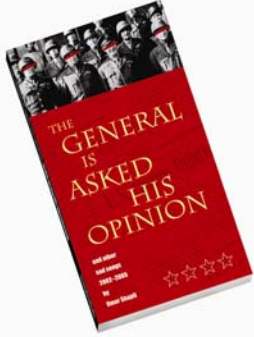


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**The General Is Asked His  
Opinion  
and other sad songs  
2002–2005**

Omar Shapli

“There is welcome wit in Omar Shapli’s poems, but every once in a while a lightning bolt of reality which sobers you for a moment and makes you think, on top of your enjoyment.” Howard Zinn

“Omar Shapli, irreverent and highly original as a poet, is recognized at long last. What a lift this is for us, who question fools in the saddle and hunger for a sense of some truth, beauty and a laugh or two along the way.”  
Studs Terkel

We live in a contradictory epoch, an unyielding Catch-22 knot: in the lengthening shadow of an imperialist presidency threatening the continued well-being of every living creature, a scattered resistance bristles, gathers its resolve, and marshals its forces. Boneheaded, reality-impaired governance, an eagerness to “disappear” the innocent for undisclosed reasons, corporate coddling, and what is essentially conscription-as-class-warfare breeds disgust and resentment, which in turn transforms bile into reactionary artistry. Writers, actors, musicians, thinkers, and others are, increasingly, tapping into their inner Noam Chomskys, bolstering and adding visibility to a roiled creative set that’s been active for decades. The Rolling Stones. George Clooney. Phillip Roth. Cormac McCarthy. Green Day. The Dixie Chicks. John Updike. Bruce Springsteen. Sean Penn.

Now a new voice joins the damning chorus: Omar Shapli. A Massachusetts-based poet who in verse takes on the guises of the sorts of instructors everyone wishes could’ve gotten through to Dubya before he became the Leader of the Free World. A history lecturer, a philosophy teacher, a linguistical instigator, and a former soldier—all a single package. Shapli’s enjambed verse is rife with inquisition, curiosity, questions, asides, reflections, and more besides—in other words, *The General Is Asked His Opinion* makes a great gift for your best friend, your least favorite elected official, or, well, anyone in the struggle, who is willing to struggle through a few stanzas in the pursuit of enlightenment, or who is struggling to make sense of the seemingly hopeless world we all must live in.

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**The General Is Asked His Opinion**

A good idea? That question has no meaning for me. Good for what? Isn’t that Policy? Wouldn’t that be *your* menu? Oh yes ample stew for the pot, if that observation assists you: flesh to the shredder—much of ours, more of *theirs*—but that’s our slot is it not: grind the bones to prop a Policy? Not my job to tell you it makes sense. Mine’s a profession that makes sense only when nothing else does and that Sir is *your* call. When sense fails, tap my shoulder. And don’t think for an instant I miss the rolling nudge around the table, the condescension, the snide asides.

I only request—no, *beg* (not easy for me)—that you track me a trinket that can damwell dent my palm: not a frail daydream of clean solutions where nothing clean abides.