

MEDITATION AT CHEZ PANISSE

*with love and apologies
to Robert Hass*

All the new cooking contains pasta.
In this it resembles all the old cooking.
The fantasy, for instance, that California reduces
the numerous calories of our usual fix. That the rum-
filled cheesecake following the pesto-stuffed breasts
of some young boned chicken is, because coastal,
some happy switch from our midwestern feasts
of cream twinkies and spam. Or that other wistful error,
that because there is no pair of pants
to which my wobble of waistline corresponds,
all food is deceitful once it gets past your lips.
We ate too much stuff all day long, and in the mouth
of my friend there were great dribbles of wine, and a moan
almost audible. After more sips I understood that
eating like this everything expands: **waistline,**
thighs, injustice, you and **I**. There was a salad
I should've eaten, and I remember when, loitering
with my tongue in the arugula that day,
I wished for the presence of extra tomatoes,
sun-ripened, or grown in Alice Waters' own windowbox,
her sweet lungs all out of breath from the hunting
of mushrooms, called **shiitake**, which I don't know yet
from shinola. It really shouldn't bother me.
I'm hungry, I say, although my stomach is full
of endless kiwi. Why should I care how I look?
But I ate so much, I didn't want you to caress me,
or to tell me that thing about blubber, so
good-bye! There are days when the food is so much better
than love, nights inside the fleshy voluptuary.
Such memories, those languid brunches on the veranda,
chewing **lasagna, lasagna, lasagna**.