uncomfortably and hurries off.

Left alone, Charles goes to visit the chapel. He says a prayer there and then walks back through the house. He thinks sadly that the builders did not know how the house would be used and that all their work has gone to waste. Still, he thinks, perhaps it has not gone to waste at all. Perhaps something good will come out of all this tragedy in the end, because something eternal remains in the house and in the world at large. When Charles makes it back to camp, his second-in-command says that Charles seems unusually chirpy.

Hooper, who represents modernity, is from a poor family and views Brideshead as wasteful. He does not appreciate it aesthetically, the way that Charles does, and sees it as an inefficient use of space. Charles realizes that one cannot control how one's art will be viewed or interpreted, or how the modern world will change. One must, instead, surrender to change. Charles's reference to his son refers to the idea that humans are God's children, but that God cannot control whether humanity loves him or not, because humans have free will.



At first, Charles is pessimistic about the change at Brideshead, and sees it as emblematic of the destructive modern world. However, his hope returns when he acknowledges that he cannot judge whether change is good or bad because he does not understand the whole plan and is not an authority. Instead, Charles decides, the only true authority in the world is God, but humans cannot understand the intricacies of God's plan because they are inferior to Him. This implies Charles's conversion to Catholicism, as he lets go of his attempts to control everything and surrenders to the idea of a higher power in the figure of God.





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