

# Ox Cart Man

By Donald Hall

In October of the year,  
he counts potatoes dug from the brown field,  
counting the seed, counting  
the cellar's portion out,  
and bags the rest on the cart's floor.

He packs wool sheared in April, honey  
in combs, linen, leather  
tanned from deerhide,  
and vinegar in a barrel  
hooped by hand at the forge's fire.

He walks by his ox's head, ten days  
to Portsmouth Market, and sells potatoes,  
and the bag that carried potatoes,  
flaxseed, birch brooms, maple sugar, goose  
feathers, yarn.

When the cart is empty he sells the cart.  
When the cart is sold he sells the ox,  
harness and yoke, and walks  
home, his pockets heavy  
with the year's coin for salt and taxes,

and at home by fire's light in November cold  
stitches new harness  
for next year's ox in the barn,  
and carves the yoke, and saws planks  
building the cart again.

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