

## Granadilla

I can remember  
a Christmas in the Drakensberg  
whose grey seraphic crags  
lifted the riddle of serenity  
and placed it high above  
the sprawl of human habitation below.

I was a student of Zulu literature  
equipped with sleeping-bag and tape recorder  
traipsing around the foothills  
in search of a clan's epic poem.

The grey-headed *imbongi* I'd come to record  
had lost a hand on the Reef,  
was stretched on a sleeping-mat  
unwilling to perform,  
but asked about work  
he stood and shaking the stump of his arm  
cursed the mine in a rage.

That was, I suppose,  
an epic poem of a sort  
the text books had yet to enshrine.

As for the granadillas,  
a vine of them flourished along his fence,  
the pods leathery and wrinkled,  
the skins flaking.

The juice in those he offered me  
was nearly dry,  
but the seeds were there all right,  
hard, bitter, black and live..

*imbongi* - a praise-poet (isiZulu)