

The Sewanee Review

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The *Sewanee Review* is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2018 Aiken Taylor Award for Modern American Poetry is Heather McHugh. McHugh has authored twelve books of poetry, including *Upgraded to Serious* (2009) and *Eyeshot* (2003), a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, as well as translations of Celan and Euripides. She has received numerous literary honors, including the Witter Bynner Fellowship, Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, and a MacArthur Fellowship.

The thirty-second Aiken Taylor celebration will take place on February 6th and 7th. University Provost Nancy Berner and *Sewanee Review* editor Adam Ross will present McHugh with the award at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 7 in Convocation Hall, after which McHugh will read from her body of work. On Tuesday, February 6 at 4:30 p.m., *New Yorker* poetry critic Dan Chiasson will lecture on McHugh's poetry in the McGriff Alumni House. In addition to his work as a critic, Chiasson has published four collections of poetry, most recently 2014's *Bicentennial*, and he teaches at Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

McHugh's poems often deal with function and nature of language, and are buttressed by a rare technical mastery. In "Language Lesson 1976," from the National Book Award-nominated collection *Hinge and Sign* (1994), McHugh outlines her poetic project: ". . . language is a game as well, / in which love can mean nothing / . . . Make nothing without words." Punning, as Shakespeare did, on the word "nothing," McHugh enters into a game of words, meanings, and literary lineage. She plays it well. These calculated risks define her work. As Richard Howard summarized in the *Boston Review*: "McHugh's poems end in a spurt, as they proceed in a slather, of just such astonishment as is bestowed—afforded—by taking apart a phrase or a word that the language has crystallized below the tension of the lyre. McHugh thus reveals that there is signification beneath or within the surface of every move we make, of every phrase we repeat."