

"The Gun & the Scythe" and "The First Marauder"

The Passions of an Army Ranger

Reviews by Allison Esposito, Managing Editor

Luke Ryan is an American author of poetry and fiction. He is the son of aid workers and spent his childhood overseas, living in Pakistan for 9 years and Thailand for 5 years. After his return to the United States and a few years in college, Luke joined the US Army and became an Army Ranger. He went on four combat deployments to Afghanistan and left the Army as a Ranger team leader. When he got out of the

military, Ryan went through a nomadic period during which he lived all over the country. From San Francisco to Tampa to New York, he traveled the United States many times, developing a fascination for the American road. He has worked several jobs—journalist, publishing over 500 articles; a freelance ideographer; and professionally in television. One of his many jobs is occasional copyediting for the JSOM.

The Gun & the Scythe

Poetry by an Army Ranger

Ryan L. *The Gun & the Scythe: Poetry by an Army Ranger*. Independently published (April 17, 2019). Available at Amazon.com. Paperback: \$7.99; Kindle: \$3.99. Paperback: 69 pages. Product Dimensions: 5 × 0.2 × 8 inches. ISBN-10: 1091476454. ISBN-13: 978-1091476455.

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A flash, an eruption of red in a sea of black
No sound, not for my ears
Only a flash.
Heat passes through me,
Like a campfire over and over
Passing through every inch of my flesh,
Through my brain and my gut.

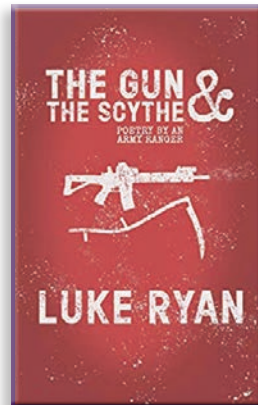
The flash subsides.
My legs still carry my body,
My arms still carry my rifle.
I can see.
That's all I need to know.

Right then, let's get on with it.
There will be time to think later.
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"Poetry is so important because it helps us understand and appreciate the world around us ... Poetry teaches us how to live. Poetry ... bares open the vulnerabilities of human beings so we can all relate to each other a little better."¹

Poetry is an art form in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or instead of, its notional and semantic content and is used in a manner that differs from ordinary prose.

Ryan's poetry deals with the worst of life but it teaches us how to live. Poet Lidy Wilks said, "Poetry, if we let it and embrace it, can offer us a way to empathize with one another. In its immediacy, poetry is a counselor helping us to understand one another. Leading us away from hate to love, from violence to mercy and pity."¹



Poetry tells us that we are not alone in our pain. According to one reader, Ryan "captures the 'shock wave' of battle that continues to ripple through a veteran's life, long after they have come home."

His poems are clear and concise, and he captures his message with the "right words in the right place." He invites the reader to share the horror of war but to feel he is walking along the reader, with reassurance and understanding.

The volume is small and easy to carry anywhere, to read and reread and to mark the reader's thoughts along with Ryan's. The book was designed by Ryan and is as personal as its contents. Ryan's philosophy is said best by a line from his poem "Hills to Take": "But you can't climb a hill when you're busy looking back at the last one."

Reference

1. Osborn A. *Why Is Poetry Important to Our World Today?* Alice Osborn. <https://aliceosborn.com/why-is-poetry-important-to-our-world-today/>



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