

Melvin Wilk

EVICTION STILL LIFE

Once I saw a family out on the street,
standing with no support,
the way a dried-out bunch of flowers
sticking together sometimes lands upright,
ditched when the good time is over.
So stood these five on the tenement stoop:
the man in a white short-sleeved shirt,
the woman in a blue print dress and matching hat,
each holding a clean child by the hand,
each child in a shirt like his father's,
a girl of twelve a little apart from them,
the strap of her pinafore drooping from one
thin shoulder.

They might have been staring at a camera.
In fact, all their eyes were set
on the bulging bundles of bedding
on the stuffed chair on the sidewalk,
as if the chair were a bed and the street a guest room,
and they were only waiting, still, and stiff,
and so respectable,
waiting for everything to be made up
just for them.