Edmund Spenser

This sonnet is part of one of Spenser’s most famous works, Amoretti, a sonnet cycle consisting of 89 sonnets which describe his courtship and wedding to Elizabeth Boyle. It was written in 1595

One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon The Strand

One day I wrote her name upon the strand

But came the waves and washed it away:

Again I wrote it with a second hand,

But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.

Vain man, said she, that dost in vain assay

A mortal thing so to immortalise!

For I myself shall like to this decay,

And eke my name be wiped out likewise.

Not so quoth I, let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name;

Where, whenas death shall all the world subdue,

Our love shall live, and later life renew.