

are important for understanding the chemical evolution of our Galaxy. The 1.4 m CAT + CES equipped with the short camera + CCD is now, as we have tried to show, suited for this study.

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## Bierce and Astronomy

Ambrose Bierce, the famous American satirist, was born in 1842 and is believed to have died in 1913, during the revolution in Mexico. A man of many trades, he spent part of his life in San Francisco as a journalist. He apparently made the first entries to "The Devil's Dictionary" around 1876, but it was only after 1881 that regular instalments began to appear in the "Wasp" under Bierce's chief editorship.

Although Bierce apparently showed no particular animosity against astronomers, he did include some references in the "Dictionary". Here are some (slightly abbreviated) examples of his wit, written more than one century ago:

*Astrology*, n. The science of making the dupe see the stars. Astrology is by some held in high respect as the precursor of astronomy (. . .).

*Comet*, n. An excuse for being out late at night (. . .).

*Dawn*, n. The time when men of reason go to bed (. . .). The reason we find only robust persons doing this thing is that it has killed all the others who have tried it.

*Electricity*, n. The power that causes all natural phenomena not known to be caused by something else. It is the same thing as lightning and its famous attempt to strike Dr. Franklin is one of the most picturesque incidents in that great and good man's career. (. . .) The question of its economical application to some purposes is still unsettled, but experiment has already proved that it will propel a street car better than a gas jet and give more light than a horse.

*Gravitation*, n. The tendency of all bodies to approach one another with a strength proportioned to the quantity of matter they contain – the quantity of matter they contain being ascertained by the strength of their tendency to approach another. (. . .)

*Morning*, n. The end of night and dawn of dejection. The morning was discovered by a Chaldean astronomer,

### References

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who, finding his observation of the stars unaccountedly interrupted, diligently sought the cause and found it. After several centuries of disputation, morning was generally accepted by the scientific as a reasonable cause of the interruption and a constantly recurrent natural phenomenon.

*Newtonian*, adj. Pertaining to a philosophy of the universe, invented by Newton, who discovered that an apple will fall to the ground, but was unable to say why. His successors and disciples have advanced so far as to be able to say when.

*Observatory*, n. A place where astronomers conjecture away the guesses of their predecessors.

*Telescope*, n. A device having a relation to the eye similar to that of the telephone to the ear, enabling distant objects to plague us with a multitude of needless details. Luckily it is unprovided with a bell summoning us to the sacrifice.

*Zenith*, n. A point in the heavens directly overhead to a standing man or a growing cabbage. A man in bed or a cabbage in the pot is not considered as having a zenith, though from this view of the matter there was once a considerable dissent among the learned, some holding that the posture of the body was immaterial (. . .).

## List of ESO Preprints

### September–November 1986

465. F. Murtagh and A. Heck: An Annotated Bibliographical Catalogue of Multivariate Statistical Methods and of their Astronomical Applications (Magnetic Tape). *Astronomy and Astrophysics Suppl.* September 1986.  
 466. D. Baade: Be Stars as Nonradial Pulsators. Invited review presented at IAU Coll. 92 "Physics of Be Stars", Boulder, 18–22 August 1986. September 1986.  
 467. C. Motch et al.: The Optical Light Curve of the Low Mass X-Ray Binary XB 1254-690. *Astrophysical Journal*. September 1986.  
 468. M. Rosa and J.S. Mathis: On the Chemical Homogeneity of the 30 Doradus HII Region and a Local Enrichment by Wolf-Rayet Stars. *Astrophysical Journal*. September 1986.  
 469. M. Heydari-Malayeri, V.S. Niemela and G. Testor: The LMC HII Regions N11 C and E and their Stellar Contents. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. September 1986.  
 470. A. Lauberts: UBVRI Photoelectric Photometry of 48 Southern Galaxies. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. October 1986.  
 471. F. Murtagh and A. Lauberts: A Curve Matching Problem in Astronomy. *Pattern Recognition Letters*. October 1986.  
 472. T. Gehren and D. Ponz: Echelle Background Correction. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. November 1986.  
 473. E. Giraud: Malmquist Bias, Type Effect and Dispersion in the Tully-Fisher Relation. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. November 1986.  
 474. R. Gathier: Properties of Planetary Nebulae I. Nebular Parameters and Distance Scale. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. November 1986.  
 475. M.H. Ulrich: Observations of Active Galactic Nuclei with IUE and Comparison with X-Ray Data. Review paper given at the NASA/ESA/SERC Conference held in London, 14–16 July 1986: "New Insights in Astrophysics: 8 Years of UV Astronomy with IUE". November 1986.

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