

[ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#)

REVIEWS BY AMOS LASSEN

BOOKS, MOVIES AND JUDAICA

“BRIDESHEAD REVISTED ” (The Series) — As Things Were

AMOS ♦ SEPTEMBER 2, 2011 ♦ [LEAVE YOUR COMMENT](#)



“BRIDESHEAD REVISTED”

How Things Were

Amos Lassen

Newly re-mastered and released on DVD is one of the classics of gay literature.

“Brideshead Revisited” is one of the most popular television series of all time. It is well loved and often misunderstood. Made in 1981 it has a huge appeal as it paints a lost world abundant with unspeakable sadness. Written by Evelyn Waugh, the book became an almost instant classic. And it is now also available on Blu ray

The movie preaches against the enervating effects of charm and how they can destroy

[TOP](#) ↑

love and even with that the charm of the film is what carries it. The film begins as a love story and eventually becomes somewhat of a Catholic soap opera. This was the movie that began the career of the noted actor Jeremy Irons who plays Charles Ryder who sits by passively and watches the fall of British aristocracy and of one family in particular. While attending Oxford he falls in love with the irrepressible Sebastian Flyte (Anthony Andrews)). Flyte is charming and the two live out a homosexual relationship which is beautiful but dependent upon alcohol. All is well until Sebastian begins to drink out of despair and we watch him fall apart. Charles, too busy being charmed by Sebastian's family, does not reach out to him and Sebastian's mother played admirably by Claire Bloom destroys her entire family while attempting not to notice that she does so.

We should be able to understand why Sebastian is so unhappy—is it because he is a homosexual and hiding it or is there some other reason we are not privy to? The script seems to play down the sexual aspect of the boy's nature but the sex, even if subliminal, is always there although we never know if Sebastian and Charles actually ever have it. It is frustrating that we cannot understand the way they behave and if their acting was not so fine, we would be at a loss in regards to them.

Jeremy Irons' Charles is perverse. He coldly abandons his lover. It is almost as if he fell in love with him without fully understanding his feelings but considering the nature of British law, the boys could not be open about their feelings. We are never sure of what Sebastian feels for Charles so we can only draw our own conclusions. We get some insight from Sebastian's former lover. We never really ever know if the boys are lovers or not

Andrews as Sebastian gives a performance that is memorable and convincing. He is completely affected, he is playful, he is whimsical and just a treat for the eyes. As Sebastian deteriorates, Andrews infuses heartbreak and emotion that are beautiful to observe.

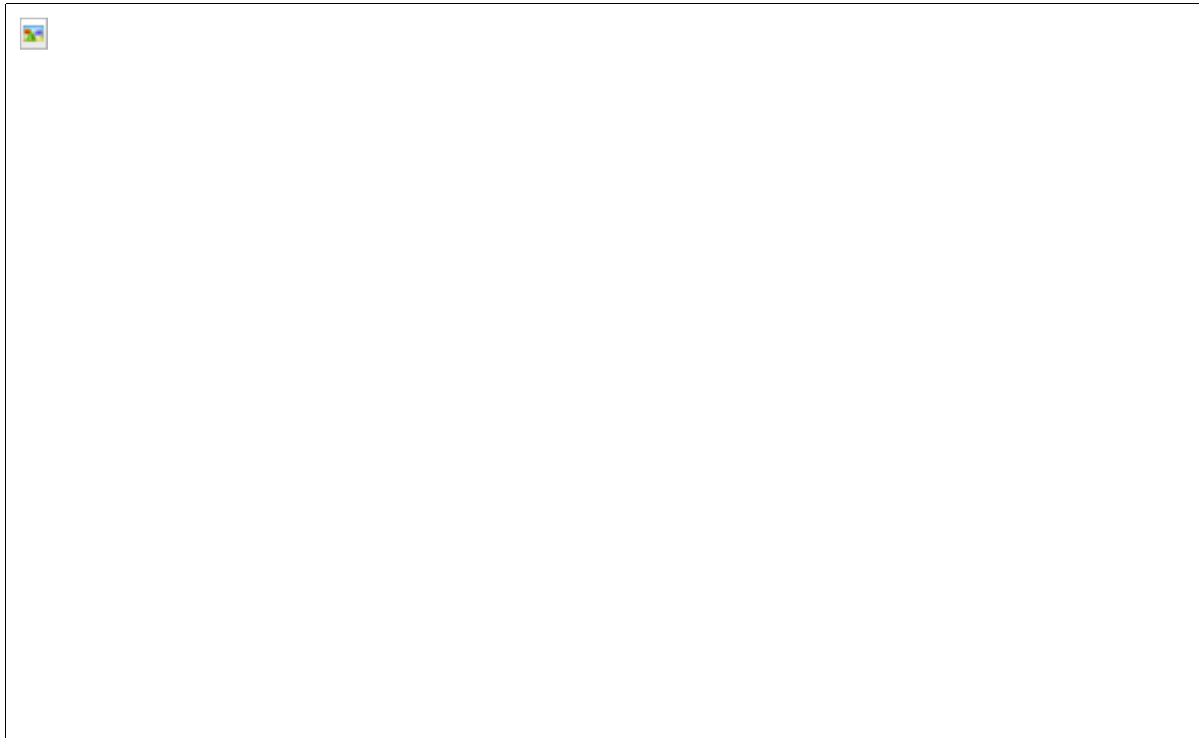
As the movie sinks into nostalgia it projects regret and the love of Charles and Sebastian is looked at as if it is to be outgrown. We must realize that we are looking at homosexuality as it was at the time the book was written, long before the film was made. England had laws forbidding it and imprisonment was the result.

The cast is amazing and luminous. Aside from the afore mentioned there are the likes of Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir John Gielgud, two of the finest actors England has ever produced yet is Claire Bloom to whom the movie belongs. Bloom shows us all the sides of the highly complex woman the mother of Sebastian is. As Lady Marchmain, she steals the show from the most competent actors to ever grace a movie set.

There is so much in “Brideshead Revisited”. The acting alone makes it worthwhile but there is also the wonderful and horrible relationship of Charles and Sebastian. The scenery is lush and beautiful and the photography is in a class all of its own. Yet the problem remains of the fate of the gay boys. They share what other gay men in early gay-centered drama did. We are so lucky that times have changed and even though we are not

[TOP ↑](#)

where we want to be completely, seeing a movie like “Brideshead Revisited” will remind you of how far we have come.



POSTED IN: GLBT FILM

Leave Your Comment

Your email will not be published or shared. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

[TOP](#) ↑

Comment

You may use these HTML tags and attributes: <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <blockquote cite=""> <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <i> <q cite=""> <strike>

Submit

[ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#)

[REV](#)



[TOP](#) ↑