Northern Tour

Donald M. Hassler

“great-rooted blossomer”
—William Butler Yeats, “Among School Children”

A workshop works like yeast. We burst
From underneath. The poem by Yeats
With the blossomer firmly rooted
Always makes my classes laugh. I teach
The best I can to silent heads.
The jester sweats. The motley hand
Still is in the game. The cap and bells
Amuse. But I need the growing season,
The shortened northern tour away from reason.

Greg Brown and his guitar came by in June.
Now it’s only black flies. News has slowed.
They say that Alice cannot remember. Her sons
And daughters care. The miner we call Bear
Is son to a pillar of a man whose father

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Was more a legend. Families gather like the fifties.
Birth is usually the same. We ought never pause
Nor interrupt our aging to complain.
Making hay suffices as the seasons wane.

In winter we drop our lines deep
As football fields and jig the calluses
On fingers made sensitive to feel
The least pull. Sometimes we feed all year
On worlds beneath thick ice and save
The finite quantity of words vouchsafed
For formal times, for ceremonies, feasts
And gatherings when we may sing
And write up all that rooted mix may bring.