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Where I Was During the Canada Russia Summit Series

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ANDRÉ NARBONNE

Where I Was During the Canada Russia Summit Series

Three janitors put a television
on a trolley and they wheeled it into
the grade two classroom and we
followed in a line that started straight but
finished round like a lasso.

It was September and our eyes pinned a place we
couldn't know onto a map inside our minds.
Russia—land of Olga Korbut, her back forever
arched in triumph.
The country looked familiar as snow.

The year before, I'd stopped being British.
I'd come to understand my place in the world
as an absence, the way a boy learns he
will never marry his first love
before he finds a replacement.

I learned it as a despite:
Despite the Union Jacks waving in the
Dominion Day parade and despite the
common sense opinion that people who
drank tea were more civilized than Americans,
Canada was not actually in England.

I still didn't know where I was, but it
looked like the place on the screen more
than anywhere else—a place where
black and white TV was perfectly suited
to projecting shades of white.

I was still in love with Olga,
but when Henderson scored and the room
erupted in joy, for the first
time that week,
I was no longer in Russia.