

The Halls

Five more books in a box to be carried out to the car;
your office door closes behind you and at that moment
you turn invisible—not even a ghost in that hall
from the hall's point of view.

If the halls don't know you, the halls and the rooms
of the buildings where you worked for seven years—
if the halls don't know you,

and they don't—

some new woman or two new men come clattering
down these halls in the month after your departure, indeed
just two days after you left forever
they come clattering with ideas about
the relation between mind and body or will and fate
filled with hormones of being the chosen workers here
and they feel as if the halls and rooms begin to recognize them,
accept them, as if there is a belonging in the world—

but these new workers are wrong, the halls don't know
who is working under the unobtrusive fluorescent panels:

this is appalling and for a minute you are appalled
though your being so now is not an event
in the life of your new rented house or even
your new condominium . . .

So if they don't, if they don't know you,
the halls, the walls, the fixtures,
then what? Then there is for you
no home in that rock, no home in the mere rock of
where you work, where you briskly walk, not even
in the bed where your body sleeps alone or not—

so if there is to be a place for you, for you
it must not be located in plaster and tile and space,
it will have to be in that other house,
the one whose door you felt opening just last night
when you dialed from memory and your friend picked up the phone.

-- *Mark Halliday*