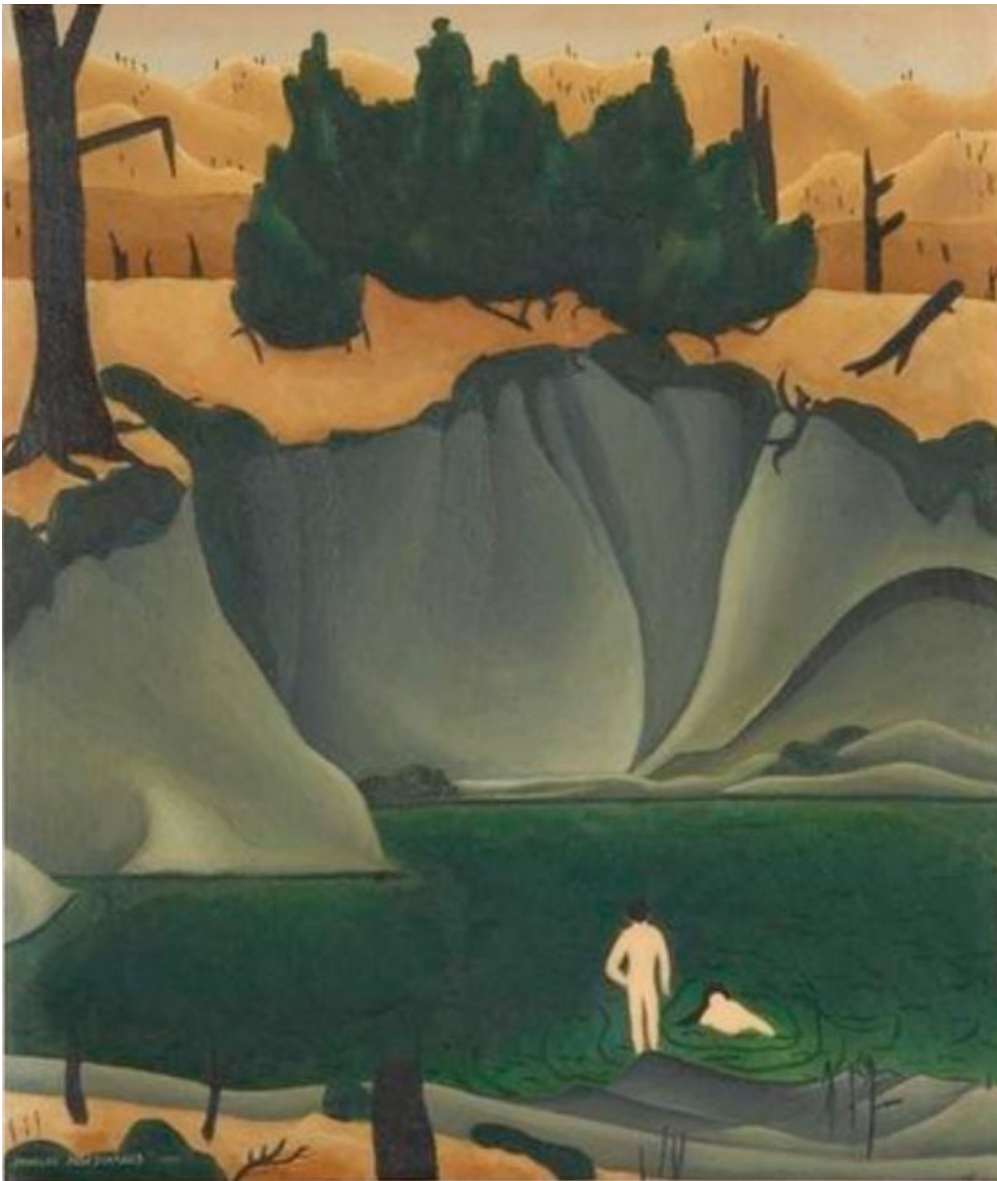


# Elegy

by [James Stevens Curl](#) (December 2018)



*Papa Cliff Pool*, Douglas MacDiarmid, 1947

*In Memoriam A M L*

Earth lies broken  
where your calcined remnants lie,  
in this bleak graveyard  
high above the town.  
A ruined church, its walls erupting ivy,

gives little shelter to the gnarled,  
arthritic tree which clings  
to life near by, and, jagged,  
creaks desolate lament:  
*ochòin . . . ochòin . . .*  
Clutching at protruding rocks,  
Gorse and heather climb the hill,  
and bitterly reproach the silent land  
that barely gives them living.  
It is forlorn, this empty place  
You chose to have your relics laid,  
but better far than Finchley,  
where the flames consumed you.  
It is well that this dissenting, barren ground  
should hold you now: you will not break out  
and blow about the grey-green nettles  
or the whins, nor enchant the hours with wit  
nor hurt with bitchiness:  
your wicked mirth is stilled.  
I cannot stay to mourn you  
in this fading light: December is so cruel here,  
already freezing on your recent grave;  
but April will fire the slopes  
with flickering flecks of yellow,  
creeping up to where you are, and yet are not.  
So much of you is held in memory of laughing days  
Too fragile to be written down and bandied on a page.

*Newry, 1970*

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James Stevens Curl is a leading architectural historian, and read for his Doctorate at University College London. He was

twice Visiting Fellow at Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, and is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, a Fellow of the Societies of Antiquaries of London and of Scotland, and a Fellow of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland. His most recent books are *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* (with contributions on landscape from Susan Wilson), 2015, and *Making Dystopia*, 2018, both published by Oxford University Press.

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