

## At Grass

The eye can hardly pick them out  
From the cold shade they shelter in,  
Till wind distresses tail and mane;  
Then one crops grass, and moves about  
- The other seeming to look on -  
And stands anonymous again

Yet fifteen years ago, perhaps  
Two dozen distances sufficed  
To fable them : faint afternoons  
Of Cups and Stakes and Handicaps,  
Whereby their names were artified  
To inlay faded, classic Junes -

Silks at the start : against the sky  
Numbers and parasols : outside,  
Squadrons of empty cars, and heat,  
And littered grass : then the long cry  
Hanging unhushed till it subside  
To stop-press columns on the street.

Do memories plague their ears like flies?  
They shake their heads. Dusk brims the shadows.  
Summer by summer all stole away,  
The starting-gates, the crowd and cries -  
All but the unmolested meadows.  
Almanacked, their names live; they

Have slipped their names, and stand at ease,  
Or gallop for what must be joy,  
And not a fieldglass sees them home,  
Or curious stop-watch prophesies :

Only the groom, and the groom's boy,  
With bridles in the evening come.

*Philip Larkin*