

John J. Ronan - *Notre Dame Review* added Notes, May 2023:

BIO

I am finishing a new book, and since it is on my mind, I'm adding this note to my profile in NDR. *The Idea of Light* is a book on the power of poetry, and of all art, the reality and sway of imagination. It draws on the everyday and aims to be accessible, honest. By accessible, I mean poetry open to an attentive, lay audience. And since it is meant to be read in public, open poetry often relies on traditional - retro, even non-trending - sound and form: rhyming, regular rhythms, some fixed forms, the workhorse sonnet. And, of course, strives to be insightful and fresh, does not talk down.

My last book, *Taking the Train of Singularity South from Midtown* (2017), stressed inclusion, diversity, social justice. *The Idea of Light* tends toward self-justified poetry, poetry for the hell of it. It is socially aware, but not reductionist. As Seamus Heaney said in a 1984 lecture, "...'pure' poetry is perfectly justifiable in earshot of the car bomb." Influences include Ted Kooser and Galway Kinnell, Mary Oliver, Nikki Giovanni, Derek Mahon. Heaney, of course, and e.e. cummings...especially for his title tricks.

I am a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow in Poetry, a former Ucross Fellow, Bread Loaf Scholar, and Poet Laureate of Gloucester, MA – a gig that taught me much about open poetry. My book *Marrowbone Lane* appeared in 2010 and was a Highly Recommended selection of the Boston Authors Club; Linda Pastan has called my work "Very good indeed: original, assured, just a touch sardonic."

Poems have appeared in *Notre Dame Review* (Yay!), *Thrush*, *Confrontation*, *Folio*, *Threepenny Review*, *The Recorder*, *Hollins Critic*, *New England Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Greensboro Review*, *NYQ*, *et. al.*

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POEM “(Say)” first appeared in the online publication *Thrush*.

(Say)

For any relative in the photo, never a clue.
Arriving in (say) 1910, each
Knew the others by face and handshake, kiss.
Obvious truth didn't deserve a note or name
On the back of the print, not with every road
In (say) the universe leading away from you.
Now, one uncle's as good as another.
But they knew, think how hugely they knew.
Look to the moon for a second example. As today,
Shadows are crossing the basin of (say) Clavius –
Uncle or elm, the flower, the fox, all
Happily unwitnessed, perfectly themselves, nothing
To do with isolation or time, certainly not.
And it's like that all around us. Almost everything.