

an older past; he refashions it in a personal synthesis which shows the vast potential of a mind when it commands such a record and draws life from it; and he projects it into his own age and ours with a poetic force which any growing mind must still find deeply formative.

That poetic force is not so singular as we may sometimes think. It ranges from the delights of *L'Allegro*:

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With masque, and antique pageantry,
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.

L'Allegro, 125–30

Or the carnival of the animals in a still unfallen Eden, even if it is tinged with a little heavy humour:

About them frisking played
All beasts of th' Earth, since wild, and of all chase
In Wood or wilderness, Forest or Den;
Sporting, the Lion ramped, and in his paw
Dandled the kid; Bears, tigers, ounces, pards
Gambol'd before them; th' unwieldy Elephant
To make them mirth us'd all his might, and wreath'd
His lithe proboscis.

Paradise Lost IV. 340–47

The beautiful rhythms of the lines describing Eve's parting from Adam on the fateful day:

Her long with ardent look his eye pursued
Delighted, but desiring more her stay.
Oft he to her his charge of quick return
Repeated, she to him as oft engag'd
To be return'd by noon amid the bower,
And all things in best order to invite
Noontide repast, or afternoon's repose.

Paradise Lost IX. 397–403

The tenderness of Adam to Eve after the Fall:

Certain, my resolution is to die;
How can I live without thee, how forgo
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined . . .
Should God create another Eve, and I
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart; . . . Flesh of flesh,
Bone of my bone Thou art, and from thy State
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.

Paradise Lost IX. 907–916