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## **I really have to stop listening to the news**

on the radio every twenty minutes they're with this SWAT team busting drug dealers. This one is a mother with a housefull of kids. You can hear the baby crying to be held, the TV blasting commercials, a teenage girl screaming over and over Mommy don't Mommy and the cops bark you just know they got guns drawn and held two handed in front of their crouched chests and the reporter gives a hushed whispery account and then the background: spring the street the ice cream trunk da-da da da-da da da da da

## **Internal Medicine**

I am hoping to read my genes  
and find my Native American  
grandmothers; they will speak  
with you, oh, my African people,  
and you, Celt, warrior woman  
I saw fly and crack her blue hands  
over the frozen crust of the pole  
and breathe sweet nectar to all  
my children from the cold

## **Is laughter always about pain?**

Sick on a journey-  
Over parched fields  
Dreams wander on  
*Basho's death poem 1694*

a boy named Nadir  
a baby girl named Pinochet  
a woman named Vendetta

What is death? How can you help  
a patient prepare to die?

*Atlantic City 2004*

--open the window--  
don't you want to see if its dark  
or light?

--here, lets pack your suitcase--  
maybe you should open  
those presents now

--dessert?--  
--wine?--  
--satin sheets?

(we laugh, delighted,  
it isn't our bruise  
our cracked wrists  
out dementia  
our incontinence  
our hacking breath)

and Basho?  
'Learn about a pine tree from a pine tree,  
and about a bamboo stalk from a bamboo stalk.'

May my death be a laughing  
poem.

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## **It is September 11th**

and I am driving  
in a liminal space  
I have a homemade map  
I follow streetsigns  
the setting sun out past  
the airport in a place  
of blasted tarmac  
weed and marsh  
flocks take flight  
I pass their cries  
fill my air I have  
written the directions  
wrong all I wanted  
was the words  
I ordered all I needed  
was to be on time  
the radio is listing danger  
my gas gauge  
is on empty  
I might as well be  
driving into the end  
the world only thorns  
mudflats ancient birds  
see me go

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## **I trusted you to care for me**

as I heard you'd cared  
for your father

to carry me  
into the shower

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hold me  
under its warmth

tuck me in  
sing to me

keep me clean  
and dry  
if I wandered shoeless into the night

to feed me  
listen  
even if I sang rage

to think it a blessing  
to have this time

foolish me

I did not know  
how little my little love was worth

how little I'd deserve  
its return

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A New Hampshire native, **Kelley White** studied at Dartmouth College and Harvard Medical School and has been a pediatrician in inner-city Philadelphia for more than twenty-five years. Mother of three, White is an active Quaker. Her poems have been widely published over the past decade, in journals including *Exquisite Corpse*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, *Rattle* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and in several chapbook and full-length collections. She is the recipient of a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant in poetry.