"On his Deceased Wife" by John Milton

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| Methought I saw my late espoused saint | a |
| Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave, | b |
| Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave, | b |
| Rescued from Death by force, though pale and faint. | a |
| Mine, as whom washed from spot of childbed taint | a |
| Purification in the Old Law did save, | b |
| And such as yet once more I trust to have | b |
| Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint, | a |
| Came vested all in white, pure as her mind. | c |
| Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight | d |
| Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined | c |
| So clear as in no face with more delight. | d |
| But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined, | c |
| I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night. | d |

Milton composed this sonnet in an Italian form: note the 8 + 6 division of the poem and the abba abba cdcdcd rhyme scheme. The first 8 lines describe the illusion that the persona's deceased wife has returned to him; the next 6 lines describe the vision itself and its vanishing as in a dream. Note the poignant irony of day (literal) bringing back night (metaphorical)—the persona's pain at his loss.

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| From you have I been absent in the spring, | a |
| When proud pied April, dressed in all his trim, | b |
| Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing, | a |
| That heavy Saturn laughed and leapt with him. | b |
| Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell | c |
| Of different flowers in odour and in hue, | d |
| Could make me any summer's story tell, | c |
| Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew: | d |
| Nor did I wonder at the lily's white, | e |
| Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose; | f |
| They were but sweet, but figures of delight, | e |
| Drawn after you, you pattern of all those. | f |
| Yet seemed it winter still, and you away, | g |
| As with your shadow I with these did play. | g |

Shakespeare composed the following sonnet in an English form: note the three quatrains + final couplet. Note the way in which the final couplet summarizes the images and its affect for the persona of the poem.