Necessary Light

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Underfoot, in dooryards,
in gardens, purslane
takes hold and prospers—
even against the tenacity
of August light,
even against the last
lifting of moisture
from crumbling soil,
even when the brook
has given up its bullheads
and runs to nothing,
even when mudbeds
crack to gray powder,
even while dust collects
in silent spinning
dervishes of wind,
when thirst becomes
constant as breath
and water, the only word
worth saying—
even if stars should flake,
thin as cast-off skin
in night’s crinkled parchment—
even if cemeteries were
the last land left inhabited.
purslane clings down
and will continue to cling
onto its own dry roots,
matted and circled,
refusing to die,
recreating itself
out of the least
seared bit,
prostrate but succulent,
leaves paddle-shaped
and still rowing
the five-petaled flower,
rosettes of yellow,
into each light-blinded morning.