THE CROSSING OF ALEXANDER PEARCE

No man can tell what he will do
when driven by hunger — Alexander Pearce

red raw my eyes smarting King's River a scummy tannin
fetched up on this shoulder of sandy brush
a fish gutted yellow jacket
could lie here till oblivion
sluiced by the wash Lethewards to Monaghan
dreadfully fatigued scars lashed sore what's the odds
faculties scarce keep in motion
ulcers off them bloody briars cross-wise thickets
this was no slant the old ticker fails me

all I've got in this godforsook world is a piece of Cox in my pocket
that Johnny newcome what pressed me to bolt upon the cross
his fam we absconded into the woods form Logans sawpit gang
mynabs was working in irons which Cox knocked off with his axe
he procured burnt rag for tinder and flour for skilly
we kept low in shrubbiest parts till we struck the beach
three days out we intimidated at each other fly cove
he crossed me Cox gammoned me over gully couldn't swim
and I durst not pass the mountains again

how I'm weary of grass and nettle tops mess went rest on my stomach
not sick of boiled heart and liver but the notion
even the thick part of arms delicious when you're nearly starved
I was obliged to take the axe to that coxcomb
him being the stronger incorrigible crawler
three blows to the joskins noddle
and still he cries for mercys sake come back
and put me out of my misery and I did
and dealt his nabs one almighty mortal bruise

I meant to keep the coast round to Port Dalyrimple
no more a sevener bond but a clean potato free
some dart now a heavy burthen weighs like an iron collar
Greenhill watching me so narrowly gripping the axe
fragments of flesh strung up on boughs severed hands flapping
Traviss venomed black foot swelling like fly blown pork
I nearly topped myself with a leather strap then ate it
if we hadn't bled flogger Dalton he could scourge me senseless
always a battler me now Im ready to cop it and willing
since ive crossed to the other side im not game no more down as a hammer
ive took a purging my lifes road was but indifferent travelling
beaks of swell street tipped me the short straw
i needs rest awhile swim back give myself up to the logs
kindle a signal fire for a pilots jolly boat
put on Coxs dry slops traps sure to bait me with snowdropping
i stood the hazard without no angel of mercy
demon my oath a lifer in lags land
doomed to scrag