

Assimilation

It is important to learn the language

What is your name?

They took my name at the border
I have filled in the forms to get another.

Where do you live?

I live in a street where pomegranates flower
and birds and children sing at evening.
I live in a pile of white rubble.
I live for four days without food on a jolting truck.
I live on a mattress in my friend's room.

Tell your partner something about yourself.

I tell my partner my right eye does not trust my left
and if I have two hands I am afraid
that one will kill the other.

What do you do at the weekend?

At the weekend I lie on my mattress
and listen to that silence that follows
gunfire and the fall of shells.
In the darkness I still cross borders
in strange clothes, leave friends and lover
where they fall.
At weekends I remember
I am the one who got through
and have nothing to carry except their names.
I watch the roof of a prison
that keeps closing over me.

*Please listen to this conversation.
It's about asking the way.*

Jane McLaughlin

Poem previously published in *Acumen* 63