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## Appetite

Dixie L. Partridge

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# Appetite

“A sparrow is hunger organized.”

—Wendell Berry

I read the phrase and see back years  
to our eager daughter, unaware in first grade  
she'd become *student*: animated  
for the daily walk to school with her next-door friend  
under oak and birch sidewalk kingdoms, rich  
with green and yellow, leaves  
kept moving by flocks of small birds.  
On their way, they always bowed  
to The King of the Corner: bright fire hydrant  
they moved past with grins and solemn genuflect.

It's called that to this day in my family—  
King of the Corner: the story-landmark  
all the childhoods were mapped around:  
    don't go past the King of the Corner;  
    meet me at King of the Corner;  
    collect acorns across the street from the King, hoard them like gold  
    under the backyard slide.

With an appetite for space and surface and making,  
they chalked their names and hopscotch grids  
under bird sounds, held the neighbor cat back  
in its high place on a car hood, lifted it,  
hind legs dangling, into their playhouse after school.

Not blackboards in memory  
from that season, only the yellow, the green,  
the yellow, sun engraving edges of leaves,  
King of the Corner a private overseer  
to an age of brevity, energies organized  
in color and light, now perceived  
like a sparrow's swift flight  
down the mind's zones of time.

—Dixie Partridge

*This poem won honorable mention in the BYU Studies 2011  
poetry contest.*