

STEPHANIE MCCARLEY DUGGER

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First Syrup, On Making Molasses

It happens at the moment  
of breaking— the sun pulling  
the sugarcane seed-heads high,  
twirling them through layer  
after layer of atmosphere  
until you see them blaze  
from ripeness or ecstasy.  
Then the stark  
grind of the stalks,  
boil, skim,  
and the dark, sweet syrup dripping  
through cheesecloth into the bottles  
whose labels stick  
because of the sap collecting  
in the green steam air.  
All of this happens in an instant  
after waiting and waiting  
for the season's raze.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Stephanie McCarley Dugger is the author of *Sterling* (Pauper Nautilus 2014) and *Either Way You're Done* (forthcoming from Sundress Publications 2017). Her poems have also appeared in *Arts & Letters*, *Meridian*, *The Southeast Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Taos Journal of International Poetry and Art*. She is an assistant professor at Austin Peay State University and assistant poetry editor at Zone 3 Press. She lives in Tennessee.

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