

THE SUBLET

This is some other woman's house.
She cooks her dinner here,
paints in the attic while the water boils,
runs up and down the stairs
to mingle home and art.
She's bathed in this tub a thousand times,
made babies in this bed,
suffered her minor pains,
endured, perhaps.
This house belongs to her.

I am a stranger here,
searching for the proper pan,
needing a place to keep my books
in a lend-lease home,
a summer substitution.
The tub feels foreign to my nakedness,
this bed's a private place
causing pain, not minor,
but to be endured.

I find a place for books
but it is wrong.
They do not fit there on that chest.
I have used too small a pan.
The sauce boils over the edges
onto a stranger's stove.

Janis Mercer