

KERN RIVER CANAL

Every river has good intentions,
even this one,
though it will drown you
for disrespecting its dark places,
its unseen, slithering currents.

It wants only to redistribute
the snow's wealth to dry flatlands—
an indiscriminate largess,
generous to thirsty crops in the summer
but without mercy:

The boy I saw pulled from the canal
had been trapped against a weir.
He looked cold and blue,
as if frozen to death
somewhere in the Sierras far from here.