

The Astronaut Checks His Watch

It's lonely out in space on such a timeless flight.
—Elton John, “Rocket Man”

And learns the world has gone on without him
while he watched blackness from the porthole,
spent his days and months at the thick glass,
thinking he might see something in the nothing
if he just looked hard and for long enough.

Summer came and went, fruit falling from the vine
as he stared at specks of stars, circled weightless.
December brought the cold fringe of a new galaxy.
He missed the New Year, floating silent alone
over the crowded globe, a toast of freeze-dried fruit.

His birthday was black Pluto; he saw the rings
of Saturn when his mother left his father;
he never knew his love grew tired of waiting,
staring at the silver glow of Venus, hoping he might
stop searching and come back down to her.

When he finally returns, removes the helmet
so he can see full around, he checks his watch.
Without the moon to tell the tides he never knew
the years slipped by, but now feels his bones ache,
atrophied, older from solitude, so long with no gravity.