My love is like to ice, and I to fire;
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat?  

Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not delayed by her heart frozen cold,
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?

What more miraculous thing may be told
That fire which all thing melts, should harden ice,
And ice which is congealed with senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?

Such is the power of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.

6. delayed: tempered.
8. augmented manifold: increased in many ways.
11. congealed: thickened.
12. device: trick.
14. kind: nature.
Sonnet 75
by Edmund Spenser

Read with a Purpose
Read to discover what happens in the exchange between the speaker and the woman he loves.

Build Background
In this sonnet, Spenser uses the image of the sea and its eternal tides to emphasize the cyclical nature of life and the immortality brought by his poetry.

One day I wrote her name upon the strand, A
But came the waves and washed it away;
Again I wrote it with a second hand, A
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.

"Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay," B
A mortal thing so to immortalize,
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke* my name be wiped out likewise; B
"Not so," quoth I, "let baser things devise" B

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." C

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1. strand: beach.
5. assay: try.
8. eke: also.