

Story for performance #53
webcast from Paris at 09:13PM, 12 Aug 05



Source: Greg Myre, 'Gaza gets ready for a taste of statehood', *New York Times* in *International Herald Tribune*, 12/08/05.

Tags: [plants](#), [death](#)

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A wind blowing from the interior of the country and there was the sense that something parallel was moving in from the Indian ocean. Today the hypocalymma flowered for the first time. I wondered if this particular degree of barometric pressure was needed to emancipate the buds. This potted shrub had travelled extensively and had led a rather amphibious life both in and out of the ground. Its axis of leaf and stem produced four perfectly symmetrical orbs that I had observed with increasing anticipation over the past month as they approached their inflorescence. I still need to register such shifts in nature. If I don't keep looking I might miss a vital clue. This tiny white starburst of blossom gave me the feeling that it held information that would become increasingly important for my passage through the day.

The rain came and settled in around the day like a hearth does a fire. I carried a number of kilos of raw earth into the institution where I work. I saw a man drive off in a car that held a shining drum. I sat around a table with a group of people talking. Occasionally the rain would fall inside the room and disrupt the conversation. Most people looked tired and exasperated. I felt tired too but

somehow peaceful. This tiny hypocalymma blossom was giving my day balance and my head clarity.

I remembered the possibly apocryphal story about the penultimate night in the life of Marie-Antoinette, incarcerated in a cell and waiting for the guillotine. She was extremely fond of flowers and had taken one of her favourites with her to the Palais de Tuileries when she was arrested. It was an extremely unusual cactus that only flowered on one night each year and she knew that it would be soon. At around midnight the blossom burst forth and she summoned her good friend, the botanical artist Pierre-Joseph Redouté to capture and immortalise this moment.

By the next evening Marie-Antoinette's head had been separated from her body but Redouté's delicate watercolour remained whole. I realised it was a wholeness I was trying to grasp in the process of inflorescence and that a newly born flower is like a head entering the world for the first time.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Gregory Pryor.