

Thirst

Drifting in and out of fever, the child dreams of water.
Not the brown puddles twitching with mosquitoes

or the lukewarm drippings from the Red Cross pouches,
but the melted snow tracing diamond paths

down the mountains of his grandfather's stories.
He dreams of walking among the bongo

on the bamboo slope, spreading apart the reeds
and finding a stream. He crouches, cups his hands.

Water rolls through his lips, washes over
his gums, sinks into the grooves of his teeth.

He wakes crying for this stream to live in his body,
this water that once shimmered at the top of a peak

after falling through the sky, after shivering into snow,
after living in a cloud with a god somewhere.

-Tania Runyan