

## EDITORIAL



# Oxymorons, wine and haematology

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*'A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Perian Spring'.*

Alexander Pope. 1688–1744. An Essay on Criticism. 1709. English poet and satirist (Fig. 1).

An oxymoron is a figure of speech which places contradictory words next to each other. Since the enactment of 'Brexit' a number of commentators have started to believe that 'Great Britain' is perhaps an oxymoron. David Mills [1], writing in the Sunday Times in August, uses a pun on the title 'Great Britain' and calls his book review 'Grape Britain' when reviewing Henry Jeffrey's book 'Vines in a Cold Climate' [2] tracing the recent history of English sparkling wine. For a wine to be called champagne, it must come from one of the following areas: Aube, Côte des Blancs, Côte de Cézanne, Montagne de Reims and Vallée de la Marne. Reims and Epernay are the commercial centres of the area. The French are, correctly, quite sensitive about this. There are many sparkling wines in the world but they cannot use the designation champagne unless they come from the above areas.

In England, Sandy and Stuart Moss chose Nyetimber in Sussex as their area to make sparkling wine. They planted Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier vines. When English sparkling wines began to win accolades in international competitions famous French champagne houses, such as Pommery and Taittinger began setting up vineyards in England and some Californian wine makers followed suit. There are currently more than 100 producers in England. Nyetimber, Ridgeview, Gusbourne, Chapel Down and Balney Wine Estate are some of the largest. Some grow, ferment and bottle their own sparkling wine and some supply grapes to large producers. One such person was the late Steven Spurrier (Fig. 2) a wine critic, art collector and writer and although an Englishman, had a wine shop in Paris called L'Académie du Vin. I first met him when he was launching his English sparkling wine in Castellina in Chianti in 2018 and his latest book. A charming person, he was the subject of a film (*Bottle Shock*) about the famous 'blind tasting' he organised of French and Californian wines which resulted in an unexpected victory for California and changed the 'world of wine' [3]. Unfortunately, Spurrier died in 2021 depriving the wine world of a most knowledgeable and courteous individual. He wrote eight books including 'A Life in Wine'. I subsequently met him when we were both guests at a dinner in the Nittardi vineyard in Chianti, hosted by its owner, Peter Femfert.

Spurrier returned to England from Paris in the 1980s, where he became a successful maker of sparkling wine in Dorset called Bride Valley (Fig. 3). He felt the chalky soil (similar to that found in the Champagne area in France) would be an ideal terroir. This

proved correct, although his production is a relatively modest affair growing chardonnay, pinot noir and meunier on a 10-hectare vineyard. The maximum production is around 20,000 bottles but varies from year to year.

I was somewhat taken aback to read Alice Lascelles extolling the merits of stemless wine glasses [4] recently. I particularly dislike this type of glass [5] especially for drinking white wine but I was even more surprised that she recommended putting wine glasses into the dishwasher. As all wine drinkers know, wine glasses should never be washed in soapy water especially if used for sparkling wine. Wash in warm water and rinse in cold for the best shine.

My favourite haematological oxymoron is 'Autologous Bone Marrow (or mobilized peripheral blood) Transplantation (ABMT)'. The preferred term is autografting but it seems that Autologous Transplantation has won out and is here to stay. For patients who were deemed to be too old for Allogeneic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT) or who did not have a donor, the use of autografting



**Fig. 1 Alexander Pope (1688–1744).** Painting attributed to Jonathan Richardson, Museum of Fine Art, Boston, USA. Public Domain.



**Fig. 2 Steven Spurrier.** 2016. Wikipedia.

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**Fig. 3** A bottle of Bride Valley sparkling wine. A bottle of Rosé Bella English sparkling wine. Bella was Steven Spurrier's wife.

seemed to be a reasonable alternative to HSCT in so far as it would facilitate the administration of high-dose chemotherapy, with or without Total Body Irradiation (TBI), followed by 'rescue' with the administration of the patient's cryopreserved bone marrow. This procedure allowed high doses of chemotherapy to be used and the problem of graft-versus-host disease (GvHD) was avoided.

The obvious intellectual flaw in this approach is the possibility of harvesting malignant cells and reinfusing them, thus, possibly contributing to disease relapse. Since 1991, when Gribben et al. reported a decreased risk of relapse in patients with B-Cell NHL following immunologic in vitro marrow 'purging' and ABMT [6], many investigators have examined the results. Unfortunately purging of bone marrow in autologous transplantation (ABMT) for non-Hodgkins lymphoma (NHL) does not affect the rate of haematologic engraftment or risk of procedure-related deaths. Thus, there is no advantage to the use of purged compared to unpurged bone marrow [7]. As Stephen Forman and Joseph Alvarnas said: 'Graft purging in ABMT: a promise not quite fulfilled' [8].

ABMT in the treatment of Multiple Myeloma has been quite popular with many investigators. However, the prognosis has radically altered with the use of immunomodulators (IMiDS), bortezomib and anti-CD38 monoclonal antibodies; therefore, the role of ABMT will require further studies to assess its efficacy and effect on long-term survival.

I sincerely hope that you do not need to avail of any form of chemo/immunotherapy or HSCT, allo or auto, and can keep enjoying drinking wine and remember sparkling wine from England is excellent.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SRM is the sole author of the editorial. All ideas and writing are by SRM.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests.