

KANSAS GHAZAL

Caroline Wiygul

That's my story: the signs were asking me
for things I couldn't give in Kansas.

It makes no sense that I was shocked by the stripmalls and sunchoked
hills because I have seen them before in places not-quite-Kansas.

I told my mother my route on the phone and she knew
it wasn't right and I was surprised on my drive by Kansas.

I was—
My history erased itself in Kansas.

In the rearview mirror, the billboards jumped across the highway
on treetrunk legs, rearranging me and Kansas.

Asphalt spun me out and away,
toward the next gas station, toward the miracle of Kansas.

How can I defend myself,
my sacrifice for Kansas?

Can I say that I was there like I was new,
a fresh calf in Kansas?

The truth is that I could see everything—
watching the earth peel away from itself, away from Kansas.

Watching myself in a kiss,
watching myself in Kansas.