

One Day I wrote her name

(Sonnet LXXV from Amoretti)

--- Edmund Spenser

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 immortalize;
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke my name be wiped out likewise."
"Not so," (quod 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."

About the author



Edmund Spenser was born in London in the year 1552 or 1553. Little is known about his family or his childhood. He studied literature and religion at Cambridge University's Pembroke Hall, receiving a BA in 1573 and an MA in 1576. Spenser published his first volume of poetry, *The Shepheardes Calender* (Hugh Singleton), in 1579, dedicating it to the poet Sir Philip Sidney. He was also the author of *The Faerie Queene* (William Ponsonby, 1596), a major English epic, and *Amoretti and Epithalamion* (William Ponsonby, 1595), a sonnet sequence dedicated to his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle. Alongside his poetry, Spenser pursued a career in politics, serving as a secretary first for the Bishop of Rochester and then for the Earl of Leicester, who introduced him to other poets and artists in Queen Elizabeth's court. In 1580, he was appointed secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland; later, in 1596, he wrote an inflammatory pamphlet called *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (James Ware, 1633). In 1598, during the Nine Years War, Spenser was driven from his home in Ireland. He died in London in 1599 and was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.