

# Midwestern Gothic Road Trip

Sage Justice

Frost clings to the corn fields  
that line roads with no painted lines,

no names, just numbers like prisoner  
9860 trudging through solemn dirt.

A billboard warning HELL IS REAL stands  
outside the house with its roof sunken

like a boulder dropped on the family  
that called it home. It's antler shedding season—

ribbons of red flesh hang from a buck's head  
as it darts from fields to quaking aspens

whose eyes haunt the cloven imprints left in the earth.  
HELL is indeed REAL in Indiana, its devils crossing

the corn fields late at night when the January winds  
tousle the tresses of the aspens and its angels' bones

are buried beneath the fallen leaves, golden and raw,  
dipped in honey and blood.