Why He Needs Beauty
by Richard Hague

If he doesn’t get it,
he will die. Just as surely as a starved child
wastes away, he will

fade away into squalor and ugliness,
the daily assault of advertising and prejudice,
the interior poisoning of good will,

the rotting away of happiness and worth,
the month always longer than the check,
the pantry empty,
the roaches of poverty scrabbling his pillow.

Beauty costs nothing,
comes with every dawn, every moment of keen
perception in the subway, like Pound’s

The apparition of these faces in the crowd—
petals on a wet, black bough

every noticing, like Basho’s, of how

the distant mountains
are reflected in the eye
of the dragonfly

Beauty is toughness,
goodness, the way out of anger
and the smothered mine
of self.

He needs beauty like he needs air,
needs food, love, the touch
of the world firing his nerves,

the pull of gravity making
him strong even as he
staggers uphill
against it.