

# SEVEN REFLECTIONS IN A CRACKED MIRROR

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Category: [Opinions](#)



***Dedicated to the memory of Agop Hacikyan***

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**Viken L. Attarian**, Montreal, 10 July 2015

"*Gyanke Kezee* (may his life be yours)", tells me Silva Mangassarian, "Agop Hacikyan passed away today". We were having dinner at the same table, at the AGBU. There were many friends there and we were engaged in a lively conversation.

I stop talking.

"We visited him with your mother last week", she adds. "He was not well at all, but was very alert. He told us he finished all his writings".

Tears start to form in my eyes. I wipe them off.

They come back. I wipe them off again.

They come back again. I wipe them off again.

And then I do not bother anymore. I just stand up, excuse myself and leave.

Silva follows me. She bids me farewell and then just hugs me. She is a good soul.

Agop Hacikyan was and will always be a good soul.

\* \* \*

The phone rings. "Viken *djan*, we need your help", says Hagop Arslanian at the other end of the line. "You know that the AGBU suffered a big loss", he adds.

"You are right" I answer. *So did all writers and readers.*

"It is a great loss for the whole of the AGBU global family", he says.

"I know that" I answer. *Also for the whole Armenian nation.*

"Can you write the AGBU announcement to honor his memory?" he asks, "Not a eulogy, but something special. We thought you would be the most appropriate person".

"I would be honored", I answer. *How could I have it otherwise?*

Actually, I had already started it, but did not wish to mention it or to explain. I am sure this Hagop would understand.

Agop Hacikyan definitely would.

\* \* \*

I just realized that I have never met Agop Hacikyan in a personal setting. It was always at a literary event, at a lecture, at a community initiative or at some kind of intellectual gathering.

Kind, gracious and smiling is how I will always remember him.

Yes that, and as a talented author.

Yes that, and as a prolific writer.

Yes that, and as a great scholar.

Yes that, and as a wonderful translator.

Yes that, and as someone who created a lasting legacy.

Yes that, and as someone who addressed the world.

Yes that, and as someone who always paid tribute to the Armenian spirit inside him.

Yes that, and as someone who was, above all, an authentic human being.

Agop Hacikyan. Authentic with himself.

Like all true artists.

\* \* \*

"How is Talleen? And how is her work?" I ask.

Talleen is Agop's immensely-talented daughter. Back in the early nineties, when I was working at Pratt & Whitney Canada, I had mentioned her a few times to company executives. Subsequently, she got to show her work at the first ever company art exhibition. Not only that, but she won the Pratt & Whitney Canada Pierre Henry Prize for the best piece.

"Why do you ask me about her?" asks Agop.

"I just think she is a great artist", I answer.

"And what about me? Why don't you ask about my work?" he chuckles.

"You? You already know how good you are", I answer.

Agop looks at me and smiles. He already knows how good she is too.

Yet he smiles all the same.

\* \* \*

"You know, you are one of my favorite Attarians", Agop says.

"Who are the others?" I ask.

"Well, there's your sister, and there's your mom", he adds, "then there's your father, although I only know him by his work".

I smile all the same.

Agop would have enjoyed meeting my father.

They both have the same kind smile. They both believed in the same things.

\* \* \*

"You know Viken, when you speak on television or do radio interviews, you tell our story to millions", says Agop.

"You know Agop, when you write an international best-seller that gets translated to eight languages, you tell our story to millions", I reply.

We smile together.

\* \* \*

Excerpts from his last email to me, dated 27 November 2014, thanking me for commenting on his work:

".....

*Why do tragic things happen to good people? We keep asking and we wish we could rationalize it, or, at least, formulate a response? We don't; we stop looking for answers and instead let sadness, injustice and outrage propel us into action. Fortunately we take our righteous grief and turn it into a force for doing good. We try to combat the pain with goodness.*

*You are combatting (evil) with rectitude..... And me, I'll try to scribble within my limits as long as I can move my pen.*

*Your generous words were brought to my attention by a friend; I thank you very much.*

....."

Agop, you truly are a man of your word; even though your limits actually encompassed the whole world, you did scribble as long as you could move your pen.

And now, allow me to sign, as a friend, and as you would have liked me to.

Viken Attarian

A wordsmith with a pen

