

Milkfugue

Milk is the gift of life. May God make milk for you.
Living on milk from cattle they do not kill, Tutsi are lean
and long of limb. There is milk in their mouths, milk
in their veins, the land flowing with milk—may God make milk
for you. May God make blood for you: a pact cut under the navel—
covenant consumed, a belly of blood. Blood in their mouths

and veins; milk in their veins and mouths—they are lean
and long of limb. Blood is the gift of life. May God make milk
and blood: past and future wed, from dowry cow
to milk shared over bloody morning-after sheets. Milk
for the children, blood for the elders—covenant consummated,
a belly of milk. May God make milk for you.

Milk is the gift of death. When Tutsi royals must be killed,
no blood, only milk—and they drink to their death. May God
make death for you. There is milk in the cup; there is death
in the cup. They are lean and they drink; milk is death
and they drink. The White Fathers bring their own cup
and promise—on altars, doorposts—a land flowing with milk

and a cup of blood. *Drink ye all of it.* Covenant completed,
a belly of blood: blood is the gift of death, and they drink.
In *Mata*—the month of milk—long limbs are cut until death
is all there is to drink, every stream—river—well running red.
Tutsi cattle are bled, Tutsi elders are bled, Tutsi children
are dead, every red river running—and they drink and they drink.

Blood in the water, blood in the cup, the promised land
flowing and they drink and they drink. May God make milk
for you, may God make blood for you. Milk is life is death

is blood in the cup. Every stream—river—well running red
and they drink. This is blood and they drink; milk is death
and they drink. They drink and they drink—all of it.