

november 11, 1572

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Second Place, Poetry

Walking home that night to dinner
(Of fish and potatoes, probably)
Brahe the Dane looked up to the inverted black bowl
Of the cold November sky and gasped.
A new star in Cassiopeia.

He blinked. Checked twice. Spun around.
Like a lost captain, he seized upon the Pole Star.
Ursa Minor still hung off it like a ladle.
Cassiopeia, the proud mother, still spanned the Milky Way.
But a new star in Cassiopeia!

Like the Copernican declarations, this changed everything.
No longer could the sky be divided into two:
The sublunar world subject to change, the heavens immutable.
Why, the metaphysical poets would have to rewrite
Their verses on sublunar love.

Raced home, shoved open the door,
There she stood, her hands deep in a pale bowl
(Of something or other), her belly protruding.
His first three boys scruffling on the carpet,
His own three Ursa Minors, he called them.

He ran for his telescope, his devices,
His twin compasses. He measured, and measured again.
There it was, undeniably present as the metal plate
Over the missing part of his nose. (Duel at Wittenberg.)
The birth of a new star, and he, Tycho Brahe, the witness.

We know now that he was wrong.
It was not the birth of a star but the death of one.
A supernova, a star bursting into final brilliancy as it died.
Bits of death in life. Stubborn Cassiopeia stuck in her chair.
Lovely Andromeda still chained to her rock.