

Clothespin

My mother's silvered clothespins,
connected by a rusty hinge the way
that old couples hold up one another,
were used to clasp receipts
and categorize coupons.
Behind the garage, some pins lingered
on the dragging line like dried sardines.
She lingered too, hollowed eyed,
dirty in her blue checked robe,
thin in her pushed-forward body
trying to water the last rose bush
and feed the dogs without bending.
Ninety one years old
sixty years in the disheveled Tudor,
I thought she might live forever
or at least outlive me
empowered by her obstinate grip
and the rejection of help.
I might well find her dead
near the clothespins
overshadowed by the prolific fig tree
surrounded by a final ornamentation
of lush persimmon globes,
or was it best to pull her away
let her die not as she wished?
Conscience and community required
that she be twisted
from her shabby partner, as worn as she,
a shared problematic plumbing,
spare, shriveled walls, crumbling
bones, and a crazed garden
which expanded as she receded,
faded and unhinged.

—Lynore G. Banchoff