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POETRY | SPRING 2016

## The Commiphora Myrrh Tree

By Wendy French

*Physician heal thyself  
for P. H.  
First British Heart Foundation Professor of Cardiology*

They wound the trees for their resin  
it's a well-known fact and him, dead.

Up the stairs to sleep she thinks about him –  
deceased, rubbed out.

And she is wounded like the trees  
they bleed for resin.

He, twenty years her senior, so at ease in the world  
why leave it so suddenly?

She wonders did he lose directions from his lab  
into the mortuary and then not know how to exit

and what about all that he'd pioneered, those paintings,  
his violin, all that work on the heart, all aspirations

over-ruled as he was left on a cold slab,  
a busy hospital, an unremarkable day, his own autopsy.

He'd never told her if he'd seen the resin collected  
for this myrrh, his present from Jerusalem?

She'd always meant to ask and now the crystals sit  
on the kitchen table. He'd taught her trees are wounded.

*Atrial Fibrillation* he'd teased over dinner one night  
would never enter a poem

but for her a strain lingers around these words,

a quest for further knowledge.  
An unremarkable day, his own autopsy.

There must be a way to stop the trees from bleeding.

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**Wendy French has two chapbooks and three collections of poetry published, *Splintering the Dark* (Rockingham, 2005), *surely you know this* (Tall Lighthouse, 2009) and *Thinks Itself A Hawk*, (Hippocrates, 2016). She collaborated with Jane Kirwan on *Born in the NHS* (Hippocrates, 2013). French, who won the Hippocrates Poetry and Medicine prize for the NHS section in 2010, was awarded second prize in 2011 and has worked for the past twenty years in healthcare settings helping people come to terms with their situations through poetry. She was Poet in Residence at the UCH Macmillan Centre from April 2015-2016.**

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