In an Office Where I Work

Monica Hopkins

St. John Fisher College

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In an Office Where I Work

Cleaning lady,
    Why did you not answer me
    When I said hello?

Just pushed around your dented
    carpet sweeper, hunched over, close to the floor, gleaning the specks
    of paper or crumbs
Left by women who hold higher
    positions than you.

    But I said hello
And you looked away, flinging
    open your new trash liners, making balloons
as they caught the air

    In this office where
Educated women chatter and gossip, sipping
    coffee and eating dry roasted soy
    nuts; ignoring you as you pick
    up after them and everyone
    else that walks through the department, spreading
    rock salt from the street
    All over the rust colored carpet . . .

    I said hello to you
    And you did not answer me.

Now I am silent.

    --Monica Hopkins