

A Few Introductory Words

by John Wentworth Chapin

Welcome. Tonight I am honored to welcome The Author to our Tuesday Night Reading Series. This is one writer who needs no introduction.

The world first glimpsed The Author's talent with the publication of "Tender Punishments" in the *Middle-Midwestern Tiny Quarterly Literary Review*. Tragic and acerbic, and yet unrelentingly witty, it was nominated for a Pushcart. This evocative piece sums up the anguish of the modern academic in a world too concerned with bottom lines and diet sodas. I'm pleased to announce that the compilation, "Whispers to My Dying Grandfather," published in 1998 by Ancient Archetypal Goddess Figure Press, is available for sale at the back table. The Author has graciously agreed to sign copies following the reading.

As usual, prior to the signing, there will be a brief question-and-answer period with The Author. *There are no stupid questions*. Some reminders:

- Entirely appropriate are questions about what time of day The Author chooses to write, whether immediately after rising, or following a simple yet nourishing breakfast, or perhaps in the wee hours of the night.
- Ask what The Author means, either in the piece just read or in other published works. That their ideas are confusing and inscrutable is a joy for all writers to address.
- Especially encouraged are those insightful, probing queries into the writing instrument of The Author. Little intrigues belle-lettrists more than issues of long-hand drafting — pen or pencil? — versus typing or perhaps even capriciously composing at the keyboard.
- In no case must someone fail to ask if The Author writes each day and, if so, how The Author manages to do this, what with all the distractions of the cat and the meter reader and *Good Morning America*.

Available online at [«http://fictionaut.com/stories/john-wentworth-chapin/a-few-introductory-words»](http://fictionaut.com/stories/john-wentworth-chapin/a-few-introductory-words)

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- If you are beset by obsessive-compulsive behaviors which either drive you to write or prevent you from doing so, we will all benefit by a detailed re-telling of your very personal pain.
- If you have ever taken a course in literature, particularly at the graduate level, please announce this when speaking to give us all a properly humbled frame of reference.
- The Author can certainly shed light on the debate over writing for yourself versus sullyng your work for the market, or even for some dim-witted editor who can't see the vibrancy of your prose and the urgency of your vision. By all means, ask that question about integrity, and whether one should sacrifice it for the sake of getting published.
- Ask for advice. The Author does not know you but is, after all, a published writer, and as such should well be able to make sufficient inferences.
- For the ladies in the audience, The Author may be able to clear the nagging question of how women will ever possibly grow as writers when their work will never see the light of day due the self-serving old-boy network of editors that squelches your every effort to tell your essential story. Please make certain to elaborate on your questions, using as necessary personal anecdotes, however long-winded or irrelevant. Be assertive — how often do you get the opportunity to speak to such a person?
- For the gentlemen who wish to pontificate about their own experiences and their professional opinions, this forum welcomes your filibustering. Be brave, speak up, and allow us all to feel perhaps enriched by having shared audience space with someone like you who has almost published in so many small magazines of whose existence we were previously unaware. If by chance you are a professor of literature, we beseech you to demonstrate your formidable critical powers upon the piece read by The Author.

- Above all else remember, particularly those of you who are regulars, that asking the same question of different writers each week is ritual praise, not repetitive neurotic behavior.

And without further ado, The Author.

Karla will be passing a hat after the reading to cover the cost of the day-old four-herb bread and port wine cheese spread. Only through your continued generosity are we able to bring you such quality programs.

And please remember to phrase your clever observations in the form of a question so that The Author may formulate an appropriate response.

