

Bringing Down the Basil

Outdid yourself this summer—
recklessly thigh high and
 redolent,
lording it over the bush beans,
rivaling the sungold tomatoes,
rampant and clustered like grapes,
their simmering flesh panting
 for your heady infusion.

Subjected to weekly sheering and pinching
of blossoms, you grew potent by thwarting,
turning the heads of passersby
who paused, asking for my secret—
what is there to say?

manure and ruthlessness.
Broken on blades of my blender,
your majesty challenged with
lobes of garlic, pignoli and flayed
reggiano, pesto is a balm for the
 bruised soul.

Now cool September nights nip your leaves.
My pruners neatly sever your woody stems,
releasing a scent
 like a sigh
like the spirit escaping the lips of prey
 at the moment of passing—

Something ancient in reaping
what we have sown and fostered,
nourished daily with our desire
until in the fullness of touch
 and time
 we break
its body
 for succor.