He raises again here the question of Lawrence’s technical competence as a painter, but he rightly doesn’t spend too much time on it. These paintings are not incompetent. But their appeal is the appeal of a personal vision, an imperative need to express something urgent through a language which Lawrence has, in a sense, invented, and which Professor Kohno calls ‘colour-speech’. Swiftly and deftly, Professor Kohno summarises the nature of Lawrence’s very substantial engagement with the history of painting: the real point being, as far as Lawrence was concerned, the terrible fear of the body which (he tells us) had afflicted the English (and not only the English) as early as the sixteenth century. That is why his ‘naked paintings’ (as Professor Kohno calls them) matter so much.

There are definite similarities here with some Expressionist paintings, and there are some narratives in certain paintings which clearly echo classical myths which have been painted better by greater painters, but all of these paintings explode from the canvas with an utterly individual life. Maybe that is why they had to be suppressed, in Lawrence’s lifetime, and why even now the art-historical world is rather snobby about them. There is even a poem by Lawrence about this very thing, which Professor Kohno quotes, called ‘Give me a sponge’ (i.e. so that he can wipe his picture clean of the filthy marks left by ‘sordid people’ – the policemen and others involved in closing the Warren Gallery exhibition in 1929).

Ask your bookseller to contact the publishers or their agents, and brush up your Japanese!