

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Sonnet 97

How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting¹ year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
What old December's bareness every where!

5 And yet this time removed² was summer's time
The teeming³ autumn, big with rich increase⁴,
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime⁵,
Like widow'd wombs after their lords' decease:
Yet this abundant issue⁶ seem'd to me

10 But hope of orphans and unfather'd fruit;
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
And, thou away, the very birds are mute⁷:
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer,
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.
(108 words)

¹**fleeting** quickly passing – ²**time removed** absence – ³**teeming** fruitful, fertile – ⁴**big with rich increase** pregnant with fruitfulness –

⁵**Bearing the wanton burden of the prime** delivering spring's uncontrolled fertility – ⁶**abundant issue** rich harvest – ⁷**mute** silent