

“Murmuration: An Epitaph”

Could we all go
as starlings do—in a cloud
of dots and blotches, rise
with wind and wave
and fade above the black bones
of winter’s branches.

The starling
cocks its head
and pecks, eats
worms, seeds,
dried French fries.

What the robins miss,
the squirrel gobbles up,
the seeds bulging
in his cheeks.

It takes a few
scissors of the beak
to bring down the seed,
but once in, the starling
just nods and bends again.

“Who are we?” quail
call. Some say, “Bob
White,” which is
so less existential.

A bird
small enough
to land on a pampas plume
does, rides out
the autumn wind.

Birds on a line
lean in
to wind,
ruffle, huddle
when it grows
so so cold.

Kevin Rabas, Kansas Poet Laureate 2017-2019

Photo by John Charlton/KGS