Badlands Walk

In the morning, walking,
I compose on a table flat and wide enough
For the needs of bison,
Sixty eight varieties of prairie grass,
Enormous wind.

Walking, I work with the grammar of expanse,
The punctuation of limitlessness,
Unfingered tools designed for the containment of reach
And employed on the theory that all things are possible given endlessness.

Eventually, I will hit the Wall.

Fantastical spires cut up,
Stand stark with the accomplishment of plain existence,
Stand stark in painful beauty: the wage of resistance and yield to change
Brought on by the imperative of that wind and its compatriot elements.

And time endless.

Eventually, my fine work surface will rent, expose soft rock,
Open to gorges impassable,
A textured crumble,
A brutalized sink.

I cannot get around,

But must discover a pass,
Or find the Notch, Window, Door,
And go in,
And navigate adjustment to change.

Badlands Mail

Addressed Interior,
Questions arrive:
What on earth is it like?
Are there people?

Postmarked Interior,
Responses go forth
on picture postcards,
Fronts worth
a thousand words that I did not write,
Backs valued
at my paltry two cents on the topic of other-worldliness:

The moon prior to our feat of visitation,
Prior to our claim,
Our foot stepped, flag planted
On its distant gorgeous remove.

My turns of phrase,
Loops of meaning
are busy gesture,
Minor acrobatics
flitting across the standard square of white.

I bend
Over backward
Flip
Inside out

Even as I consider just leaving it,
Blank space unmarked
in deference to this
Economy of Beauty
It is my project to internalize.

Badlands Colors

Banding the Badlands formations, there are colors
that have traveled through time
And have carried the essentials only,
carried only what they need to identify themselves.

Sand tan; Xanthic beige; Washed bare bone rose;
Dreein silver, gold; Llipseirrod mauve; Putty long asleep; Prehistoric sage green:

Colors so ancient they have forgotten what it was
to weep for their own gorgeousness.

In a certain frame of mind,
The sun sets over the Badlands with a moody display of extravagance,

Unleashes power
In the form of permission for

Outrageous garish purple, feather boa pink,
Fuscia unquiet and untamed and uncontained

To streak the sky in competition with lightening and tornado
For shock value, for the headlines.

The Badlands colors respond
With a deepening in their distant hearts,

Gather their forgettings,
Gather reserves inarticulable,

Solidify restraint
And glow.

Badlands Near and Far

The prairie sheets out.
The Badlands formations rise from it,
Jagged and severe.

In the distance, the Badlands appear
As a lonely city massed against the sky,
Spires and Pinnacles carved, cut out in relief.

At close range, in and amongst the peaking formations,
Grassy tables set about with buttes
Give way to rents in the earth.

The land of soft, vulnerable rock is lacerated,
Left to gap and crumble,
Left to take erosion as its form of change.

Starkness defined.

Barrenness incarnate, given this tortured body
By way of instruction from a literal minded maker
in some kind of love
With gorgeous desolation.