

Bouldering
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This is the west
of my childhood,
I tell myself, the west
of Louis L'Amour's tales
and Horace Greeley's imagination,
full of sunburned rocks
and spanish-named places,
always smelling
faintly of sage,
sweaty and dusty
and somehow bright
with the promise
of ten-degree-cooler shade.

Some nights I dream
of streetlights and
the horns of cabs
barking hurry hurry
hurry at the double-parked
trucks, at the crowds,
at the messengers
whizzing on their bikes.
This is no life
for me; I need space
and time and geckos
sunning themselves
on rocks older than anyone
and a town made
mainly of stop signs
and clapboard shutters
that guard against
summer hailstorms.

From my balcony,
I look west, watch
foothills grow up
into mountains,
crisp and untouchable
in the darkening air.
One outcropping
looks like the profile
of a man I used to know
who walked dogs

past my apartment;
he wanted to be a buyer,
he said, and I'm glad
to be reminded of him
here in this place
where people discuss
down to the half-centimeter
the river's current height.

I need this place,
with its forever-long twilight
and landscape that
always looks to me
like a rock garden
created by some
overworked god
wanting a good spot
to rest in
on the seventh day.