

NINE HERBS CHARM

Caroline Goodwin

i.

the wrinkled glass
(you swept it empty
cleaned it out
cleaned my heart
out and far away the flight
of the bare-throated tiger-heron
neck bent back

ii.

fury, song, heavy storm
floods communities
in western alaska —
through the green
fuse, down the yukon —
sing the charm three times
over the mouth, over
both ears

iii.

Heron 1 is an MALE (medium altitude long endurance) UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) built for the respective theatre of operation. 2013: German Herons log 15,000 Combat Operation Hours in Afghanistan.

iv.

heron: code for heroin

v.

river, the white stones
charm, the stone bowl
blood, my black heart
bridge, your mint sprig
leaf, the crushed dust

vi.

*hybrid children
watch the
sea*

vii.

against a sudden/violent
stabbing pain... shot
by witches, elves and other
spirits that fly through the air...
acquire the feverfew, red
nettle and plantain... boil
in butter... block the ears (loud,
oh! were they loud/when
they rode over the hill...

viii.

Heron 1 can carry an array of sensors, including infrared and visible-light surveillance, intelligence systems (COMINT and ELINT) and various radar systems, totaling up to 250 kg (550 lb). Heron is also capable of target acquisition and artillery adjustment.

ix.

the wrinkled glass
the ice-white waves
the thing that should
not be, history, apart-hood
your kettle and flame,
my ivory tusk (open the letter:
hurricane, floodgate, levee, imagine
our feet at the hearth
now that the war is through with me

Note: The *Nine Herbs Charm* is an Old English charm recorded in the 10th century, part of the *Lacnunga* manuscript, the oldest written Anglo-Saxon medical text. This poem incorporates a few verses from the actual charm, along with lyrics from the Metallica song "The Thing That Should Not Be" and information from Wikipedia about the German Heron warplanes.