

Sujet 0  
Texte littéraire

D. H. Lawrence  
*The first Lady Chatterley*, 1944

10 Ours is essentially a tragic age but we refuse emphatically to be tragic about it.

This was Constance Chatterley's position. The war landed her in a dreadful situation, and she was determined not to make a tragedy out of it.

15 She married Clifford Chatterley in 1917 when he was home on leave. They had a month of honeymoon, and he went back to France. In 1918 he was very badly wounded, brought home a wreck. She was twenty-three years old.

20 After two years, he was restored to comparative health. But the lower part of his body was paralysed for ever. He could wheel himself about in a wheeled chair, and he had a little motor attached to a bath chair, so that he could even make excursions in the grounds at home.

25 Clifford had suffered so much that the capacity for suffering had to some extent left him. He remained strange and bright and cheerful, with his ruddy, quite handsome face, and his bright, haunted blue eyes. He had so nearly lost life that what remained to him seemed to him precious. And he had been so much hurt, that something inside him had hardened and could feel no more.

30 Constance, his wife, was a ruddy, country-looking girl, with soft brown hair and sturdy body and a great deal of rather clumsy vitality. She had big, wondering blue eyes and a slow, soft voice, and seemed a real quiet maiden.

35 As a matter of fact, she was one of those very modern, brooding women who ponder all the time persistently and laboriously. She had been educated partly in Germany, in Dresden; indeed, she had been hurried home when the war broke out. And though it filled her now with bitter, heavy irony to think of it, now that Germany, the German guns at least, had ruined her life, yet she had been most happy in Dresden. Or perhaps not happy but thrilled.

**Waldemar**  
**Januszczyk** learns a  
new sartorial language  
at the Queen's Gallery

*The Sunday Times* (26.05.2013)

**T**he Fates, those sneaky devils, have been busy in recent weeks overturning our perceptions of British art. First they arranged for Tate Britain to be put through a floor-to-ceiling defibrillation that brought the old dear back from the dead and finally allowed us to admire the nation's art journey from Tudor times to the Chapman brothers. Now they have turned their attention to the Queen, and have fixed it for Her Majesty's fabulous collection of royal portraiture to be understood in intriguing new ways.

The sumptuous display that has appeared at the Queen's Gallery seems to be about clothes — their importance and meaning in Tudor and Stuart times — but it can also be understood as an examination of portraiture itself. These days, we generally assume the task of the portraitist is to capture the sitter's character as well as their appearance. When Rembrandt paints the outer man, he seems to paint the inner man, too: their spiritual anguish, their awareness of passing time, their dashed hopes. It is, of course, an illusion made possible by the expressive power of Rembrandt's brush strokes, but it tallies with our views about what portraiture should be doing.

So, when we encounter a school of portraiture that doesn't do any of this — which appears thoroughly uninterested in probing the psyche, which seems to lavish more attention on the patterns in a dress than on the sorrow in the eyes — we tend to belittle it. It is a fate that has befallen most British portraiture before the arrival of Van Dyck. All those pointy-toed Elizabethan ladies arranged stiffly along the stairs of our stately homes, all those men in tights standing bolt upright in our oak-lined Tudor halls, have tended to prompt national embarrassment rather than joy. Were we really this provincial?

Yes, we were. And we should puff our chests, Henry VIII-style, and be mightily proud of it. Because, as this show makes excellently clear, being provincial in this context means being from here, not from there. In Tudor Britain, portraiture developed a set of ambitions that was particular to these isles. It was a uniquely British way of understanding what portraiture should do and how it should be done. And in this new national outlook, clothes took on an elevated role. This was a portraiture in which the language of the embroidered doublet told you as much about the sitter as the worry lines on one of Rembrandt's foreheads.

We start, inevitably, with Henry VIII, the

human mastiff, whose four-square presence in our pictorial imaginations is largely the result of the clothes he wore in his portraits. Amazingly, Henry was renowned as "the best-dressed monarch in Europe". His entire get-up, from the slashed doublet to the broad-shouldered gown, was adopted to achieve a particular visual effect. Yes, he was meaty, but those were never his real shoulders spreading sideways so outrageously. Henry's superhero width was deliberately achieved with padding and stiffening.

Most of the female presences in the show, from Elizabeth I onwards, are more obviously exquisite. Their jewel-like clothing presents them as human gems, and the painter's task is to describe their finery so precisely that every symbolic nuance can be read. There's a Portrait of a Lady by Cornelius Johnson so astonishingly exact, you can actually see that the stitches on her right sleeve are aligned perfectly, but the ones on her left sleeve are not.

Those of us who enjoy giggling at the ridiculousness of contemporary fashion are constantly reminded that it was ever thus. Many of the developments in men's clothing were tasked with emphasising the wearer's masculinity, and by the beginning of the 17th century, men's thighs had grown so theatrically huge in their "bombasticated" breeches that they made Chris Hoy's hamstrings look like the legs of a flamingo.