



"lawnmower," concrete poem, (detail) 1972

E.R. Baxter III

A Fairy Tale About Trolls

Once upon a time, long, long, ago, in a magical land far, far away from most people, there was a beautiful waterfall. This sparkling river leapt and thundered into a deep gorge, sending up clouds of mist where sun rays made rainbows, and through which birds soared, disappearing and appearing again. The gorge and its rim were rich with forests of giant, ancient trees and wildflower meadows.

Slowly, as the years passed, factories and other manmade things gobbled up the beauty of the natural landscapes that used to be everywhere. Still, what remained caused some people to notice that the river and its shorelines was a wonderful home for wild birds and they named this place a Globally Significant Important Bird Area.

Then others, as if waking from a long dreaming, said, "But there is an ugly concrete road running right through it! All the wildflower meadows are either sleeping under the concrete or cut into little pieces by lawnmowers!" They looked at one another, eyes wide in wonderment, and said altogether as if with one voice, "Let's ask that the ugly road be removed!"

But others, upon hearing this, said, "No! No! It's a globally significant important road! We love it! God gave us this road! So we have a God-given right to drive on it! Didn't God's most important prophet, Moses, build it for us? We drive back and forth on it all the time and if we do this long enough it will lead us to heaven!"

*

And the story must stop here, in this land where magic flutes still play faintly in the distance. Now you are probably saying to yourself, "What the hell kind of fairy tale is this? It doesn't have an ending! Nobody gets to live happily ever after?" Well, grow up. You expected a fairy tale because of the title?

Would you like to know where this place is, with its distant music waiting to be reborn? Visit www.niagaraheritage.org and sign the petition to help us remove the road. Do you know of a courageous politician who loves the natural world? Ask that person to help restore this little part of it. If the politician tries to tell you it's the road to heaven, don't you believe it. It's more likely to be a road to that Other Place, anyway. It is an ugly, ugly road, filled with evil spirits. Trolls who love concrete more than trees come out from under their bridges and creep around on this road at night. Do not go there after dark.

The End