A non-pejorative counterpart for a slur S is a word C that applies to the same things that users of S take S to apply to, but without the derogatory force that S conveys. For instance, 'black' is a non-pejorative counterpart for the N-word. In this talk I seek to challenge the assumption that, for a slur S with non-pejorative counterpart C, the meaning of C is part of the meaning of S. This assumption is widespread: it is held both by pragmatist accounts of slurs, according to which S is semantically equivalent to C, and semantic accounts of slurs, according to which S is expressive of derogatory content additional to the non-pejorative content of C. In the first half of the talk, I urge that this assumption is false. It is no part of the meaning of the N-word to classify subjects as black. To think otherwise is to construe slur-users as having more in common with 'us' (those for whom slurs are useless) than they in fact do. The error here, on the part of the orthodoxy, is two-fold: first, there is a failure to acknowledge the fundamentality of the slur-user's mistake; and second, the attitude taken towards the target group by speakers without a use for slur words is likewise misrepresented. In the final parts of the talk, I encourage an alternative conception of slurs on which they are failed attempts at classification. I argue that slur-users, in their use of slurs, betray a conceptual bankruptcy that is disruptive of their ability to think of their targets at all. Although this is apt to encourage parallels with empty terms such as 'phlogiston', I suggest that such parallels can only be taken so far.