

shepherds weep no more.

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WHITHER ACR? SOME PASTORAL REFLECTIONS ON BEARS, BALTIMORE, BASEBALL, AND RESURRECTING CONSUMER RESEARCH

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Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more, Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere, I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude, And with forced fingers rude Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. Bitter constraint, and and occasion dear, Compels me to disturb your season due ("Lycidas," John Milton 1637. 11. 1-74.

I'd be pretty dumb if all of a sudden I started being something I'm not (Yogi Berra, quoted by Clark 1984, p. 6).

Against the rules, yes, Boo Boo. But I an a nonconformist bear (Yogi Bear, quoted by Clark 1984 p. 6).

We have the obligation of pressing the unpleasant questions, ...the embarrassing questions, the taboo questions. Being so privileged as we are, it is almost our damn job not to ask the nice questions, not to ask the comfortable questions (George Steiner, quoted by the New York Times 1985, p. 22E).

ABSTRACT -

The Bad News Bears return. Hattie pays for the Baltimore Sun. The buyer goes downtown. The consumer researcher plays left field. Sweet Lou comes home. The shepherds weep no more.

THE BAD NEWS BEARS RETURN

The Bad News Bears are back! Only this time, they are wearing baseball uniforms, reading poetry, and playing on our team.

Last year, in an ACR session entitled "The Vices and Virtues of Being Relevant: Perspectives on Consulting," I prompted some debate by examining the forces that push consumer research toward managerial relevance, comparing these pressures to the Three Bears, likening our discipline to Goldilocks, and retelling the ancient tale in a new version that bore deadly consequences for our fair-haired heroine!

When the bears returned to the cottage from their day in the woods, they found Goldilocks peacefully asleep.... They immediately did what any self-respecting bears would do. They killed her on the spot (Holbrook 1985b. p. 154).

In his presentation, Jack Jacoby took exception to my distortion of this beloved fable and generously supplied me with a children's book that contains what he regards as the appropriate ending:

Goldilocks woke up with a start. She ran to the window and jumped out. and the three bears never ever saw her again (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books 1982 p. 23).

Though I doubt that whether Goldilocks is "killed on the spot" (my account) or simply "never seen again" (the authentic version) makes much difference to those who loved her dearly, I have learned one thing--namely that, as a metaphor for the fate of consumer research, my Three Bears story fails to do the trick. Besides, I've always liked bears and mean them no harm.

LYCIDAS IS DEAD

So what we now need is a story that really is sad--by anyone's standards--but, to preserve our optimism, one that has a hopeful resolution. I can think of no sadder but ultimately more hopeful tale than John Milton's elegy on the death of Lycidas in which the poet "bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned...on the Irish Seas":

Bitter constraint, and and occasion dear, Compels me to disturb your season due, For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime, Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer. Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme. He must not float upon his watery bier Unwept, and welter to the parching wind, Without the meed of some melodious tear ("Lycidas," Milton 1637, 11. 6-14).

I shall therefore take "Lycidas" as my symbol for the potential premature demise of consumer research--Lycidas, the fair-haired and beautiful shepherd boy who has drowned beneath the sea and "sunk... beneath the watery floor" (l. 167). This oceanic image recalls last year's comparison of commercialization and overzealous managerial relevance to sinking like a stone in water:

We can pursue knowledge like beauty for its own sake...or we can wrap our feet in utilitarian slippers of lead and perform soggy pirouettes beneath a sea of managerial practicalities. As Charlie the Tuna found out to his dismay, the pursuit of Truth and Beauty gets nowhere on the ocean floor. Sorry, Charlie. Practitioners don't want tunas with good taste. They want tunas that taste good (Holbrook 1985a, p. 30).

As soon as business intrudes into science, one hears complaints from scientists about loss of academic freedom and interference with scholarly integrity. Yet, in my experience, one seldom hears such complaints voiced in the context of business schools or among consumer researchers. Apparently, we are like fish in water. We have so long been submerged under the influence of business sponsorship that we don't even notice it any more Usually, we swim in the tide of corporate sponsorship without really noticing the ebb and flow of the invisible currents that steer us (Holbrook 1985b, p. 153).

Milton's poem contains numerous cases of water-ant-light, sea-ant-sun imagery. In this spirit, then, let me begin with a story about the sun--in this case, the Baltimore Sun, that town's daily newspaper.

HATTIE PAYS FOR THE BALTIMORE SUN

Once upon a time, in a story told and retold by my mother-in-law, one of her friends named

Miss Lee moved from her home on a plantation near Charlottesville to the city of Baltimore. Miss Lee had grown up in the patrician luxury of the Virginian countryside, surrounded by crops, servants, and the good things in life. In her later years, Hiss Lee took her loyal and devoted housekeeper called Hattie and went to a small apartment to be near her doctor in the big city. Hiss Lee enjoyed the cultural stimulation of the urban environment; but Hattie, who was less well-educated, found it difficult to adapt. Finally, one day, the arrival of the newspaper boy asking to be paid for delivery of the paper pushed Hattie over the edge. She came bursting into Hiss Lee's bedroom in tears and cried: "O, Miss Lee, I can't stand it no more. Back home, when I needed eggs, I just went to the hen house and grabbed up a few; now I need to place an order with the delivery man and wait two days. Back home, when I wanted milk, I could just go out to the barn and get me some from the cow; now I have to call the dairy company and pay them to come and bring it. Back home, when I had to fix vegetables for supper, I could just go out to the garden and pull some up right out of the ground; now I have to carry a shopping basket and a pocketbook full of money all the way town to the grocery store. And now--Lord, Lord--there's a boy down there at the front door who says he's here to collect for the sun."

At one level, Hattie had missed the point. She had failed to recognize that the "Sun" in question was a newspaper and not the big star that sits at the center of our solar system. But, at a much more profound level, Hattie had grasped one key issue better than do many of us who call ourselves consumer researchers, attend ACR conferences, and ponder the future direction of the Association.

Hattie understood, metaphorically, that consumers want to enjoy the sunshine and that marketers want to collect for the sun--that marketers want to charge them money for their consumption experiences. In other words, Hattie recognized that there is a fundamental difference in perspective between consumers and marketing managers and by extension, therefore, between marketing and consumer research. The consumer's perspective, Hattie knew, centers in consuming and in phenomena related to the consumption experience; presumably, consumer research should reflect those interests. By contrast, marketing research does and definitely should reflect the marketing manager's concern for buying behavior and for phenomena related to purchase decisions and their impact on profitability. Hence, as Hattie instinctively recognized, consumer research and marketing research differ fundamentally in orientation.

I like marketing. I spend many of my waking hours worrying about marketing and trying to teach MBA's what I know about the formulation of marketing strategy and the solution of marketing problems. But still, even though I deeply believe that marketing is a worthwhile (probably the most worthwhile) business activity, many of us in marketing are in the position of trying to collect for the sun. Therefore, our concerns as marketers may differ from the concerns that inform the activities of consumers. It follows that marketing research and consumer research are and should be different sorts of things.

To repeat, I regard marketing as a noble profession. If I did not, I could not stand up and teach it for a living. I want the companies whose stocks I own to practice good marketing management and make lots of money. I want my students to go out and become good marketers and succeed on the job. I would even let my son marry a marketing woman. Further, as Levitt (1960, 1962) has taught us so well, I recognize that marketing often involves a large component of customer orientation and, therefore, that any decent piece of consumer research may eventually be relevant to some marketer somewhere, some way, some time. But, as Levitt's critics have insistently pointed out, customer orientation must be tempered by some concern for the firm's skills, strengths, capabilities, resources, costs, and other internal constraints so that, ultimately, we arrive at what is sometimes called the profit orientation, the survival orientation, or the "marketing orientation" (in the truer sense of that abused term).

This marketing orientation, by focusing on internal considerations of the firm's profitability, differs fundamentally from the perspective of the consumer. Accordingly, the research intended to serve it does and should differ fundamentally from consumer research. Thus, in my view, consumer research emerges from the perspective of the (value-seeking) consumer and marketing research adopts the orientation of the (profit-seeking) marketing manager. But, already, I have used such terms as "consumer," "consumption," "buying," "business," and "marketing"--words that have served as endless sources of confusion in our discipline and that occasionally have even led to the abandonment of consumers by some of their erstwhile most devoted friends and to the redefinition of consumer research by some of its most illustrious spokesmen.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas? ("Lycidas," 11. 50-51).

THE BUYER GOES DOWNTOWN

A spectacular case in point appeared in a recent statement by Ralph Nader, surely one of the consumer's most passionate advocates:

"I don't want to use 'consumer' anymore," Mr. Nader said. "I want to use 'buyer.' You don't go downtown to consume--you go downtown to buy" (Molotsky 1985, Nader's claim was "that people ought to use their buying power to bring them to parity in dealing with large corporations and government" (p. 44). But, however well-intentioned, his treatment of "consumers" as people who "go downtown to buy" endangers the recognition that consumers are not just buyers and that our research should reflect this fact. Besides purchasing, consumers also engage in other forms of consumption involved in the acquisition, usage, and disposition of the products they consume:

consumer behavior is the acquisition, consumption, and disposition of goods, services, time, and ideas by living units.... It encompasses much more than just the purchase of products and/or services by humans (Jacoby 1975, p. 979).

Most definitions of consumer behavior shackle us by confining attention to purchase.... purchase is only one form of acquisition.... Consumption must be given greater salience.... disposition...appears to have been completely neglected. This neglect should be rectified (Jacoby 1978, p. 94).

in addition to choice behavior, we must encourage research on procurement behavior..., on consumption behavior...and on disposal behavior (Sheth 1985, P. 1).

Hence, as these warnings suggest, the use of "buyers" to signify "consumers" encourages dangerous misunderstandings, some of which have afflicted our own literature.

But the confusion between "buying" and "consuming" is not the only terminological problem that threatens us. Another concerns the meaning of the word "marketing" itself. On the wall outside my office, I have an old New Yorker cartoon. It shows a door labelled "Vice-President of Marketing" with a man coming out of the door, carrying a shopping basket, and

clearly heading toward some nearby grocery store. This cartoon serves to remind us that our language carries at least three meanings of the word "marketing." The first, "marketing" in the sense of "going to market" or "shopping," belongs to the discourse of housewives or househusbands and focuses entirely on the activities of the customer. The second, "marketing" as a set of managerial responsibilities concerned with exchange processes (Kotler 1972) or with the removal of gaps between producers and end-users (McInnes 1964), adopts the perspective of practitioners and corresponds most closely to the usage that prevails in both academic and management circles (Marketing News 1985). The third, "marketing" as a very broad set of phenomena involving interactions between customers and managers (with an equal emphasis on the viewpoints of each), would better be called "business" or "commerce" and constitutes a vaguely delimited area in which we all participate to some degree.

A similar confusion surrounds the natures of "marketing research" and "consumer research." Some of the smartest people I know insist that the two are essentially the same thing. For example, John Farley (current Executive Director of the Marketing Science Institute) walked into my office the other day and assured me that there is no difference between consumer research and marketing research. Their union minus their intersection is the null set. As we shall see, the 1985 ACR Call For Papers by Rich Lutz (this year's Conference Chairman) conflates the two. Again, one might interpret Jack Jacoby's (1985a, b) position as blurring the distinction somewhat. Geraldine Fennell (1982), another friend from the world of consulting, also seems to suggest that marketing research and consumer research are (or at least should be) indistinguishable insofar as "marketing's central assignment" involves "responding to consumer wants in a competitive environment" (p. 1). Thus, in their comprehensive review of marketing R & D, Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980) suggest that in the early 1960's...marketing research became, in effect, "consumer research," and the emphasis was placed on developing theories of consumer motivation and behavior or consumer decision processes (p. 4).

These examples reflect a prevalent conception based on considerable common sense. Indeed, compared to the difference between marketing research and, say, biophysics, marketing and consumer research do seem almost identical. Further, the tendency to equate the two may exhibit nothing more than one side of the age-old debate between those inclined to see the One and those drawn instead to a view of the Many.

Almost 2500 years ago, two Greek philosophers named Heraclitus and Parmenides represented opposite sides of a controversy that most of us still grapple with millennia later. This controversy concerns what Hare (1982) calls the problem of the One and the Many and stems from the fact that people adopt contrasting world views. Some see everything as different and changing. Others see everything as constant and the same:

Two great philosophers...took up opposite points of view on the problem of 'The One and the Many.' The first was Heraclitus...emphasizing the diversity and changeability of the Many at the expense of the One; Parmenides, by contrast,... went to the opposite extreme, denying the reality of appearances altogether...and...concluded that, in spite of appearances, the universe is really solid throughout and immobile (pp. 12-13).

Clearly, those who insist that "buyers" and "consumers," "marketing management" and "business," or "marketing research" and "consumer research" are the same things adopt a Parmenidean view of our discipline. They receive support from a 2500-year-old philosophical tradition. Yet I believe that they blur some important distinctions, fudge some key contrasts, and thereby encourage confusion. Accordingly, I wish to revive the spirit of Heraclitus and to argue for a more Heraclitean temperament at ACR.

In an effort to remain as consistent as possible with common usage (and with myself), I shall adopt the following terminology. I shall define "business research" as investigations pertaining to customer-manager interactions broadly considered. For example, business research would include work on public policy or on social welfare. In accord with the official AMA viewpoint (Marketing News 1985, p. 1) and the book by Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980), I shall define "marketing research" as investigations intended to address managerial problems and to provide practical solutions or applications for marketing managers: A basic assumption adopted by the ERDMM Commission... was that the broad purpose of knowledge development in marketing should be to improve, or make more effective, marketing management. Marketing's R & D system, it can be argued, has this as its fundamental goal (pp. 143-144).

Finally, I shall define "consumer research" as investigations that address issues dictated by their relevance to consumption phenomena (e.g., acquiring, using, disposing, etc.) and that contribute managerial applications, if at all, only incidentally or even by accident. Notice that, as just defined, business research encompasses all or most marketing research and some consumer research, while consumer and marketing research may overlap in content but differ fundamentally in purpose.

I cannot insist strongly enough on two points: (1) that I agree with the generally prevailing articulation of the purpose for marketing research and (2) that I view consumer research as having a different objective—namely, to understand consumption behavior in the acquisition, usage, and disposition of products (goods, services, and other consumable events). Here, I freely admit that there is some tendency for much consumer research to be or to become relevant to the decisions of marketing managers. I only wish to claim that, whatever its relevance to practitioners, managerial applicability does not serve as its primary motivation nor its main intention. The fundamental purpose for consumer research (in my definition) is to understand the nature of consumption behavior broadly conceived. From my perspective, this view should serve as our window on the world. It is like the contact lens through which we observe reality. But, like a contact lens, it easily gets misplaced. We must guard it carefully. And if, perchance, we drop it, we must bend and search for it before we lose it or someone else tramples it under foot.

Anyone who has agreed, even partially, with my comments to this point must surely have reacted with alarm to ACR's 1985 Call For Papers (Lutz 1985).

But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone, Now thou art gone and never must return!... As killing as the canker to the rose, Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze, Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear, When first the white-thorn blows; Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear ("Lycidas," ll. 38-49).

In the 1985 ACR Call For Papers, Rich Lutz (1985) offered "some thoughts on the 'state of the association,'" echoed Sheth's (1985) concern that "ACR has lost some of the 'excitement' which was characteristic of the organization during the 1970's," suggested that "the pendulum has perhaps swung too far in the direction of broadening consumer research," argued that "what the field needs is more systematic attention to the 'core' of the domain

rather than its fringes," specified that "the core of the domain of consumer behavior rests both empirically and definitionally on the effects of marketing activities on consumers," and concluded:

Accordingly, I would like to offer another potential remedy to those which have been discussed in the past and hereby actively solicit papers, special sessions and workshops devoted to the study of the effects of marketing variables on consumer behavior (p. 5).

YoSG

This hard-core theme (including an apparently pejorative use of the term "fringe") was soon picked up and echoed by Rich Yalch (1985) in his departing editorial for the ACR Newsletter:

It seems to me that ACR has gone through phases that basically correspond to the interests of the members who have formed the heart of the Association since its beginning. At present, these individuals (and hence the association) seem lost.... The need for variety characteristic of cognitively complex individuals seems to be motivating radical proposals for how the discipline should approach consumer research and what constitutes important areas of interest.... In addition to being skeptical of the contribution of this endeavor, my concern is that younger, impressionable members of the discipline might mistake the leaders' temporary disinterest with the discipline's core areas of research and fascination with the fringe areas as evidence of a major paradigm shift.... However,...the focus will remain on the purchase behavior of the "shopper" in the household for common consumer goods and services (p. 2).

Surely, these polemics by Lutz and Yalch constitute an "Embarrassment of Riches." It seems clear (from my own biased position) that these two scholars have been listening to the same muse—one that issues bad advice. How can this have happened?

But now my oat proceeds, And listens to the Herald of the Sea, That came in Neptune's plea. He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds, What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain? ("Lycidas," 11. 88-92).

In my admittedly idiosyncratic view, three sirens of the deep have been calling to the two ACR leaders. Lutz (1985) describes these three siren songs quite specifically as his three major assumptions:

- (1) ACR was conceived of, founded by, and continues to be dominated by marketing academics (approximately 80% of the current membership);
- (2) Consumers would have little to "consume" were it not for the activities of marketers....
- (3) It is entirely possible to conduct scholarly, scientific research on the effects of marketing variables on consumers (p. 5).

All three assumptions strike me as either untenable or irrelevant to the issue at hand. First, while the perspective of marketing management may once have dominated ACR, I doubt that it continues to do so. One's title as a marketing professor does not necessarily determine the content of one's thought processes. Further, many of us think that the participation of ACR members from other disciplines deserves expansion, not contraction. Seeking a hard-core marketing focus for the organization hardly seems likely to foster that end.

Second, as vividly articulated by Hattie, we should avoid the assumption that consumption depends exclusively or even largely on the activities of marketers. I doubt that Lutz really believes consumers would have little to consume without marketing. Only someone trying, like Polaroid, to sell us "a piece of the sun" would make that claim seriously.

Third, though scholarly work on marketing variables is indubitably "possible," it does not necessarily follow that it is "fundamental" to consumer research nor that such a focus should be proclaimed as our guiding light at ACR. Indeed, good reasons exist for thinking that scientific progress often moves fastest when it remains relatively independent from the pressures of various interest groups (Holbrook 1985b). Perhaps I may clarify this last point by turning to an analogy drawn from another pastoral source—namely, baseball.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill, Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill; Together both, ere the high lawns appeared Under the opening eyelids of the Morn, We drove a-field.... ("Lycidas," 11. 23-27).

THE CONSUMER RESEARCHER PLAYS LEFT FIELD

In a classic comedy sketch, George Carlin contrasts the sports of football and baseball. The first emerges as pragmatic, tough-minded, and rapacious, the second as fun, tender-hearted, and gentle:

Baseball and football. Baseball is pastoral. Football is technological. Baseball is played in a park. Football is played in a stadium. Baseball... (pause)...has no time limit; we don't know when it's gonna end. Football is rigidly timed; and it will end, even if we have to go to sudden death. Baseball has the bunt. Football has the punt. Baseball's object is to go home.... In football, we are down in enemy territory, reaching for the end zone. In football, we have the block, the clip, the kick, the blitz, the bomb, the offense, the defense. In baseball, we have the sacrifice. And, in baseball, you make an error. In football, you pay a penalty. Woody Hayes wears a baseball hat during the football game. Can you imagine if Walter Alston wore a football helmet during the baseball game? They would truck him away, man (Carlin 1975).

Carlin's contrast vividly undercuts the analogy frequently drawn between business and football. Business does not resemble a football game, where the purpose is to bash, battle, and bruise the opponent into oblivion:

What is football...except eleven people who line up, beat the shit out of the other guys, and take their land? It's a ground-acquisition game (Carlin 1975).

Clearly, football—with its intent on destruction—resembles war, not business. Hence, the business strategists who dwell excessively on football and military analogies pursue the wrong metaphor. Rather, business is like a baseball game in which the sphere of action at any moment includes a batter, a pitcher, a catcher, some other fielders, and maybe some base-runners. In football, there is no meaningful analogy to the customer. In baseball, the batter corresponds to the business customer. The pitcher parallels the salesman. The catcher resembles the marketing manager. And the consumer researcher plays left field. Consider, first, the batter. The batter stands at home plate and waits for his pitch. He is a discriminating customer. He does not want to expend his resources on a bad product. But, when he sees an offering he likes, he swings with it—or at least at it.

Meanwhile, the pitcher is a salesman—in the worst sense of that term, as embodied by Levitt's (1960, 1962) merciless critique of the selling orientation. The pitcher wants to persuade the batter to swing at a bad pitch. His art is deception, misrepresentation, and chicanery. As the consumer of pitches, the batter's best interests are directly antithetical to those of the pitcher. This tension was beautifully captured in a poem by Robert Francis

(1976) called "Pitcher":

His art is eccentricity, his aim

How not to hit the mark he seems to aim at,

His passion how to avoid the obvious,

His technique how to vary the avoidance.

The others throw to be comprehended.

He throws to be a moment misunderstood.

Yet not too much. Not errant, arrant, wild,

But every seeming aberration willed.

Not to, yet still, still to communicate

Making the batter understand too late

(Gillman 1985, p. 32).

I do not wish to suggest that all or even most salesmen behave in the product-oriented manner of Levitt's selling orientation nor with the deception of Francis' baseball pitcher. But some do. And we should not blind ourselves to that fact either. Nor should we blithely assume that, as marketing manager, the catcher always strives to keep the pitcher honest. Often the catcher does ask the pitcher to throw strikes. But even the most artful spitballer needs a little help from his backstop. However, that is not the important point.

The important point is that the consumer researcher resembles an outfielder. As a scientist interested in explanation (why or how might the batter swing at the next pitch) and prediction (when and where will a fly ball come floating into the outfield), he focuses primarily on the customer. Watching the batter—his stance, his swing, how the ball leaves his bat, where the ball travels—becomes his chief preoccupation.

The outfielder is also an artist. He plays the key role in one of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring moments in all sports. I refer to the towering fly ball—the high arching trajectory—majestic in its soaring freedom, seemingly unfettered in its flight, apparently capable of a path that might take it anywhere but that just happens to take it, as if by magic, into the tiny crevice of the fielder's outstretched glove. Thus, the outfielder participates in a visual phenomenon that seems at once entirely surprising, yet somehow completely inevitable. Just as an artist creates unity-in-variety or resolution of departure from structure or order out of chaos (Holbrook and Zirlin 1985), the outfielder turns deviation into reconciliation and tension into resolution. In this capacity, he again resembles the consumer researcher engaged in theory development, who in turn resembles the artist engaged in creation (Holbrook 1984). And his motivation is essentially similar: joyful exploration of a phenomenon found fascinating, namely the batter's manner of consuming the product delivered by the pitcher or even the fungo hitter's manner of swatting fly balls when there is no pitcher at all. As Robert Redford said from his hospital bed in *The Natural*, "God, I love baseball." As Ernie Banks used to say nearly every time he came to the ball park, "It looks like a good day for a game; let's play two." In the unforgettable words of Roy Campanella, "To play baseball, you gotta have a lot of little boy in you.

So, when we say colloquially that an idea or a suggestion "comes out of left field," we may subconsciously mean something very closely linked to this image of the outfielder. We refer to something unexpected, divergent, or even wildly improbable that somehow magically fits. We refer to the liberating sense of fun suggested by the old Von Tilzer and Norworth song:

Take me out to the ball game;

Take me out to the crowd.

Buy me some peanuts and Crackerjacks;

I don't care if I never come back.

We refer to the vantage point of playfulness that informs all truly creative activity.

One example of these playful roots to creativity was brilliantly encapsulated in the following brief dialogue between Leopold, Adrian, and Andrew in Woody Allen's *Midsummer's Sex Comedy*:

Leopold: So, you're an inventor, eh?

Andrew: Hmn, a crackpot inventor. I help people with their investments until there's nothing left....

Adrian: You know, Andrew's invented a wedding present for you and Ariel.... Tell them about that.

Andrew: It's nothing.... It's a silly apparatus that takes the bones out of fish, you know.

That's all. Or, if you prefer, you know, although there's no point to it, it puts bones into fish.

What a perfect nonconformist working of the mind on display! What a clear example of a thought from left field! Let's turn the handle backwards and see what happens. Ah, yes, it puts bones into fish, though this serves no useful purpose. What a marvelous evocation of the artist's ability to take intellectual risks, almost as if by faith or duty:

The responsibility...of the intellectual...(is) to try as best we can to live our convictions. I think the person who lives the risks of his conviction, of his passion...won't sizzle at the last judgment.... you leave any city rather than sacrifice to it what bit of truth possesses you or what you believe to be the truth (George Steiner, quoted by the *New York Times* 1985, p. 22E).

Many people have found—and sometimes lost—the same feeling in baseball:

I lost interest in spectator sports the day the Dodgers left Brooklyn, which was also the day I became a cynic. As a kid, I spent nearly every weekend—and almost all of my allowance—in the second tier at Ebbets Field cheering Gil Hodges, Roy Campanella, Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snider and the rest of the great team. The Dodgers were the good guys in the terrible fight against hate and racism, and they seemed to say, somehow, that Brooklyn was a more humane, liberal and moral place than, say, St. Louis. They deserved our loyalty. Then one day they moved to Los Angeles for something as trivial as money. I have never again been to a professional sports event (Reinhold 1984, p. 38).

Reinhold's description of the disillusionment he felt when the Dodgers left New York for California reminds me of the way the Yankee fans responded to Reggie Jackson twenty years later. Jackson was a power slugger from Babe Ruth's hit-a-home-run-or-strike-out school of batsmanship. But Reggie would shy away from running into the fence when chasing a fly ball, would complain if asked to play the role of designated hitter so as to let a more talented fielder occupy right field, and would still demand ever higher salaries. Reggie finished by getting traded to the California Angels and by leaving the Yankee fans in a state of disenchantment.

Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled; Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides, Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world.... Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt

with ruth And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth ("Lycidas," 11. 154-164).

SWEET LOU COMES HOME

Perhaps instructively, my own greatest baseball hero has been—not Willie Hays, Mickey Mantle, Hank Aaron, or Dave Winfield—but rather Sweet Lou Piniella, left-fielder for the New York Yankees during the last ten years of his career. Other players have been fletcher of foot (Mays), stronger in muscle power (Mantle), higher in batting average (Aaron), and much better paid (Winfield). But Sweet Lou was the quintessential ballplayer. Whereas his teammates resembled college professors (Reggie Jackson), TV comedians (Mickey Rivers), movie stars (Bucky Dent), gangsters (Goose Gosage), truck drivers (Don Mattingly), politicians (Tommy John), or dentists (Ron Davis), Lou Piniella looked like a baseball player and nothing else. With his square jaw, steady gaze, and incredibly smooth swing, he resembled the prototype; but, in spirit and love for the game, he approached the Platonic Ideal.

Lou would play in pain. Lou would cheerfully crash into the fence in pursuit of a fly ball. Lou would line a clutch single over the shortstop's head, time after time. Lou never hassled anybody about his salary. He simply took all the risks and tried with all his heart because he loved to play the game. As he approached the plate, the fans would begin a chorus of "Looo-oooo-oooo-oooo" The fans loved Lou because Lou loved baseball. In a radio interview just after his final game, he declared:

It's been a lot of fun. It really has.... It's been a thrill.... I enjoyed it. I had goosebumps out there the whole day.... I play the game with emotion.... The fun I've had playing baseball will be with me the rest of my life.

This moment did not mean the end of Sweet Lou Piniella's career with the Yankees. A short time later, on "Lou Piniella Day" at Yankee Stadium, he told his fans, "This is not a farewell, this is only a hello," and added, "The good thing is that I'm not going anywhere." Indeed, he has remained and has returned for another year as batting instructor and coach. During games, he has sat on the bench at the right hand, first, of Yogi Berra and, more recently, of Billy Martin. When Martin was injured in Texas, Piniella filled in as manager. He is widely regarded as Martin's likely and logical successor in that role. It appears that, far from fading into oblivion, Sweet Lou has come home.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more, For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead, Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor. So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed, And yet anon repairs his drooping head, And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore Flames in the forehead of the morning sky ("Lycidas," 11. 165-171).

THE SHEPHERDS WEEP NO MORE

As I began by saying, my story needs a hopeful ending. We have talked about Hattie and the Baltimore Sun, about Sweet Lou Piniella in left field, and about the consumer researcher as Lycidas sunk beneath the watery floor of managerial relevance. All three metaphors permit optimistic resolutions. The sun sinks, but rises again tomorrow morning. Sweet Lou retires but comes home as the Yankees' batting coach. Similarly, Lycidas dies but can himself be brought back to life:

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more; Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore, In thy large recompense, and shalt be good To all that wander in that perilous flood ("Lycidas," 11. 182-185).

In response to the question "Whither ACR?," the members of this association have a choice. We can resurrect Lycidas, or we can bury him under the sea. We can celebrate the homecoming of Sweet Lou Piniella, or we can root for Reggie to hit another long one and milk the Angels for a few more points on his salary. We can strive to bring daylight back into the field, or we can simply announce that we are here to collect for the sun. Conversely, we can strive for managerial relevance in order to earn some big consulting fees or to win some big research grants, or we can try hard merely because we love to play consumer research. My own personal preferences lean heavily toward the latter possibility. I believe that consumer research must put the consumer at its center and that for us marketing is, at best, peripheral and parasitic on the role of consumer behavior. I believe that consumers are as central to business as are managers. I believe that both deserve study, but that some have chosen to put the former first, that those people call themselves consumer researchers, and that they live here—here at ACR, where we must always remember that our focus on the consumer takes precedence, that marketing variables attain importance only on that basis, and that, far from damaging or misleading our field of inquiry, this focus continues to serve as its main source of interest and inspiration, its spring of wonderment and delight.

Finally, I want to close by thanking the participants in this session entitled "Whither ACR?" Together, their efforts have shown: (1) that real differences still exist in the views of ACR members on the purpose(s) of the Association; (2) that answers to the question "Whither ACR?" will depend on how we approach and perhaps eventually reconcile these differences; (3) that our cooperative effort to make these differences clear may have moved us as far as we can presently go toward reaching a consensus; and (4) that it may therefore be time to put the issue back in mothballs for another ten years or so until we can more closely approach some kind of resolution.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills, While the still morn went out with sandals grey: He touched the tender stops of various quills, With eager thought warbling his Doric lay; And now the sun had stretched out all the hills, And now was dropped into the western bay; At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue: To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new ("Lycidas," 11. 186-193).

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