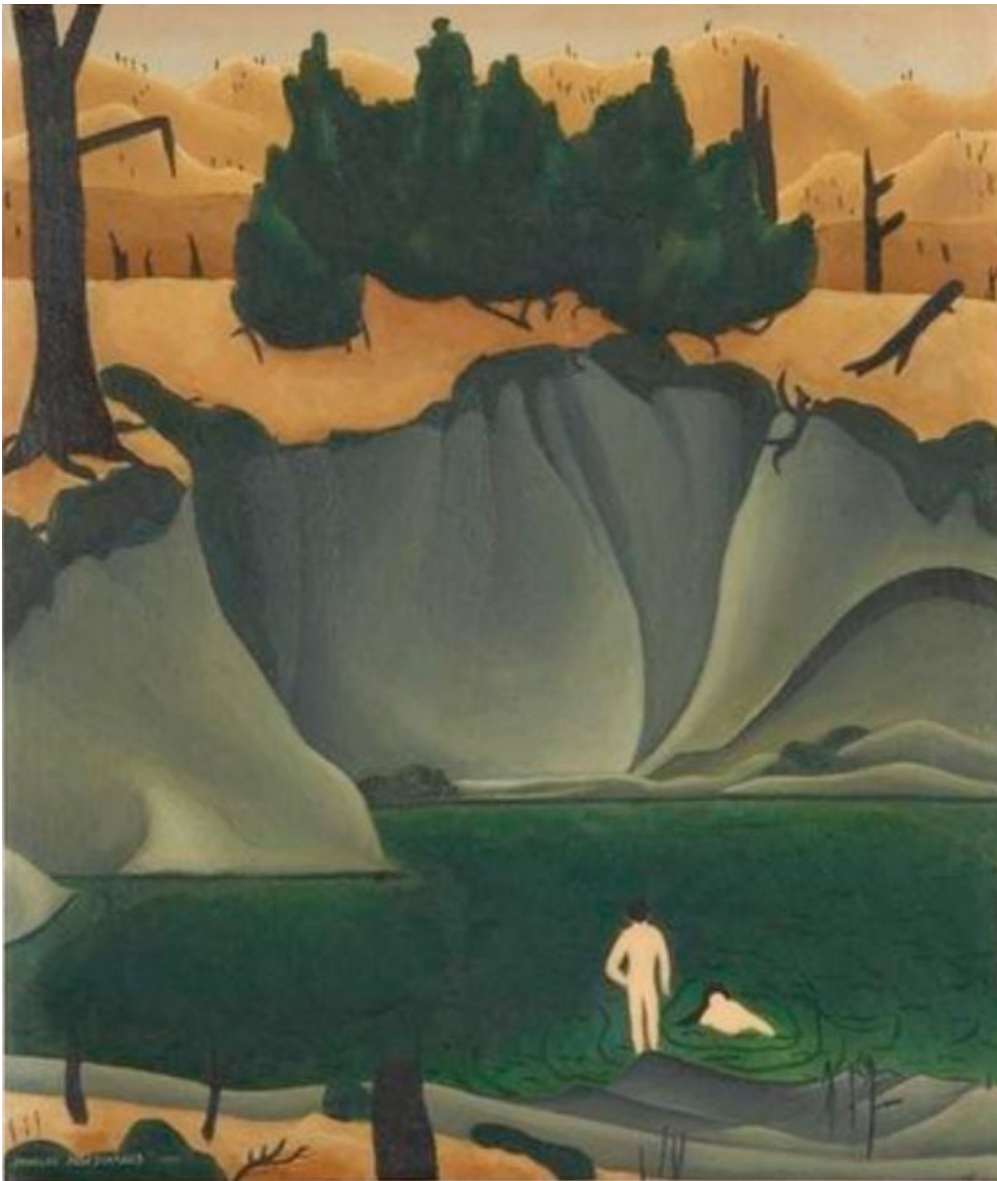


Elegy

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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