

Crescent

You thinned your pain.

As a boy, on the frontier, you placed it like a small coin under the wheels of a train
And a girl you loved made herself a necklace of it in the fields

Smugglers taught you how to strike it in the quiet
In the night with the hammers of thieves
to conceal your fingers' marks in front of others

You thinned it with silence, with long walks
Until it became transparent and hard
Like a cut nail disappeared in the carpet of time

And when you found it
It had become a moon eaten away by love
And you hung it in the sky of your soul

And stayed awake all alone, waiting for the *azhan* of Eid.

*Translated from Arabic by Golan Haji & Stephen Watts
published in Modern Poetry in Translation, 2017*

The Voyeur

Through two holes from the heart of the tree,
light is looking at us
like a child who plays with pictures
and whose name is Death,
seeing how flowers were plucked
with their roots uprooting our bones.

In cities erected from the voices of the dead
are places we will not enter because they are like us
– distant and cheap –
are numbers that raise their heads and spoil the conversations.
We were rooms on the roof of the world
that light built from silence,
rented by penniless students and construction workers,
always shaded
by many dirty words.

*Translated from the Arabic by Golan Haji in collaboration with Jesper Berg and Stephen Watts.
Published in Syria Speaks, Sagi Books, London, 2014*

Another House

The house
A frightened face
In the window of another house.

I was my house
I drink the water of my breath
And sit on my dreams

A stranger lit
A fire in the bedroom
And warmed himself
Then he carved names from the past
On the black walls

I still can't read them

Translated from the Arabic by Marilyn Hacker, published in The Paris Review, issue 217, 2016