The Cone Gatherers

Chapter Nine

This is a fairly short chapter and a continuation of the day in Lendrick. Duror has just left Dr Mathiesons, having drunk too much whisky; he goes then to the pub where he encounters the cone gatherers.

1. Describe Duror’s mood and thoughts on pages 104-105, and analyse why he feels this way.
2. On page 106 Duror sees Neil and Calum in the pub. Look at the paragraph beginning “Duror waited…”. Analyse the imagery used by the writer.
3. Why do you think the incident with the soldier telling the story of the airman with the pet ape has been included by Jenkins.
4. What does he wish to emphasise about how other people treat/ perceive Calum and Neil?

Chapter Ten

This chapter concentrates on the characters of Lady Runcie Campbell, and of Roderick Runcie Campbell. The first section concerns Lady R.C, on her way to visit Peggy, and thinking about previous visits. The narrative “voice” is now that of Lady Runcie Campbell.

1. What has disgusted her about Peggy’s behaviour on previous occasions, and how has it affected her own behaviour?
2. What, in contrast, has she admired about Duror’s behaviour?
3. She is aware that her visit is not for “altruistic” reasons (meaning simply for the good of others) but that it is “an act of penance (meaning a kind of self- punishment to make up for something you have done wrong.) Summarise her reasons for feeling this way, and the dilemma which she faces due to her social position v her Christianity. P111 section from “Last night while praying……… barren and impious was that argument”
4. On page 112, she sums up her view of Roderick’s character: “ Although naturally timid…..doubts in hers”. Explain her thoughts and feelings about him.

Chapter Ten, part two:

The focus changes in the second part of the chapter, and we then see events through the eyes of Roderick, who is setting off on a “pilgrimage” through the woods to the cone gatherers hut. We can see how imaginative Roderick is, and how the wood takes on an air of “magic and terror”; and yet despite his fears he continues. He has dismissed Mrs Morton’s warnings about the cone gatherers (prompted by whatever Lady R.C. has said to her- presumably on her part prompted by what Duror has said to her, causing her to be in a black mood.)

1. On page 118 (first two paragraphs), we find out why Roderick is so intent on taking the cake to Neil and Calum. What does it symbolise to him?
2. What is the reader intended to feel about the character of Roderick at this point, and why?
3. Roderick seeing Duror hiding under the Cypress tree and wondering why allows the writer to use the character of Roderick and his thoughts as a device, to make clear one of the major themes of the novel. What is the theme, and how do Roderick’s thoughts make it clear? Use quotations to back up what you say.
4. Roderick’s thoughts about Duror being dead, about death in general, and the imagery surrounding those thoughts is very dark.(p120-121) What do you think is the significance of these thoughts to the theme of good v evil, and Roderick’s earlier belief that in the end “good would remain alone, victorious.”