

*17 Years After Her Passing, Cousin Molly Appears
to Me as a Young Dancer Outside Kupel's Bakery*

She looks exactly as I remember, shocking
white hair to her shoulders, tailored
red dress and fish-scale belt, a six-pointed star —

her lipstick, a shade brighter
than a woman of her age often chooses.
But it is the guttural laugh, pitched strong

like a sports announcer's, that gives her away
as she stands in line at Kupel's Bagel Bakery
waiting her turn on a Sunday morning.

When the teenager in vintage dress pivots towards me,
offers "such a delightful day!" she seems to know
I know who she is — my ninety-two-year-old cousin —

connoisseur of Russian literature and politics. The teen
moves her body as if she were blue water
and loudly inquires if I prefer everything bagels

or pumpernickel? She is going to have both!
But all I want to do is ask her if *in the beyond*
the beyond, are you happy?

All I need is a good book and a PBS special,
Molly once told me and so I imagine
heaven's library filled with Russian novels.

The young dancer looks tireless as the line leaps
and halts — excited to tell me of her conquests:
a slow waltz, then a tango, then a swing.