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Home and Office

Edward L. Hart

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Home and Office

When people leave home and go to a bar, Auden
 Said, they try to make it look like home.
 And I guess what's true of people going to bars
 Is true of people going to offices too.
 At least, I pass by doors along the hall
 To my office and catch a glimpse of a snug boudoir:
 Soft lamplight, carpets, and reclining chairs,
 Cushioned and plumped, inviting R and R.
 And why not, I think: old Auden was an oaf.
 Be comfortable! And if you'd rather be home
 Than working, pretend you're still home and buy
 An upholstered recliner and a tinted lamp.
 I'm just jealous, you can tell, as you walk through the door
 Of my workplace, Spartan and cluttered in naked light,
 With maybe a hair shirt hidden somewhere.
 But Arnold Stein comes back to my mind from Seattle.
 His door was across from mine: the battered
 Wooden desk and chair and an ammunition
 Box for student consultations. I was told
 He was a German POW during World War II.
 I never asked him. He wasn't my idol or anything,
 But he worked hard and seemed to get a lot done.
 It's time to get out of here and try to forget it.
 But first let me mention one virtue of austerity—
 It's easy to leave it, no enfolding and holding,
 Just pack up and get out. So I'm going home now.
 And when I get there, there's one thing fairly sure:
 I don't want to make my bedroom look like my office.

—Edward L. Hart

Edward L. Hart, recipient of the Association for Mormon Letters poetry award in 1979 for *To Utah*, is a retired professor of English from Brigham Young University.