

## Lady Chatterley

France/Belgium 2006 168 mins

### Crew and Cast

Director	Pascale Ferran
Screenplay	Pascale Ferran & Roger Rohbot
Cinematography	Julien Hirsch
Constance Chatterley	<b>Marina Hands</b>
Parkin	<b>Jean-Louis Coulloc'h</b>
Sir Clifford Chatterley	<b>Hippolyte Girardot</b>
Mrs Bolton	<b>Hélène Fillières</b>
Charlotte Parkin	<b>Siane Lemoine</b>

### Synopsis

England 1920s. Lady Constance Chatterley lives with her husband Clifford on his Midlands estate, Wragby. Clifford, a mine-owner and former officer, has been left paralysed from the waist down by the war, and their marriage is sexless. Constance sinks into a malaise, for which the doctor prescribes exercise. While walking Wragby's grounds, Constance happens on the cabin of gamekeeper Parkin who, having separated from his wife, lives a solitary existence in the woods. She begins to visit him there regularly and the two embark on a sexual relationship. Constance's health improves dramatically.

*abridged from Sight & Sound Sept'07*



### Review

Sexual intercourse began not long after the end of the 'Chatterley' ban, to paraphrase Philip Larkin. This César-winning, stirring-in-all-senses adaptation of D H Lawrence's 1920s contraband revives the novel's progressive vision of sex as an ecstatic, guiltless communion of souls – one that looks as Utopian as ever.

Lawrence took three passes at 'Chatterley' and, though it was the last version that ignited all the controversy, Pascale Ferran's French-language adaptation draws on the second, suggestively named '*John Thomas and Lady Jane*', which is less polemical, less loquacious, and opens a bigger class barrier between the lovers than its more notorious sibling. Constance (Marina Hands) is the young wife of a rich World War I veteran (Hippolyte Girardot), who is wealthy and powerful – he owns the local mine – but whose battle injuries have left him impotent and reliant on a wheelchair. The lonely bride rattles around their vast house and wanders their massive estate until she happens upon the strapping gamekeeper, Parkin (Jean-Louis Coulloc'h), naked from the waist up and bathing outdoors. Her instinct is to bolt, and a rush of conflicting emotions washes over Hands' expressive face: shock, desire, confusion, curiosity, excitement.

Splendidly photographed by Julien Hirsch, ***Lady Chatterley*** is smooth and patient in its seasonal movements. Once spring has sprung, the daffodils come out and the chicks hatch, it's time for Constance and Parkin to act on their best impulses. Then summer comes into full bloom and so does their sex life. (Constance looks flushed all the time and wears lots of red!). The most basic outlines of 'Chatterley' may appear tacky or clichéd but then the book suffered not only the indignity of a 30-year embargo in Britain but also the louche taint of interpretations by the likes of Ken Russell and the star of the 'Emmanuelle' films.



Not to worry, because Ferran's film effortlessly shrugs off its softcore template (sex-starved lady of means hitting the floor with the help) through sheer magnificent execution. The director conducted weeks of intensive rehearsal with her two leads, and it shows: the characters' erotic awakening feels thrillingly organic – something that is discovered and experienced before our eyes. Each of the film's six sex scenes advance the narrative and deepen the relationship between Constance and Parkin, from their first, abbreviated fumble to simultaneous arrival against a tree to the famous naked run in the rain. (And, by the way, the sleepover interlude nearly cracks the lens.) '*Lady Chatterley*' is an eloquent film in which people articulate themselves more clearly in gestures than in words – with the riveting exception of a late, mutual outpouring of disclosures and vows that is all the more moving for being deferred for so long. It's only appropriate that Constance often loses track of time. '*Lady Chatterley*' is nearly three hours long, but seems half that length. As is so often the case when two people lose themselves in each other, every minute melts into air.

*Jessica Winter* Time Out August 2007