The Cone Gatherers Chapter One :Characterisation of Calum and Neil

(These notes are intended to supplement the Power Point presentation on Chapter One)

Calum:

* At home in the trees. “As indigenous as squirrel or bird”
* Affinity with nature- the chaffinches trust him and flutter around him. Suggests his innocence. (links to St Francis of Assisi?)
* His face is beautiful
* He has implicit trust in his brother. He asks no questions- would even stay up there all night. It is enough for him that they are together.
* His predicament, ( links to the essential element of his character in causing the hatred of Duror and causing events to come) is that he cannot understand why animals have to kill each other. He even feels sad that the trees have to be cut down.
* He has no understanding of the war and tries not to think about it.
* He is happy with his simple life-the tiny hut, the open air, his brother’s companionship
* He is very proficient at climbing, has grace and balance, but on the ground he trips and stumbles.
* Childlike behaviour-“moaning” and “sobbing” over the crippled rabbit, “stumbling and whimpering”
* What Calum represents ( “shown in his inability to kill the rabbit to stop it suffering) is “pity so meek as to be paralysed by the suffering that provoked it.”
* Calum as seen by Duror: “he was humpbacked with one shoulder higher than the other; he had no neck and on the misshapen lump of his body sat a face so guileless and beautiful as to be a diabolical joke”.

**Calum, from the beginning, represents goodness and innocence.**

**Neil:**

* Gazes at the big house with “bitter intentness. We find out why: he is bitter that he and Calum have to live in a tiny hut “a box fit for monkeys”, when his employers live in a mansion with fifty, mostly empty, rooms. They were not even allowed to stay in the summer house. Neil relates to and conveys **the theme of** **social inequality and class conflict**, and represents the thinking that led to huge changes after WW2- “We’re human beings, just like them.”
* He is devoted to Calum, and praises his goodness, and yet is frustrated by his childishness
* He gave up the chance of marriage to look after Calum. He seems sad and bitter.
* We feel sympathy. He has to guard against trouble to safeguard their jobs. He has total responsibility for Calum.
* “He hated these cones which kept them prisoners in this wood”, but he could not object to being lent out from Ardmore Estate to do the job, because if they lost their job “they would have to set out again in search of work, shelter and friendliness. For five years they had been happy at Ardmore..”
* The war seems to weigh heavily on his mind.