

## MCMXIV

Those long uneven lines  
Standing as patiently  
As if they were stretched outside  
The Oval or Villa Park,  
The crowns of hats, the sun  
On moustached archaic faces  
Grinning as if it were all  
An August Bank Holiday lark;  
And the shut shops, the bleached  
Established names on the sunblinds,  
The farthings and sovereigns,  
And dark-clothed children at play  
Called after kings and queens,  
The tin advertisements  
For cocoa and twist, and the pubs  
Wide open all day;  
And the countryside not caring:  
The place-names all hazed over  
With flowering grasses, and fields  
Shadowing Domesday lines  
Under wheat's restless silence;  
The differently-dressed servants  
With tiny rooms in huge houses,  
The dust behind limousines;  
Never such innocence,  
Never before or since,  
As changed itself to past  
Without a word – the men  
Leaving the gardens tidy,  
The thousands of marriages,  
Lasting a little while longer:  
Never such innocence again.

Philip Larkin (1960, 1964)