

# “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