

JUDITH BAUMEL

Open Arms

Mismatched, those who are gone, I am assembling them like a doll party.
I am assembling them like the flowers brought by many to a dinner party.
I am assembling them like an in-school party
with pajamas and lovies and stuffed creatures in backpacks, the boys
with superheroes and girls with Sailor Moons or fashion figures.
My son's pre-school teacher held a contest
to find the biggest September leaf. His was huge.
The teacher's was more huge. She had a theory about the educational
motivation of her pre-rigged competition.
The other teacher's young husband died of a heart attack.
At the Greek Orthodox wake we were all encouraged
to make physical contact with his corpse. Then the first teacher lost
half her body weight. Then the Hungarian family
went back to Budapest but not before the mother told me
that seeing the Statue of Liberty made sharper her hatred
and resentment of her mother. Instead of high-tailing it to New York,
the mother returned from the DP camps to the square
from which she was deported, looking for the past not the future.
I am assembling, but I want to grab everything and go.
I want to do better than Odysseus grabbing three times the shades.