

# The Cuckold

*by* Con Chapman

The train is late, and so I stop to talk  
with my son's old hockey coach.  
We chat of this and that and  
after a while, he breaks it off  
at another man's approach.

I know the newcomer too, but we do  
not speak. I had dinner with him once  
years ago, our sons are the same age.  
My family moved and we lost touch;  
in the vogue phrase, we turned the page.

It was an uncomfortable Thanksgiving, I recall;  
His ancestors' portraits lined the walls  
in the dining room and the halls.  
Later, my wife told me the reason  
for the tense knot in an evening:



his wife had made love to another man,  
out of spite or lust or to wake him from  
his conventional slumber, we never learned.

We were there as a foil,  
a first step towards reconciliation,  
unction and oil. We may have helped,

or at least didn't hurt; we bridged the  
silence that would otherwise have been there.  
We did what we could between the soup and the desert.

The cuckoo lays her egg in the nest of another  
mother, after first pushing out one of that bird's  
eggs. The egg of the cuckoo matches the one  
displaced in a mimetic fall from grace.

When the young cuckoo is hatched, it  
works its back against every other thing in the nest,  
eggs or chicks. It gives them a push,  
causing them to fall and die on the ground below.

I wondered if the look in the fellow's eye,  
avoiding my gaze, laughing at his own  
jokes, staring off into the distance,  
was caused by a similar blow.

