

# A New Interpretation of Sonnet 112

*Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has actually been abolished? Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten ...*

**George Orwell, 1984**

The editors of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* have found Sonnet 112 so densely patterned that no amount of navigation gives them a clear understanding of its complex territory. Stephen Booth suspects it to be unfinished or "one that Shakespeare abandoned in frustration" because "it is atypical of the others only in being incomprehensible."<sup>1</sup> This statement indirectly supports my thesis that 112's traditional interpretation is not the one intended by the poet. The editors have leaped over the Stratford man's biographical gap by replacing the literal with the hyperbolic. When we take Christopher Marlowe to be the writer of Sonnet 112, the traditional interpretation's hyperbolic *you are my all the world* theme becomes concrete, and it is not the world that is dead to the poet, but the poet who is dead to the world.

It is not surprising the sonnet stating the poet is dead to *all the world* is difficult to penetrate. I propose the reason for 112's density and resulting perplexity is the poet's use of ambiguity to conflate the cause for his faked death, the details of the killing, the new pseudonym, his disgraced name and exile from England. By definition ambiguity is unclear because it embodies two meanings. This doubleness can be obtained by using a word that has two or more definitions, syntactical rearrangement, the joining of two separate words as they are spoken, or intentions that drive both forward and backward. All of these techniques are utilized in Sonnet 112.

The majority of editors agree that the lines impeding our understanding of Sonnet 112 are 7, 8, and 14. I suggest these crux lines can only be solved by giving a new interpretation to line 12, which the editors have glossed over without question. Once the new interpretation is given to line 12, we will discover the poet gave us a clue in line 13 that supports this new reading.

***Line 12: Mark how with my neglect I do dispense.***

Line 12 is telling us to *Mark* (pay attention) *how with neglect* the poet is going to *dispense* his words in the couplet that follows. I am employing the same meaning for *dispense* that Shakespeare used in *King Henry VI, Part II: I.iv: Canst thou dispense [make arrangements] with heaven for such an oath?* The poet is commanding us to look for an error he intentionally made somewhere in his arrangement of the couplet. Line 13's *You are so strongly in my purpose*

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Edited With Analytic Commentary* (2000) - p.369. This book provides the most thorough analytic commentary ever written on *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

*bred* remains thematically consistent with the *you are my all the world* theme of the preceding lines; therefore, the neglectful way the poet is going to dispense his words must be in:

*Line 14: That all the world besides me thinks y'are dead*

which is not thematically consistent with the previous lines. If the last line is to remain consistent with the *you are my all the world* theme, it ought to read: That all the world besides *you* thinks *me* dead; therefore, the poet's *neglect* in *dispensing* with the last two lines was his inversion of the pronouns *me* and *you* (*y'are*).

Now that line 14 has been corrected as the poet commanded, we can go back to:

*Line 13: You are so strongly in my purpose bred*

and discover it gives us the clue that supports this reading. Booth speculates the construction of line 13 is highly unidiomatic; therefore, it may be a play on "my riddle".<sup>2</sup> I suggest it is, and the riddle's solution supports the new reading of line 14. Let us look at line 13 again. *Purpose* means "the object toward which one is aiming," and *bred* means "the thing that brings about a result". When we take line 13 to be a riddle, we can objectify *You are* by placing a "The" before it and an "is" after it, which gives us: The *You are* is *so strongly in my purpose* (the object toward which I'm aiming) *bred* (the cause that will bring about the result). In other words, the "*You are*" in line 13 is strongly the poet's purpose to produce, to breed, line 12's commanded correction. Can it be mere coincidence that it is precisely the "you are" (*y'are*) that needs to be exchanged with *me* in line 14 to solve the riddle of this densely patterned sonnet? Line 12 tells us to pay attention to how neglectfully the poet is going to make the arrangement of his words in the couplet, and line 13 gives us the clue to the *y'are* in line 14 that needs correction.

It has always been the obviously misplaced *y'are* in line 14 that has stumped the editors of Sonnet 112 so much that the majority of them rub it out and replace it with "they are". Most modern sonnet editions print the line "That all the world besides methinks they are dead" instead of retaining Thorpe's 1609 printing "*That all the world besides me thinks y'are dead*". As you will have noticed, these editors also replace Thorpe's two-word *me thinks* with a contracted one-word "*methinks*". Thorpe's original spelling of both *me thinks* and *y'are* is crucial to understanding this sonnet if we are to obtain the poet's self-identifying declaration in line 14 that *all the world* thinks he is dead. It is

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Booth, *op. cit.* p.364. Booth's explanation of this line is as follows: *in my purpose bred* . . . cherished in my intentions, established as my concern (a gloss dictated by context and derived by extension from various meanings of *purpose* {"that which one aims to achieve," "that for which one acts or exists," "one's intended meaning," etc}), and from *bred* meaning "brought up," "nurtured"). Since the construction is highly unidiomatic, Shakespeare might mean to play on my *purpose* meaning "my discourse," "what I say" (for *purpose* meaning "discourse," "conversation," see FQ III.iii.4 and "listen our purpose" in the Folio texts of *Much Ado* III.i.12-where it appears in context of *bred* and of the topics of this sonnet), or conceivably, on my *purpose* meaning "my riddle" (compare FQ III.x.8: "oft purposes, oft riddles he devysd").

imperative we get to the root of the editors' reasons for altering the original 1609 printing of line 14.

In 1780 Edmond Malone wrote the first critical analyses of *Shake-speare's Sonnets* in his two volume *Supplement To The Edition Of Shakespeare's Plays Published In 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*. It is Malone's alteration of line 14 editors cite as the one they are adhering to when they alter Thorpe's original 1609 printing of the line.

*Thorpe's line 14: That all the world besides me thinks y'are dead.*

*Malone's line 14: That all the world besides methinks are dead.*

It is of interest that Edmond Malone's first response to line 14 was not the emendation succeeding editor's have adhered to for more than two hundred years, but the same one being proposed in this paper. Here is Malone's first comment on line 14:

*That all the world besides me thinks y'are dead. Thus the quarto. The context rather requires that we should read 'That all the world besides you thinks me dead. i.e. all the world except you &c. so before: None else to me, nor I to none alive'.*

**Malone**

George Steevens responded to Malone's first interpretation:

*I would read, if alteration be necessary, "That all the world beside, methinks, is (or are) dead. The sense would be this-I pay no regard to the sentiments of mankind; and observe how I account for this my indifference. I think so much of you, that I have no leisure to be anxious about the opinions of others. I proceed as if the world, yourself excepted, were no more.*

**Steevens**<sup>33</sup>

In Malone's more complete edition of his former work, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* published by Boswell in 1790, we find that he has not only succumbed to Steevens' reading of the line, he has altered the line within the text to adapt it to that reading by contracting Thorpe's two-word *me thinks* and replacing the *y'are* with "they are":

*That all the world besides methinks they are dead.*

Malone's comment about this alteration was, "The quarto has - That all the world besides methinks y'are dead. Y'are was, I suppose, an abbreviation for they are or th'are. Such unpleasing contractions are often found in our old poets."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Edmond Malone, *Supplement To The Edition Of Shakespeare's Plays Published In 1778 By Samuel Johnson and George Steevens* (1780) - p.672.

<sup>4</sup> Edmond Malone, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, Volume 10 (1790) - p.283.

There are several problems with this emendation. First, Steevens' interpretation altogether leaves out the *y'are* in line 14 ("That all the world beside, methinks, is (or are) dead"). Second, when Malone relinquished his instinctual pronoun reversal response to Thorpe's line 14 for Steevens' reading, he had to do something with the *y'are* Steevens had left out, so he rewrote the *y'are* into "they are", assuming the 'y' in *y'are* stood for a degenerate form of the Old English thorn that had evolved into "th" by 1609. The first problem with his supposition is that the thorn usage most often stood for "this", "that", and "the" (Ye Old English Tea Shop), and not for pronouns such as "they". The second problem is that the 1609 printing of Sonnet 112 itself contradicts his supposition of the degenerate 'y' thorn usage in its first line, which uses the evolved thorn:

*Line 1: Your love and pity doth th'impression fill.*

In spite of this, Malone's supposition has turned into an assumption by editors of the Sonnets and most modern editions have altered 112's original text to 'they are dead', thereby thoroughly erasing the poet's treasure.

The third problem with the traditional interpretation of 112 is Malone's contraction of Thorpe's two-word "*me thinkes*" in the Boswell edition. His comment on his alteration of the line, "The quarto has - That all the world besides methinks . . ." was wrong. It was Steevens who first contracted the word in his commentary on Malone's first reading of line 14 in the 1790 *Supplements*. Thorpe's 1609 edition printed a two-word "*me thinkes*". This is an important distinction. In the *New Cambridge Shakespeare*, Evans says the reason for contracting Thorpe's original two-word spelling of *me thinkes* into *methinks* is that the poet likely intended it to be one word, but it was usually printed as two in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century and always in the Sonnets.<sup>5</sup> Not one of the other usages in the Sonnets, however, has *me* as part of a prepositional phrase to be kept separated from the verb *thinkes* as does the new reading of 112's line 14. I will place commas in Thorpe's 1609 line to illustrate:

*That all the world, besides me, thinkes y'are dead.*

It is precisely this separation of *me* and *thinkes* that enables the poet's commanded correction to read: *That all the world, besides you, thinks me dead*. The other sonnets Evans mentions have *me* and *thinkes* subject-verb to each other so that they can be rewritten as one word without harming the poet's intentions:

*Me thinkes no face so gracious is as mine*

**Sonnet 62**

*And yet me thinkes I have Astronomy*

**Sonnet 14**

<sup>5</sup> G. Blakemore Evans (Ed.), *The New Cambridge Shakespeare: The Sonnets* (1996) - p.223.

*So your sweet hue, which me thinks still doth stand*

**Sonnet 104**

The fourth problem with the editors' reading of line 14 is the meaning they attach to the word *besides*. Peter Farey has pointed out that, "Most incredibly, none of the editors (including Malone) have examined just how Shakespeare used the word 'besides' elsewhere in the Works. On no occasion is the word used in the sense of 'other than', 'with the exception of', or 'excluding'." Mr. Farey listed three Shakespearean usages for 'besides':

1. Out of some mental state ("how fell you besides your five witts?" TN);
2. More, as an additional matter;
3. As well as, in addition to, over and above.

He suggested the most appropriate meaning for line 14's *besides* is "as well as" (or: "as well").<sup>6</sup> Mr. Farey's discovery cancels out both Steevens' reading and Malone's later acceptance of it because their interpretation of line 14's *besides* is dependent upon it meaning "excluding" or "except". I refer back to Steevens' attempt to give the line meaning: "I proceed as if the world, yourself excepted, were no more." When the editors' "except" meaning is replaced with the correct "as well as" or "as well" meaning, their reading translates into: That all the world as well methinks they are dead. The incorrectness of that interpretation is best revealed when read after line 13:

*You are so strongly in my purpose bred  
That all the world as well methinks they are dead.*

Compare that reading of the couplet with the new interpretations' use of the "as well as" meaning:

*You are so strongly in my purpose bred  
That all the world as well as you thinks me dead.*

The new line-by-line interpretation of Sonnet 112 will show that the poet's intended meaning of the couplet paraphrases the motto on the Cambridge portrait thought to be of Christopher Marlowe:

*That which nourishes me destroys me.*

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Farey's interpretation of line 14 is "That, as well as thinking all the world is dead, I think you are too." He states, "...this is a possible (if only tongue in cheek) excuse for his neglect of the addressee. After all, who would not neglect someone if they thought him dead?"

### Crux Lines 7 and 8

- 7     *None else to me, nor I to none alive,*  
8     *That my steeled sense or changes right or wrong.*

The editors' interpretation of line 7 is generally "None else to me, nor I to none who are alive". Once we reverse the pronouns in line 14 to get the new interpretation that all the world thinks the poet is dead, we discover it echoes the last half of crux line 7 when the ambiguous sentence formation due to the absence of a comma is interpreted to mean "I, to none alive". Ambiguity can disregard the comma inserted into a line, such as when Othello reveals the instigator of the brawl (Iago) even as he seeks his identity: "*Tis monstrous. Iago, who began it?*" Ambiguity can also insert a comma that has been left out of a line, such as line 7's: *I to none alive*.

Most editors interpret line 8 as follows: That my hardened way of thinking [*my steeled sense*] changes right or wrong. They then link *my steeled sense* with line 10's *my adder's sense*, which they interpret to mean the poet speaking of his sins, so that his sinful ear *to critic and to flatterer stopped are*. This traditional reading attributes to the poet both a hardened sense and a sinful ear.

In their interpretation of line 8 the editors leave out the *or* that comes before *changes*. Although Booth points out the standard Renaissance use of "or ... or" was used where we would use "either ... or" this doesn't seem to clarify the use of line 8's two *ors*, for it gives us a pointless: That my steeled sense either changes right or wrong. The new interpretation sees the vagaries of construction in line 8 to be the price of double intent. The *or* drives both ways, and that is why the line has remained an elliptical crux for so long. The editors have missed ambiguity's sounded word "censor" in this line, which was the poet's reason for putting the *or* before *changes*: *That my steeled sense or* (censor) *changes right or wrong*. With stealthy juggling of diction and syntax, Marlowe slipped *censor* past his censor. The new reading redefines *my steeled sense* by utilizing this seemingly unnecessary *or*, thereby attributing the "hardened sense" not to the poet but to the poet's censor, Archbishop John Whitgift. This new reading also applies to *my adder's sense*, giving the "sinful ear" not to the poet but to the poet's censor.

The circumstantial evidence presented in the Coroner's Report revealing that Thomas Walsingham's personal employee was Marlowe's killer, coupled with Walsingham's role as Christopher Marlowe's patron and his powerful position between the Burghley/Cecil and Essex factions at the time of the Deptford affair, point to him being the recipient of Sonnet 112. The following interpretation of 112 is derived from this assumption, and it is supported by the sonnet's images relating to the cause, the wound, the weapon, the grave, the dead body, and the poet's resurrection under a pseudonym.



## Sonnet 112 Interpretation

1 *Your love and pity doth th'impression fill,*

2 *Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow,*

Marlowe has carefully chosen his words in these lines so they send forth two meanings: His fictional death and his resurrection under a pseudonym. The first two lines refer twice to the wound in the Coroner's Report (*impression, stamped*) and once to the area of the wound (*upon my brow*). They also refer to the necessary plea of self-defence Frizer gave (*vulgar scandal*) which stamped Marlowe publicly a coward for striking a man from behind. The underlying, second meaning of 112's first two lines refer not to the poet's emotion about the *scandal*, but to the thing the vulgar scandal has stamped upon the poet's brow.

The word "impression" comes from the Latin "inpressio" which means both "mark by pressure" and "edition of book". Walsingham does not *fill* the *impression* with *love and pity*, *love and pity* are cause for him to *fill* the *impression* with something else, something that *cures* the poet and *renews* him, just as the poet requested in the preceding sonnet:

*Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed  
your pity is enough to cure me.*

### Sonnet 111

While the editors read this *pity* as in itself enough to satisfy the poet, I suggest he has equated this *pity* with a specific action: the *renewal* of his life. The poet's *cure*, the *renewal* of the poet's life that Walsingham performs out of *pity* is a new name to put on Marlowe's works, the thing that fills the impression in the first line. In her analyses of this line, Katherine Duncan-Jones comes close to the new interpretation for *impression*, saying, "There may also be a notion of a printed book, perhaps written by the poet (cf. 111.6-7), whose title-page is stamped, or printed, in a disgraceful manner, but redeemed by the young man's love and pity."<sup>77</sup>

3 *For what care I who calls me well or ill,*

4 *So you ore-green my bad, my good allow?*

Booth points out that the use of adverbs with this sense of "to call" is not idiomatic, and suggests that it may be due to making the pun "who calls me Will". He points out that Jill, ill, and well are rhymed in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is therefore likely that "well" was pronounced "will" at that time, which gives support to the poet's intended pun.<sup>8</sup> Sonnets such as 29, 34, and 111 tell us that Marlowe does care about his disgraced name, so the overt meaning 'what care I whether people speak good or bad about me?'

<sup>7</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones (Ed.), *Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Sonnets* (2004) - p.334.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Booth, *op.cit.* - p.362

disguises the pun '*What care I who calls me William Shakespeare?*'. This meaning flows perfectly with lines 1-2 when read: Your love and pity doth the edition of the book (*impression*) supply with the inscription (*fill*) William Shakespeare, which *vulgar scandal* (my alleged disgraceful death) caused to be *stamped upon my brow*.

*Ore-green* is a concrete reference to the poet's fictional grave, a patch of ground that must be re-turfed after the body has been buried. The *bad* that is *ore-greened* is the fictional *coward* who made the *coward conquest of a wretches knife* in Sonnet 74. Walsingham has fictionally buried Marlowe and now he has done something that allows the dramatist/poet to live on (*allow my good?*). The question mark gives this line a sportive sarcastic tone: So you bury the so-called coward and atheist under the ground, allow my good (plays/poems) to live?

Lines 3-4 wrap up the first quatrain which seem to be the poet's response to discovering he now has a pseudonym that will allow his writing to live on, even though he has been buried (*ore-greened*).

5      *You are my All the world, and I must strive,*

6      *To know my shames and praises from your tongue,*

You are *my All the world* now that everyone else thinks I'm dead, and I must strive to know what others are saying about my disgraceful death (*shames*) and future works (*praises*) from you. Sonnet 81 echoes this *All the world* theme phrase, while at the same time confirming that the man from Stratford couldn't have been the writer of the works:

*Your name from hence immortal life shall have,  
Though I, once gone, to **all the world** must die<sup>9</sup>*

Lines 5-6, Sonnet 81

7      *None else to me, nor I to none alive,*

8      *That my steeled sense or changes right or wrong.*

If we read the end of line 7 as *I, to none alive* we find its echo in the concluding line of the sonnet once his intended error of pronoun reversal has been corrected: That All the world besides you *thinks me dead/I, to none alive*. If we read line 8 connecting *sense* and *or* to get the sounded *ensor* the meaning becomes 'my censor's hardened way of thinking' instead of the traditional 'poet's hardened way of thinking'. The new interpretation of these two lines gives us: There is none else in my opinion, including myself since I am alive to none, That my hardened censor changes his decisions for, whether he's right or wrong.

<sup>9</sup> My bolded emphasis.



The new interpretation reads lines 7-8 two ways just as it does lines 1-2, 3-4, and 13-14. The second reading: There is none else in contact with (*to*) me, nor am I alive to anyone, So that my stolen life can't change anything whether what you've done is right or wrong/whether the charges against me are right or wrong. This reading takes the *or* that drives both ways to be coupled with *changes*, rather than *sense*, giving it the meaning 'over changes' or 'make a difference'. In this context, *My steeled sense* sends out two meanings, each dependent on the poet using the ideational potential of *sense*. If we take *steeled* to mean 'cover' (the 'helmet' embodied in the pseudonym name William) and *sense* to mean 'sensibilities', we get 'my armoured sensibilities' which echoes both line 3's pun "what care I who calls me will" and the new interpretation of line 1's *the impression fill* as referring to the pseudonym. This meaning also contains within itself "my stolen life" (the past participle of "to steal"=stolen, senses=life). We can replace "my armoured sensibilities" with "stolen life" or even "steeled (knifed) life" and keep to the same intention in the line. It should be noted that Line 1 tells us there was a wound (*impression*), line 2 tells us where the wound was (*brow*), line 8 tells us what the weapon was (*steeled*, an echo of 74's *knife*).

This second quatrain seems to affirm that a great matter has been settled between the two men, the outcome being Walsingham is now Marlowe's *All the world*. I suggest that the preceding Sonnet 111's *double penance to correct correction* alludes to Marlowe's absence that day at Deptford and tells us he was not involved in the method they used to fake his death. That line seems to be telling Thomas that the poet will not ask him to make amends for this "sin" of making him out to be a man who would strike Ingram Frizer from behind. The poet uses the words "*double penance*" which implies that Walsingham has already expressed penance once through his grief over the way they had to contrive the death. This implication is supported by Sonnet 34:

*Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;  
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.*

**Lines 9-10, Sonnet 34**

The second *penance* expressed in 111's line 12 may be referring to some specific action Walsingham was considering that would *cure* Marlowe's disgraced name. We might infer this because he says *to correct correction*. The faking of Marlowe's death was Walsingham's *correction* of the lies in Baines' Note that could have led to Marlowe's being tortured and hanged. Sonnet 111 was his request to have Walsingham *renew* and *cure* him so he could answer the charges. Walsingham took another route, *renewing* and *curing* him by putting the pseudonym on *Venus and Adonis*. Lines 7 and 8 express the poet's succumbing to Walsingham's conclusion (guided by Burghley and Cecil) that it would be useless for him to "come back to life" and deny the charges whether the charges were *right or wrong*.

**9** *In so profound abyssm I throw all care*

Line 9 begins the third quatrain, which expresses Marlowe's resignation to the final decision he remain "dead". The new reading translates its meaning as follows: Into this life-changing grave where I am supposed to lie I throw my care of what others voices can do to me (prison, torture, hanging). The *abyssm* is his fictional grave in which he will be freefalling for the rest of his life.

**10** *Of others voices, that my adder's sense*

**11** *To critic and to flatterer stopped are:*

Into this life-changing grave where I am supposed to lie (*profound abyssm*) I throw my care of others voices (Baines, Drury, Kyd) so that my censor's (Whitgift's) scent (tracking) of me to both my critics (Baines, Drury, Kyd) and flatterers (Raleigh's circle of freethinkers) *are stopped*. *My adder's sense* refers not to the poet, but to the poet's censor. When we consider Whitgift's inquisitorial practices against England's own people were seen by Burghley and others on the Privy Council to threaten the freedoms guaranteed in the Magna Carta, the fall of the rights of man, *my adder's sense* is likely an allusion to the snake in the Garden of Eden. One of the five senses is smell, and this is why *sense* is used here to mean tracking. Adders are the only venomous snakes in Britain. They strike their prey, inject venom and follow the prey's **scent** until it is dead or dying, then swallow it whole. Now that Marlowe is dead to *All the world*, Whitgift will stop using Baines to track him, stop using this search as an excuse to track his friends and associates.

**12** *Mark how with my neglect I do dispense.*

Once the *abyssm* is understood to be a metaphor for the poet's fictional grave, it is understood that he no longer has to be concerned about *others voices* because they think he is dead and buried, therefore line 12 does not refer backward to *critics* and *flatterers* or to *others voices*. Sonnet 112's volta is signaled by the word "Mark" at the beginning of line 12. It is here the poet introduces the point that moves the theme of the first eleven lines forward toward the summation of the concluding couplet. The poet signals this volta with his use of the colon at the end of line 11. A colon is used before an explanation: it is a gate inviting one to go forward. Line 12 drives forward telling us to pay attention (*Mark*) how the poet is going to *dispense* (mete out) his words in the couplet. Following his command that we pay attention to the place in the couplet where *with* his *neglect* he will *dispense* his words, it will be up to us to find this place and correct his error. "Mete out" is especially applicable as an intended meaning for *dispense* because it implies "meter", the arrangement of his iambic pentameter in the couplet.

A *Mark* is what people who can't sign their names use in lieu of a signature. Seeing that the word is capitalized in line 12, as would be a signature, it also points to the first syllable of Marlowe's surname. Another form of the word "mark" is "marker". A grave marker is one of the words for a gravestone,

something that we have never found for Christopher Marlowe. A grave marker is placed over the site of a grave to identify the occupant in the same way *Mark* is being used in line 12.

**13**     *You are so strongly in my purpose bred,*

After the correction is made to line 14, the *You* in line 13 becomes the person who caused the poet to be dead to *All the world*. The sonnet recipient, the *You*, is so strongly in the poet's purposes that *All the world* as well as the recipient thinks he is dead. This reading is in accordance with the new interpretation of lines 7 and 8 expressing the poet's yielding to Walsingham's conclusion that it would be useless for him to "come back to life" and deny the charges whether the charges were *right or wrong*.

Marlowe's most practical use to the State would have been through the medium of drama. *Massacre At Paris* and *Edward II* bear evidence of being written at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham. Both he and Thomas Walsingham had been in Paris during the Bartholomew Day massacre of Protestant French Huguenots and the play uses material that could have only been obtained from his papers. Marlowe's play *Edward II* echoes Sir Francis Walsingham's words to the young King James in 1583, documented in his report to the Queen. The Queen's Men were formed under Sir Francis Walsingham's supervision as a route to anti-Catholic propaganda. One of the plays they performed was *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, which is laced with anti-Catholic rhetoric. I suggest that Marlowe wrote *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* because the Prologue to Part I refers back to *Tamburlaine*, a habit of his with each new play he wrote:

*You that with friendly grace of smoothed brow,  
Have entertained the Scythian Tamburlaine,  
And given applause unto an Infidel:  
Vouchsafe to welcome (with like courtesy),  
A Warlike Christian and your Countryman.*

**The Troublesome Raigne of King John, Prologue, Lines 1-5**

The same form of rhetoric exhibited in *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* against the Catholics was used in *The Life and Death of King John* against England's Church hierarchy and its Ecclesiastical Courts that demanded nonconformists give the *ex officio* oath. This play views church-state relations from the perspective of those who thought that rule is human as opposed to divinely ordained, and the law which was said to protect the liberties of the subject by placing limits on the King in both secular and ecclesiastical matters.<sup>10</sup> I suggest Marlowe also wrote *King John*, under the auspices of Burghley, and this made him as dangerous to Archbishop Whitgift's policies as Marprelate, Barrow, Greenwood, and Penry. It was during this period that Marlowe was arrested and the charges of heresy were brought against him by

<sup>10</sup> Donna B. Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (1992) - p.42.

the two informers. Whatever the specific causes, Marlowe's work as a playwright and intelligence agent was so strongly in his *purpose bred* that he is now *dead to all the world*.

**14 *That all the world besides me thinks y'are dead.***

This is a tongue-in-cheek or biting sarcasm. Instead of finding a legal channel within which to resurrect Marlowe, Burghley/Cecil/Walsingham decided to keep him dead, hence sealing (*ore-greening*) his grave with the pseudonym William Shakespeare. Line 14 was written by a man who knew full well the purpose of faking his death was twofold: to save his life (and his writing for their purposes) and to protect the people behind the event should his appearance before the Star Chamber lead to his being tortured. Marlowe's knowledge of secret intelligence would have put them all at risk at a time when there was a power struggle between the Whitgift/Burghley factions, and while Burghley was working behind the scenes toward Scotland's King James' eventual succession to the throne in spite of the Queen's prohibition on the subject. Both Burghley and Walsingham must act *as if* they think the poet is dead; therefore, they cannot plead Marlowe's case with members of the Privy Council in an attempt to *correct* their *correction* of the lies in Baines' *Note*, Drury's *Remembrances*, and Kyd's accusations while under torture.

When we take the couplet in this context, it is revealed to be a paraphrase of the motto on the Cambridge portrait thought to be Marlowe's:

*You are so strongly in my purpose bred  
That all the world as well as you thinks me dead.*

*That which nurtures me destroys me.*

Marlowe likely got the idea for his portrait's motto from the last five words on his favorite poet Ovid's statue in Tomis, where he died after ten years' exile:

*Here I lie, who played with tender loves,  
Naso the poet, killed by my own talent.*

In light of this, the couplet becomes Marlowe's epitaph etched on the fictional grave Walsingham dug for him. Sonnet 112, with its twelve references to a grave, a dead body or a body buried in a grave, is the grave marker we have never found for Christopher Marlowe.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The words or word couplings that can be construed referring to the grave occur 5 times in 112: *Pit(y)*, *impression*, *profound abyss*, *Mark* (grave marker), and *you ore-green my bad* (*ore-green* implies the turf growing over his fictional grave because it is coupled with *my bad*, meaning the fictional coward who struck Ingram Frizer from behind and who is now "buried"). There are seven words or word couplings that can be construed to be referring to a dead body or a body buried in a grave: *the impression fill*, *stamped, ill*, *you o'er-green my bad* (this second meaning refers to the fictional coward that the sonnet recipient has *o'er-greened*), *I to none alive, my steeled sense*, and the last line when corrected, *all the world besides you thinks me dead*.