[Template:Pp-semi-protected](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-protected" \o "Template:Pp-semi-protected) [Template:About](/wiki/Template:About) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef)

A **cuckold** is the husband of an [adulterous](/wiki/Adulterous) wife. In evolutionary biology, the term is also applied to males who are unwittingly investing [parental effort](/wiki/Parental_investment) in offspring that are not genetically their own.[[1]](#cite_note-1)

## Contents

* 1 History of the term[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]
* 2 Metaphor and symbolism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]
* 3 Cuckoldry as a fetish[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]
  + 3.1 Theories in psychology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]
* 4 Theories in evolutionary biology and psychology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]
* 5 See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]
* 6 References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]
* 7 External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

## History of the term[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[thumb|c. 1815 French satire on cuckoldry, which shows both men and women wearing horns.](/wiki/File:Order-cuckoldry-ca1815-French-satire.jpg)

The word *cuckold* derives from the [cuckoo](/wiki/Cuckoo) bird, alluding to its habit of laying its eggs in other birds' nests.[[2]](#cite_note-2)<ref name=BBC\_2009>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> The association is common in medieval [folklore](/wiki/Folklore), literature, and [iconography](/wiki/Iconography).

English usage first appears about 1250 in the [satirical](/wiki/Satirical) and [polemical](/wiki/Polemical) poem "[The Owl and the Nightingale](/wiki/The_Owl_and_the_Nightingale)" (l. 1544). The term was clearly regarded as embarrassingly direct, as evident in [John Lydgate's](/wiki/John_Lydgate) "Fall of Princes" (c. 1440). In the late 14th century, the term also appeared in [Geoffrey Chaucer's](/wiki/Geoffrey_Chaucer) "[The Miller's Tale](/wiki/The_Miller's_Tale)".[[3]](#cite_note-3) Shakespeare's poetry often referred to cuckolds, with several of his characters suspecting they had become one.[[3]](#cite_note-3) The female equivalent [*cuckquean*](/wiki/Cuckquean) first appears in English literature in 1562, adding a female suffix to the *cuck*. One often overlooked subtlety of the word is that it implies that the husband is deceived, that he is unaware of his wife's unfaithfulness and may not know until the arrival or growth of a child plainly not his (as with cuckoo birds).[[3]](#cite_note-3) A related word, first appearing in 1520, is *wittol*, which substitutes *wit* (in the sense of knowing) for the first part of the word, referring to a man aware of and reconciled to his wife's [infidelity](/wiki/Infidelity).[[4]](#cite_note-4)

## Metaphor and symbolism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

In Western traditions, cuckolds have sometimes been described as "wearing the horns of a cuckold" or just "wearing the horns." This is an allusion to the [mating habits of stags](/wiki/Rut_(mammalian_reproduction)), who forfeit their mates when they are defeated by another male.[[5]](#cite_note-5) In [Italy](/wiki/Italy) (especially in [Southern Italy](/wiki/Southern_Italy), where it is a major personal offence), the insult is often accompanied by the [sign of the horns](/wiki/Sign_of_the_horns). In [French](/wiki/French_language), the term is *porter des cornes*, which is used by Molière to describe someone whose consort has been unfaithful. In German, the term is "jemandem Hörner aufsetzen", or "Hörner tragen", the husband is "der gehörnte Ehemann". [Rabelais](/wiki/François_Rabelais) wrote the *Tiers Livers* of [Gargantua and Pantagruel](/wiki/Gargantua_and_Pantagruel) in 1546, by which time the symbol of the horns was "so well-known and over-used that the author could barely avoid making reference to it."[[6]](#cite_note-6) [Molière's](/wiki/Molière) [*L'École des femmes*](/wiki/The_School_for_Wives) (1662) is the story of a man who mocks cuckolds and becomes one at the end. In [Geoffrey Chaucer's](/wiki/Geoffrey_Chaucer) [*Canterbury Tales*](/wiki/Canterbury_Tales) (c. 1372–77), the "[The Miller's Tale](/wiki/The_Miller's_Tale)" is a story that humorously examines the life of a cuckold. In [Chinese](/wiki/Chinese_language) usage, an altogether different allusion is used, when the cuckold (or wittol) is said to be "戴綠帽子" (wearing the green hat), which derives from the [sumptuary laws](/wiki/Sumptuary_law) used in China from the 13th to the 18th centuries which required the males in households with prostitutes to wrap their heads in a green scarf (or later a hat).[[7]](#cite_note-7)

## Cuckoldry as a fetish[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

Unlike the traditional definition of the term, in fetish usage a cuckold is complicit in his (or her) partner's sexual "infidelity"; the wife who enjoys cuckolding her husband is frequently called a [hotwife](/wiki/Hotwife) or a *cuckoldress* if the man is more submissive.[[8]](#cite_note-8)[Template:Page needed](/wiki/Template:Page_needed)

### Theories in psychology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

Psychology regards cuckold fetishism as a variant of [masochism](/wiki/Sadomasochism), the cuckold deriving pleasure from being humiliated.[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10) In Freudian analysis, cuckold fetishism is the eroticization of the fears of infidelity and of failure in the man's competition for procreation and the affection of females.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In his book *Masochism and the Self,* psychologist [Roy Baumeister](/wiki/Roy_Baumeister) advanced a *Self Theory* analysis that cuckolding (other forms of sexual masochism) among otherwise mentally healthy people was a form of escapism. According to this theory, cuckold fetishists are relieving themselves of the stress of the burden of their social role and escaping into a simpler, less-expansive position.

If a couple can keep the fantasy in the bedroom, or come to an agreement where being cuckolded in reality does not damage the relationship, they may try it out in reality.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) However, the primary proponent of the fantasy is almost always the one being humiliated[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed), or the "cuckold": the cuckold convinces his lover to participate in the fantasy for them, though other "cuckolds" may prefer their lover to initiate the situation instead. The fetish fantasy does not work at all if the cuckold is being humiliated against their will.[[11]](#cite_note-11)

## Theories in evolutionary biology and psychology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

In evolutionary biology, the term cuckold is also applied to males who are unwittingly investing [parental effort](/wiki/Parental_investment) in offspring that are not genetically their own. As noted above, the term cuckold is derivative of the mis-directed parental investment of birds who direct parental investment to the eggs that cuckoo birds have laid in their nests.[[1]](#cite_note-1) In his book [*Sperm Wars*](/wiki/Sperm_Wars), biologist Robin Baker speculated that the excitement and stimulation of the cuckolding fetish emerges from the biology of sexuality and the effects of [sexual arousal](/wiki/Sexual_arousal) on the brain, although it is important to note the word "cuckold" does not appear in his book. According to one of his theories, Baker believes that when a man thinks that his female mate may have been sexual with another man, the man is prompted by biological urges to copulate with the female in an effort to "compete" with the other man's sperm. Baker is also one of the few proponents of the theory of *Killer Sperm*, the idea that sperm compete not only for first access to the egg but by "attacking" other sperm. Although this idea appears frequently in cuckold fetish material, very few biologists share this view.[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13) Baker and his proponents' views conflict with the hypothesized foundations for [sexual jealousy](/wiki/Sexual_jealousy_in_humans) in [evolutionary psychology](/wiki/Evolutionary_psychology), which is rooted in the idea that men, specifically, will react jealously to sexual infidelity on the parts of their mates.<ref name=Harris2002>[Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref> Infidelity is also the number one cause for divorce.[[14]](#cite_note-14) The cuckold’s urge to thrust, through intercourse or masturbation, is often enhanced by the presence of the bull, whether real or fantasized. A study by Gordon Gallup and coworkers (2003) concluded that one evolutionary purpose of the thrusting motion characteristic of intense intercourse is for the penis to “upsuck” another man’s semen before depositing its own.[[15]](#cite_note-15)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Div col](/wiki/Template:Div_col)

* [Adultery](/wiki/Adultery)
* [Candaulism](/wiki/Candaulism)
* [Crime of passion](/wiki/Crime_of_passion)
* [Cuckoldry in fish](/wiki/Cuckoldry_in_fish)
* [Cuckquean](/wiki/Cuckquean)
* [Cuckservative](/wiki/Cuckservative)
* [Erotic humiliation](/wiki/Erotic_humiliation)
* [Female dominance](/wiki/Female_dominance)
* [Female promiscuity](/wiki/Female_promiscuity)
* [Feminization (activity)](/wiki/Feminization_(activity))
* [Hotwife](/wiki/Hotwife)
* [Monogamish](/wiki/Monogamish#Monogamish)
* [Non-paternity event](/wiki/Non-paternity_event)
* [Open marriage](/wiki/Open_marriage)
* [Paternity fraud](/wiki/Paternity_fraud)
* [Polyamory](/wiki/Polyamory)
* [Polyandry](/wiki/Polyandry), marriage to plural husbands
* [Pregnancy fetishism](/wiki/Pregnancy_fetishism)
* [Swinging](/wiki/Swinging_(sexual_practice))
* [Wittol](/wiki/Wiktionary:wittol)

[Template:Div col end](/wiki/Template:Div_col_end)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

* [Template:Wiktionary-inline](/wiki/Template:Wiktionary-inline)

[Template:Sex fetish](/wiki/Template:Sex_fetish)

[Category:Marriage](/wiki/Category:Marriage) [Category:Sexual fidelity](/wiki/Category:Sexual_fidelity) [Category:Sexual fetishism](/wiki/Category:Sexual_fetishism)

[fr:Adultère](/wiki/Fr:Adultère) [pt:Corno (gíria)](/wiki/Pt:Corno_(gíria))