

Starmer, the cuckoo

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I saw a [cuckoo](#) yesterday. Hearing them at this time of year is, around here, normal. Seeing one that was happy to sit on the top of a series of bushes for maybe a couple of minutes, much less so.

As a result I had to go through what my wife, with her medical background, calls the differential diagnosis of bird identification. Due to lack of everyday familiarity a cuckoo is not one of those birds that I can identify by what birdwatchers call its 'jis'. That word abbreviates the term 'it just is', because it just has to be whatever species it is because you've seen it enough to know.

The process was quick, nonetheless. Pigeon? No, too slim, but colour roughly right. So, not a collared dove, then. Wrong place. Colours wrong. A bird of prey? The colour and chest stripes are right(ish) for a male sparrow hawk but the shape and size are wrong. Very briefly, a small corvid (jackdaw?) in a weird light flitted through my mind, but that was just wrong. And only then was it obvious this was a cuckoo, and a rare delight. All that happened in a second or less as I first saw it flying.

Why narrate this? Partly, because such moments that take me from the world of political economy into a totally different place are of real value to me. They are one of the things that help ground me in nature, place, shared experience and wonder. They both make me feel part of a much bigger whole and make me feel apart from it when I realise the terrible relationship we have with the planet and its biosystems that support us.

Simultaneously, there is the endorphin release from seeing something so stunning so near home. I don't deny that such moments are exciting.

But then the political economy crashed back in.

The cuckoo is such a weird bird, laying its eggs in other birds' nests, and leaving them to bring up its young.

More than that, the newly hatched cuckoo chick knows it must throw the eggs of its

newly adopted parents out of the nest it is now in so that it alone can be fed as the sole supposed offspring of those birds that will bring it up as its own. In the process, it will abuse the blind loyalty of those birds in whose lives it has been planted who will unwittingly bring into the world a bird entirely unrelated to them, whose priorities are entirely unrelated to theirs, and who will never offer them any reward for their thankless efforts.

This story is all about power relationships. The more powerful bird gatecrashes the lives of another pair of birds, has its offspring cull their offspring and then demand loyalty so that an agenda entirely unrelated to that of the birds that have adopted this unwanted chick gets precisely what it wants.

I could not help but think of Keir Starmer's takeover of the Labour Party when reflecting on this.

He shamelessly entered the party.

He was hard to identify for what he was.

He conned that party into accepting him.

He then culled those who opposed his presence.

Now he demands to loyalty of those who are left to deliver a policy agenda alien to all that Labour stands for.

Using a relationship where he started from a position of power as an establishment insider, he has used his strength to abuse the blind loyalty of some to Labour to disguise the fact that what he will deliver is anything but the government they expect.

Starmer is the ultimate cuckoo, and most are still being conned. He was always hard to spot, of a breed rarely seen. And once he had wheedled his way in, he disguised his agenda for long enough to occupy the territory, expel the natural occupants, and then con those people blinded by tribal loyalty into believing he is the real thing, abusing them on the way. Too late, when his government fedges, the reality will be apparent.

But in political economy we do have the opportunity to plan alternatives, having called out the falsehood. That is now the task to be pursued. People, the planet, the Labour Party and society, require that there be a political movement dedicated to social and economic justice, equality, saving the planet from our abuse, and the building of genuine opportunity for all. That is what has to happen now.

Starmer the cuckoo might have gatecrashed and taken over Labour, but there is no need to accept the result. The reed warbler, or whatever bird it might be that raises the cuckoo's chick in its nest, can have another go this year or next to have another brood of its own. So, too, can we have another go at creating political justice post-Starmer.

We have little other choice.