

# THE COLLECTOR:

On the Occasion of the Opening of the Stuart Wright Exhibit

BY FRED CHAPPELL

Notes contributed by NCLR staff

I am here to speak of Joyner Library's acquisition of the Stuart Wright Collection, and I must begin by congratulating the Library. This is an extremely important collection, and its value can only increase as its existence becomes more widely known. And, as the Library is to be congratulated, Mr. Wright is to be saluted. As the Collection becomes better known, his collecting achievement shall become more widely and deeply appreciated.

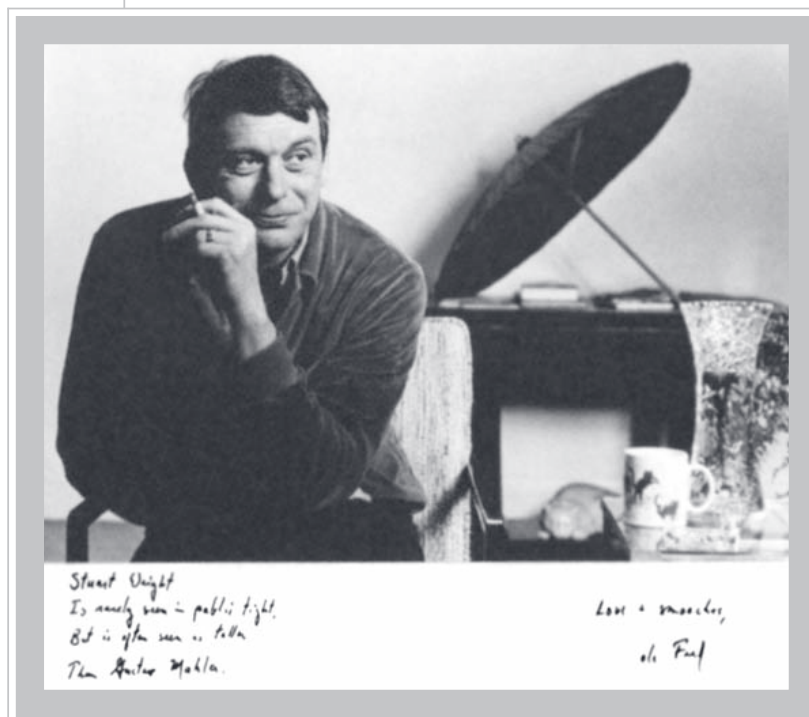
My remarks cannot be impersonal. For many years I have been fortunate to count Stuart a friend. Our relationship has had many aspects, from the publicly formal and gravely academic to the privately hilarious and sometimes grossly undignified – on my part, anyhow. I will spare us the awkwardness of retelling much of that.

We have kept up correspondence on a fairly regular basis for some time now after he moved to Ludlow, Shropshire, in England, and some of what I shall say tonight derives from the letters of these past few years. For example, when I told him that the Library, in the person of Tom Douglass,<sup>1</sup> had requested a poem to be written for a broadside to be published on the occasion, Stuart replied that I should – *must* – reprint a poem I had written to commemorate that centrally important Southern teacher and man of letters, George Garrett.

Of all the various strands of our relationship, one of the most significant has been our mutual respect, loving regard, and long friendship with George. George was and is legendary, not only for his splendid written work, but also for his genius as a teacher, mentor, and friend. When you look up the word

*generosity* in a dictionary, you should find the definition accompanied by a photograph of George. When he died, another, different George, Mr. George Core, requested a tribute poem for *The Sewanee Review*. After the requisite sad toil, I presented “Shining In and Out of Darkness,” which begins with an epigraph taken from George Garrett’s provocative novel about the great playwright, Christopher Marlowe. That novel is called *Entered from the Sun*.<sup>2</sup>

Bear with me, ghosts.  
And bless us, one and all, your newfound, long-lost friends.  
Speak to me.  
Speak through me.  
Speak to us.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK MORROW; COURTESY OF THE STUART WRIGHT COLLECTION.  
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<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Douglass's essay about ECU's acquisition of the Stuart Wright Collection forthcoming in the 2013 issue of *NCLR Online*.

<sup>2</sup> These lines close the “Author’s Greeting,” which introduces George Garrett’s *Entered from the Sun: The Murder of Marlowe* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).