

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 outfaced
By human self-esteem.**

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