

QAMAR JAMIL

EMPTY HOUSE

I am but an empty house yet
in this house a lamp
still burns;
the faintest sound
of tinkling bells
and voices
softly
gently
crying.
Dark of night and
windows host a
tapping sound
and people think
a swift breeze blows.
Morning dawns and
round the porch
flowers bloom
some white
some black
and people think
that Spring
is back
but
I remain an empty house
with several doors
and on each door
a tapping sound;
a drum-beat sounds
as small drums
roam from room

to room in
search in
search
of me.
Children play
their mothers say
don't go inside that empty house
don't go inside that empty house
so I remain as empty house
inside me is an empty
chair and
there
I sit
alone.
In my hand a mirror
in which fairies
dance and say
don't come inside this empty house
don't come inside this empty house
but then
She
comes—
a girl who says
'this house is mine.'
In my heart her lamp
still burns
and in its glow
the faintest sound
a girl so
softly
gently crying.

Translated by Estelle Dryland