

SPECTRUM

Call me what the hell you like

"That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." And who would dare to argue with the Bard himself. Yet in many cultures to name something is to control it. It's a tenacious belief: witness the time, energy and ink squandered by scientists in order to establish priority in naming newly discovered minerals, fossils, animals, plants, elements, processes. The principle extends into the realms of slang too - words have power, encapsulating something of the intentions of the nominator towards the nominated. "The love that dare not speak its name" has provided a rich lode, well minded through the years, and the process works in both directions. On the one hand, terms of abuse are many; designations derived by oppressors to denigrate the oppressed or despised. Actually, as slang, these terms tend to be of only local value, liable to misinterpretation when exported - where I grew up a "fag" was a cigarette, a "faggot" a spicy sausage, a "dike" or "dyke" was a dry or water-filled ditch, and if you woke up in the morning feeling a "little queer", the less said about it the better!

Terms change with time, as language itself evolves. There is reasonable evidence to suggest that "gay" was used to describe homosexual men in Shakespeare's day, and again in late Victorian London. One hundred years after Shakespeare, when a homosexual underground seems to have existed in Britain, Holland and France, the preferred term was "molly" or even "queen" - male brothels being called "molly-houses." Later came "sarah-jane" and "maryanne," a pattern of cross-gender identity ran strongly through the slang of the 17th of mid-19th centuries, possibly a reaction to the King James Bible's condemnation of "effeminacy." Of lesbians at this time there is little trace.

"The emergence of the modern social sciences during the closing decades of the last century inspired a rash of new names - reflecting Victorian science's love affair with classification and nomenclature. A strong body of opinion considered gay men to represent an intermediate or third sex. Confusion reigned with regards lesbians, as no-one was at all certain whether women had an identifiable sexuality at all, and all sexually assertive women tended to be called "mannish." The third sex was subdivided into "perverts" who retained a "masculine" dominant sexual role, and "inverts" who though physically male assured a "feminine" or submissive sexual role. Around 1869 the Hungarian psychologist Kartbeny coined the terms "homosexual" and "homosexuality," though they do not appear to have gained currency much before the turn of the century. The perjorative "homo" has a more recent vintage, originating among folk not overly concerned with the subtle distinctions between Latin and Greek roots!

Advocates for the 'third sex', who became more visible and vocal, especially in Germany during the 1890's, rejected the notion of defining human beings on the basis of one characteristic, especially by a quasi-medi-

cal term. The word "Uranian" became popular, derived from a German source ("Uranus" is not such a source of risibility in a language depressingly barren of double meanings!). At the same time, "Sapphist" or "Lesbian" entered usage too.

Those who cannot appreciate how "scientific" terms can cause offense or reflect prejudice might like to consider how at about the same time anthropologists and ethnographers adopted the term "negroid" for blacks, while using the term "Caucasian" or "Caucasoid" for whites. One concentrates on skin-colour alone, while the other embraces a sense of history, culture and language. No one seemed to think that "blancoid" was at all suitable as a term for whites, though it would logically share a Spanish root!

Anyway, from "Uranian" came the English slang "Urning" and "ernest", common in the London of the 1880's and 1890's. Ignorance of this last

gem spoils understanding of an outrageous pun in the title of Oscar Wilde's finest comedy.

During the late 1960's the whole matter repeated itself. "Gay" was adopted as the gender-inclusive term preferred by the Stonewall generation. "Uranian" seemed just a trifle quaint, and had the unfortunate association with a certain planet before NASA sanitized this for the purposes of the press-coverage of the Voyager II encounter. Needless to say, folk who would never have been heard using the term "gay" under any circumstances, have been lamenting this case of lexicographic hijacking ever since - even the "Daily Gleaner" still sees fit to publish supercilious editorial comment on the subject. They should not bother themselves, the red-neck tendency have been using "gay" as a term of abuse for a good two decades!

In the more militant and angry, in-your-face mood of the late 1980's

The condom controversy

The latest initiative by St. Thomas University to remove condoms from vending machines on its campus has sparked considerable controversy. That is not surprising. Such a move appears to fly in the face of the general trend on most, if not all, universities across Canada.

If I have it right the Catholic Church (and the STU Administration) are placing the issue of condoms, STD's and AIDS in the larger context of human sexuality. By their action they are basically stating that the overall purpose and meaning of our sexuality needs to be taken more seriously today than is generally the case, especially by students on a university campus.

Human sexual expression, the Church argues, ought to be loving, joyful, healthy, responsible and life-giving. When it is such it is integrated into the totality of a person's life. Genital sexual union, which is only one part of the whole sexual language, is intended to be a profound expression of mutual and committed love: full mutual giving and receiving.

To this, the Church states, we must all strive. Genital sexuality is not forbidden fruit. To the contrary, it is precious fruit. But it ought not to be indulged in prematurely. It ought to be preserved until it is ripe and can be enjoyed to the fullest. The Church warns that when genital sexuality is reduced to "any time, and context and with any one," it may become little more than momentary physical gratification, complicated by resulting emotional pain and disappointment, with the added risk of disease, even death.

In spite of such warnings, is everyone willing, or able, to live up to this ideal? And, how much has been done to help us understand *why* we ought to strive for this ideal, if at all?

The complaint made by not a few students in that morality should not be imposed, especially at a university. As an Aquinian editorial put it, university is a place "where students

are encouraged to grow as individuals, to learn to think for themselves, to make choices for themselves." Students, it asserts, should not be *told* how to live.

With this I fully concur. Students ought to be treated as adults. They ought to be, after all, mature enough to make responsible decisions, and to act responsibly. There ought to be no doubt about this.

Just as it is ideal to think that everyone will abide by the Church's teaching on sexuality, so may it strike on as ideal to think that all students (all people, for that matter) will always act responsibly. That point was driven home by what I read in the classified section of last week's *Brunswickan*.

Dear Peter:

You probably don't remember me but we met Frosh night. We did the big thing. I am now 4 1/2 months pregnant. I need some support. If you are still as nice as you were frosh night I know you will help.

Desperately needing help.

A young woman in desperation? Indeed! A responsible action on Frosh night?

Pregnancy, of course, is only one of a number of possible outcomes of any "brief encounter". Some of the outcomes can be devastating. Disease, infertility, even death, can result. We are discovering that, and not least by some high profile personalities.

How can these outcomes be prevented, or curtailed? How can we minimize, or stop, the worst case scenarios? AIDS Awareness people assert that making condoms readily available is the only logical solution. If students are going to engage in casual sex, and the statistics tell us that a very large percentage of them do, then it would be irresponsible not to educate them regarding "safer sex". And, according to them, the condom is basic to "safer sex".

To assume, or hope, that no one will engage in casual sex now, or be exposed to its dangers, is wishful

Positively Pink by Adrian Park

groups like ACT-UP and "Queer Nation" have recovered the old perjorative as a mark of pride. The slogans "We're queer, we're here, get used to it!" and "Queer . . . can't beat the feeling!" may shock an older generation of activists, but they express a genuine sense of outrage as validly as "Fags in Frocks" and "Dikes on Bikes" did 15 years ago. When the worst insult the peanut gallery can command today is "politically correct", these slogans have a certain eloquence!

In the final analysis, it matters little what we call ourselves, or are called by our detractors. Some of the energy currently expended in needless

internecine argument could be far better channelled - into securing legal equality for starters. If I am in as much physical danger as a "gay" as I am as a "faggot", then what does it matter? If I can be fired or evicted for being "gay", as readily as being a "fruit", the distinction becomes academic. Actually, you can call me what the hell you like, just don't call me late for dinner!

There will be a meeting of FLAG on Wednesday, February 12, 1992 at 7:00 p.m. in Edmund Casey Hall (STU) Rm. T14. New members are welcome to attend.

Metanoia by John Valk

thinking. Thus, to educate according to the proper use of the condom may go a long way in preventing the spread of certain diseases.

Condoms may be necessary, but are they the complete answer? Condom education leaves unanswered a vast array of moral questions. It is itself not value neutral, no matter how objective its advocates seek to be. One may even ask whether handing out free condoms (in the SUB cafeteria at Winter Carnival, for example) does not itself promote casual sex. And where does that put us?

In all of this I'm reminded of former US Surgeon General Dr. Everett Koops' response to the question "Do you advocate using condoms to avoid the spread of AIDS?" To this he replied, *I never answer questions about condoms directly. I counsel two ideas. The best way to avoid getting AIDS, and I recommend them, are by abstinence (from casual sex) and mutual faithful monogamy. Those are the best ways to avoid AIDS. If you don't intend to do that, protect yourself.* His concluding remark, however, is most noteworthy: "the latex device is more trustworthy than those who use them to avoid AIDS."

We don't live in an ideal world. Neither our intentions nor actions

may be ideal. Nonetheless, we must take action. What is needed is well-rounded education in human sexuality. Many alternatives need to be seriously considered. No one should be given mere lip service, regardless of what the statistics tell us.

It would seem, therefore, that seriously encouraging sexual abstinence outside of long-term committed relationships is a necessary first step. Long term monogamous relationships are to be seriously promoted, and more highly regarded. Secondly, we all need to become more consciously aware of the differences between meaningful sex and casual sex, with a clearer understanding of the many benefits of the former and the drawbacks of the latter. The male gender in particular needs to be socialized to distinguish between the two, as well as take responsibility for their actions.

The condom controversy will soon dissipate. The problems, of course, will not. But we will advance considerably if our approach is more well rounded, if we educate the whole person. We must make available all we can, with the realization that individuals themselves *will*, nonetheless, make their own choice.

Arrogance lives! *Continued from page 9*

desirable to trash out our environment, kill each other in the name of religion, or whatever has been voted on by some legislature somewhere.

At this point my mind was reeling, Dr. Know went on to say, many subjects can't be discussed in groups larger than three people even now. And certainly we couldn't print anything in the *Brunz* about that "stuff".

"You mean stuff like Chevalier being wrong and it was Steve not Eve?" "YUP!!" It was then I awoke, sweating, with my heart throbbing. I looked outside, the snow was white, the air was crystal clear, and I thought I'd better get up, read a book (without pictures) or maybe just go for a walk and enjoy it while I could.