

## NEWCOMERS

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Fred Chappell

We are the youngest children of the river  
Which suffers us to return to it again,  
    And yet again,  
In preparation to be changed forever  
As if newly from the hand of the Giver  
    We came without stain,  
    Clean as the rain.

Let us refresh the source that freshens us,  
For from our source we cannot far remove,  
    Cannot farther move,  
Without distressing an ancient bond that is  
The ligature between the eternities  
    In which we live  
    In which we love and live.

By river light we read our history  
And watch ourselves become part of the land,  
    Apart from the land,  
As we embrace a mutual destiny  
Or abrogate the solemn fealty  
    That keeps us bound  
    To our native ground.

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**Fred Chappell** is professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and was the poet laureate of North Carolina from 1997 to 2002. His most recent book is *Shadow Box: Poems* (2009), reviewed by David Middleton in these pages (Summer 2011).

The river flows away beneath the sun  
But bears the sun upon it and the stars,  
    The coursing stars, at night.  
The river's flame, the sky's long gleam, are one,  
Commingle, twinned, as are the world and man:  
    Let both emerge to sight  
    Reborn, forgiven, new-clothed in light.

*Written on request to celebrate the designation of the New River  
in Ashe County, North Carolina, as an American Heritage  
River.*