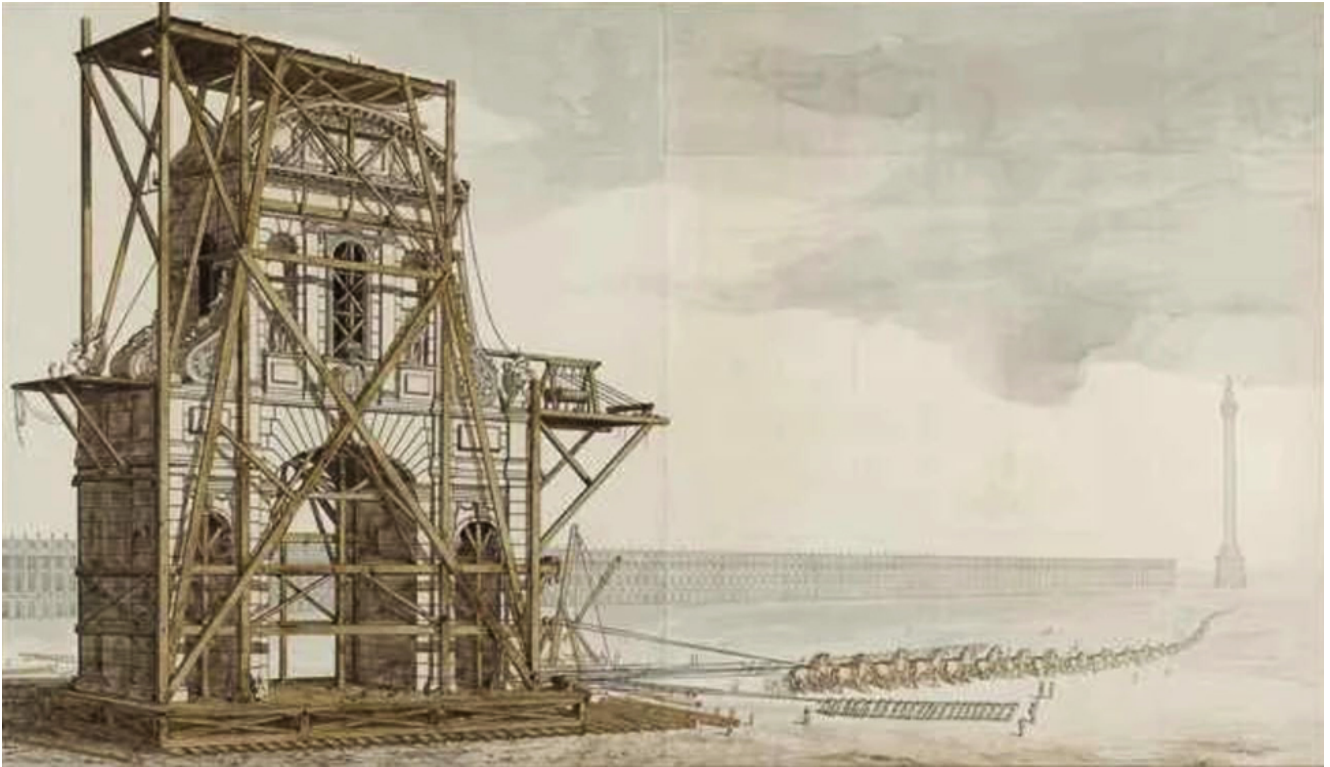


Another Day in the Life of Winston

by [Robert Gear](#) (April 2023)



Relocation of Temple Bar, Pablo Bronstein, 2009

You can imagine this if you like. I left the hexagonal apartment, slamming the door for good measure and slunk across the plaza for another day of tampering and fiddling. In my hurry, I almost tripped over the marble lizard-men troughs that studded the plaza of this and many standardized cities. I had never actually seen a lizard man, but I knew they existed since constant reminders were broadcast over the various pravda reports—done for our own good, you understand. I managed to circumnavigate without incident the large Chinese-carved monument of Floyd George looming disgracefully over the

open space.

The snow now blew in blinding torrents from an angry sky. A white skin of snow covered the giant bronze whose oriental outlines became simplified. "How are the pravdas going to explain that?" I wondered staring down at my footsteps in the snow. But soon the white-stuff-dispersal unit came scurrying out carrying ladders and buckets to erase any suggestion of wrong skin tone.

Oh, I forgot to mention that the bleak mid-summer had taken its toll on my nerves. Last month, (or was it yesterday?) I had been unfairly scorned by Kampala Harris whose fluid cackle and stare of cold command had forced me down into a dejected state. Not even the cockroach sandwiches (provided, like all medical services, free at point of dispensing!) could improve my mood. My tampering with the statistics failed to tell the lies necessary for doing a good day's work. So, after being allotted a new wumask (the third that month) and new partially-worn winter boots, I had returned to my hexagon to sleep it off. No sooner had I shut the sliding door behind me than my spouse had come at me with an argument she had just picked up from the regular pravdas broadcast from the central committee's many-headed outlets. Basically, if you turned off one pravda another would come at you like transfluid Cerberus leaping out of the returning ice sheets.

This is how he/she/it spoke:

"Winston, your dentures are like garden slugs; they come out at night and slide with determination across gravel into the incoming rush of the overflowing ice-melt," she said accusingly.

"But that's an unfair accusation," I replied, coming speedily to the realization that the transwoman I had fallen deeply in love with, and let it be said here,

married against her tri-combo-parents' wishes, was not the person I had once taken her to be.

"And let me add that your ears are also certainly on the wrong side of your heads. This allows you to understand everything backwards, and I believe wrongly." She added this last insult in order to ensure that I understood correctly; and I almost believed it.

"Did you say 'heads, Erica?' A single head is not a plural entity. I have at last count merely one cerebral appendage."

"Oh, I do apologize, Winston."

"And you are totally unhinged." I came out with this finally and irrevocably, putting the by now tenuous relationship on a mutually agreed trajectory of sawdust on the floor—spat on and slippery as eels in a bucket of snow melt.

But I decided that my last remark was not quite final enough, and so I doubled down by rolling up my shirtsleeves and baring arms which showed in living color what happens when you visit a cut-price tattooist on the wrong side of the river.

Inside the building designed to look like frozen mashed-potato with carrots sticking out all was confusion. Apparently several tamperers had been cancelled after suggesting that they could find no evidence of increased hurricane activity. One novice had even dared to opine truthfully that flooding and tornado activity was at a one-hundred-year low point. Fools! Where do they find these diversity hires? My alcove assistant, Hussein O. Canute (not her real name—she claimed she could not help change the climate, just as King Canute told his courtiers that he could not stop the rising tide of

illegal immigration), was among them.

My new assistant was, wait for it ... a chicken. This was not, you understand, a trans chicken: a person who merely thought they *were* a chicken. Such identification was common enough nowadays, as was the burgeoning trans-soup-can movement which has been so much in the newspeak recently. No, this was a real avian. Not exactly a female of the species, more a male; at least it identified as one. The plumage was decorative and iridescent, although it wore a kind of funny hat and cape which hid his nakedness. He spoke in a kind of squawk, which as you may know is an increasingly popular patois among lawless breeds—and the young. I understood little except that he gave out his name as 'Mo.'

I put him to work pecking out statistics to prove nearly the opposite of whatever could be taken for truth. Problem is, friends, every so often he would break off his tampering duties, and unroll a rug upon which he would jump while pecking wildly at the plasticated floor. In between the wild pecking I got this rooster to explain to me how he had been chosen for such a worthwhile job: tampering, that is.

I knew The Party made good use of chickens of all breeds and genders. The fowl were useful to them—up to a point. Any and all applicants could be employed to undermine wrong-thinkers. I know, I used to be one myself—a wrong-thinker that is.

He told me of the time he had been a farm boy named Morris somewhere in the Mid West of the United Conglomerates. One morning he had woken up to find himself turned into a chicken. He blamed Kafka although he had not read him, because as you know, it's always useful to blame or celebrate someone from the past about whom you know nothing. Since recently anyone could identify as anything, Ovid had become a best-seller, a classic justification for justifiable transitoriness. Eventually Mo thought his new outward appearance was going to be helpful in the new world that was fast developing—the rules

of The Party being implemented incrementally over the captive minds of the populace.

Was I anxious? Well, yes, in that Kampala Harris might make an unexpected entrance. I was already on a defaulter's list and really did not want to be gulagged in the Brandon Archipelago as happened to my own creator, Julia Orwellian when she questioned the truth of her own book: the one she wrote about me.

Mo was still at one of his pecking activities when my worst fear was realized; Kampala appeared cackling at the alcove opening.

The chicken looked up and squawked at first sullenly, then produced a sound half way between a dog bark and a yowl of triumph.

Did they love each other? I cannot be sure, but was beginning to see that my own captive mind had been badly irritated. All in one day my wife had forced me out into the worst July snowstorm since last year, and then to cap it all I had been given the task of tutoring a raving lunatic of a chicken.

Ok, so the day had got off to a bad start. But fortunately Kampala and Mo were romancing in some inexplicable way and did not notice my discreet evacuation of the alcove.

I made good use of the paragon of architectural sophistication in which I worked and climbed up and down and around the labyrinth of gloom to get to the nourishment dispensers. Yum, I thought. I put the token in the slot and nothing happened. A good kick managed to change the vending machine's mind and out slid the tastiest green-chili-Schwab-and-cockroach sandwich. 'Fresh from the Insectarium!' as the YouTube ad happily and invariably puts it. That changed everything. A kind of epiphany flooded my lobes. I was saved, at least for the time being. I continued to love Big Floyd and all the little Floydlets who have done so much to brighten our waning days.

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