



# Understanding Fred Chappell (Understanding Contemporary American Literature)

*John Lang*

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## **Understanding Fred Chappell (Understanding Contemporary American Literature) John Lang**

This study introduces the reader to a writer of poems, novels and short stories whose accolades include France's prestigious Prix de Meilleur des Livres Etrangers, the Bollingen Prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize. The text identifies and explores the principal influences on the writer, his major themes, and his use of humour as a counterbalance to the gravity of his moral vision. Lang cites the North Carolina Appalachian Mountains of Chappell's youth and the writer's wide reading in the Western literary tradition as two dominant influences on his far-ranging oeuvre. Describing the writer's work as grounded in the region but in no sense provincial, Lang insists on the significance of the wider Western literary traditions in the allusions and Dantean structure of "Midquest" and in the prologue and epilogue poems of "First and Last Words".

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