

SLOUGH TRANSFIGURED

Betjeman saw you as the Styx,
But that was nineteen thirty-six,
When he was full of aesthetics
And social aspirations.

He scribbled to amuse his friends
And never thought to make amends,
Keeping his eye on arty trends
And weekend invitations.

But Slough is not its shopping malls
And congeries of stones and walls,
Facilities for feet and balls,
Or streets in rainy weather;

Slough is its people and their faces,
A ziggurat of human races
Drawn from innumerable places
To work and play together.

Slough is both harmony and friction,
Singing and multilingual diction,
The godless on the wheel of Ixion,
The godly in their dream.

Betjeman's was a subtle taste,
But his derision was misplaced,
And such disparagement outpaced
By human self-esteem.

FERGUS ALLEN © 28/7-5/8/09 [commissioned by
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