

## "On his Deceased Wife" by John Milton

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.

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.