

Hastings Environmental Law Journal

Volume 11
Number 1 *Fall 2004*

Article 3

1-1-2004

West by Southwest

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Recommended Citation

Robin Leslie Jacobson, *West by Southwest*, 11 *Hastings West Northwest J. of Envtl. L. & Pol'y* 23 (2005)
Available at: https://repository.uchastings.edu/hastings_environmental_law_journal/vol11/iss1/3

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West by Southwest

Cypresses, Land's End, San Francisco

By Robin Leslie Jacobson

Where I was raised, people leaned hard
into hurricanes, stood their ground
no matter how things pushed at them,
natural or unnatural — the cell memory
of all those crossings against the current.
In me too the pilgrim urge to fight it: wind
stroking the blue-green belly of earth,
earth curling into wind like a lover aroused.

Were there so many storms before walls?

Out here, where cypresses grow
in shapes bonsai masters trace to make wind visible,
even here there are pyramids, dams —
our long migration not without baggage.

The great green cranes know better.
Anchored in the crags
they face whatever comes,
the way I once rode carousels,
hugging the horse's neck, trusting it
would hold through all the ups and downs,
my chestnut mane streaming behind me
in the centrifugal air.

