

July 14

Five Lessons on Medicine Bow Peak

I The moss campion
 lifts her purple head
only slightly
from her bed of moss.
She holds to the ground
for if she aspired to a taller
beauty,
the alpine winds
 would whip
her slender neck in two.

II Snowmelt begat Nashfork,
Nashfork begat Westbranch,
Westbranch, Laramie, Laramie,
North Platte,
North Platte begat Platte,
Platte begat Missouri, Missouri,
Mississippi, Mississippi, the Gulf,
the Gulf begat Atlantic, the oceans,
the ocean begat rain,
and the rain, life.

III The glacier lily hangs like a yellow bell
on her swan-neck stem,
she and her sisters
lifting the snow around them,
pushing the barren edges
of great ice fields
with warm and golden music.

IV The Engleman spruce is only half alive,
his twisted body grey and cracked,
 ahundred years
 or more
 years old,
and at his fingertips
the new green of growth contends
with wind and snow,
becomes a Baroque spire

in a sacred dance.

V Across snow field, boulder field,
we follow the cairns,
 altars of the god of travel, and we
do not lose our way.

As the clouds bear down, obscure our
path.

We come to feel Medicine Bow,
a giant beneath our feet, her
boulder-covered back
a great cairn the glacier left,
saying,

*Follow me,
I moved this way
with power
to carve the mountains.*

And we will not lose our way.