life-giving food. They lived in a beautiful harmony through the years of the tree-child’s maturation.

The tree-child became a young adult. The love between him and the tree-lady changed from mother and son to man and woman. Their ages mattered little: they were so close physically and mentally an inseparable bond formed between them. Day and night, rain, sun and snow, all the year round they loved. Their arms grew among each other’s, and their feet followed the same paths in their search for food. Because she was older and bigger, the woman’s body seemed to surround him, keeping out the strong winds. She strove so hard to protect him that he hardly saw any sunlight or felt any rain on his leaves. She guided his thirsty feet with her own, but because hers were bigger, they drank most of the water themselves. But the younger tree was so overcome by love he could not see these things.

The tree-youth grew paler as time passed. His leaves were thirsty from lack of water, and his body ached from dryness. Without sunlight he could not make food. He was slowly dying. His love for the woman overshadowed the pain of his crackling body. The couple lived on in beautiful bliss, aware only of each other and the tremendous happiness they felt. She grew stouter and taller in her joy; he grew hardly at all, and his leaves were brown instead of green. His branches broke off in the slightest breeze, though the woman tried to cover him. She slowly became aware that he was dying, though she did not know why, or what she could do for him. He knew it soon, too, but he never complained of the agony. They continued their love-filled existence, never speaking of death.

Winter came again; then spring, the starter of new life. But this year there were no buds on the tree-man’s fingertips. There was no awakening of new life in his body, for there was no life left in it.

REAL-TIME ROADS

Al Bersted

Long city pavement
repaired in a picture
by men in tar and
coveralls
lone city pavement

painted green
never seen
for the mud
that spurts
bloodless grass
and everyone knows
tinted green concrete
is not grass...
but full of glass.
Basket...
and on the seventh day
the young lad rested
after basketball
solitaire
in a nine foot
cross-fenced-in
schoolyard
of gray bricks
and putrid air
and this isn’t grass
or life, either.
Ether on a rag
the world floats
away
cars driving alone
or together
stopping
at a stoplight
and sipping a little gas
like fine connoisseurs
of bad food
“o, i like pure or shell”
“but, ford,
standard’s ethyl is,
by far, the best”
they leave with noise
and smoke
they leave death.
The pigeon hobbled
fell, hobbled
fell,
and was still
death put its arm around
the old threadbare man

watching
and he clutched at his heart
and died
and dried
in the sun.
The city pavement lengthens
making room for one more
stretching its arms out
encircling with its tentacles
that radiate everywhere
closing in on life
on
life
again.
A rat crawls
among Sani-City
refuse containers
in the alley
behind the tenement
where a small child
sleeps
the rat is joined
by others
and they partake
of an open window
invitation
and eat
life.
Life for some is short
for some not
but, for most
it is in forsaking
city pavement
to see a glass-backed
tROUT beer bottle
swimming
in their pond
and saying
why?
why?
a small child asks
of the teacher
does a plastic pen
crack
the way it does
and what if...
No! study
your multiplication
tables
don't concern yourself
in idle daydreams!
and the young child
wondered why
for awhile
but didn't ask
or think what if...
anymore.
Imagining the world outside
thinking what if...
the blind boy cried
of visions
and beautiful things
in spite of no sight
while his big brother
saw only the world
that was not beautiful
with his just-eyes.
It is all too beautiful
said the drug crazed mind
it is all beautifully relative
said the fine physicists mind
of a Rising Executive
it's production, cutting prices
wages and vices

for him
it is not
beautiful.
Beautiful late summer day
boats bobbing in the bay
crawfish scurry between rocks
in the creek and by the docks
lazy dreaming time
summertime.
fantastical fictions
figments of fantasy
float or dart
and slow
while toes ooze together
in the sand.
Imagining the world outside
toes buried in a sand
baking in the hot sun
dance
and flying at
too great a height
behind
a four year old's kite
say "what a bite!"
and awaken.
To a sound
of blaring screaming
motion and sneers
a man being kicked
behind the ears
the pavement laps up
against the curb
eating away
at this life disturbed.