

Jacob Eigen
ARGUMENT

When I was alone with my life
it showed me photos
of other lives. Fated
lives full of words
like cruelty and attention
and difference and repose.

My life asked What are our words.
As lovers on television
ask questions that aren't questions,
questions that mean I accuse.

Couples tended to be happy
in those photos: men and their lives
on the steps of museums, touching
the backs of their hands
in the late afternoon. My life asked

Why won't you take me there.
Why won't you say I don't care
how cold it is, and buy me a hot dog,
and stroke my knees to keep them warm.

I said It's not what I want.
My life said It is. I said I know
what I want. I want to be
the Hungarian mountaineer
I read about in the obits.
Under the ice twenty years.

Whose back became part of the earth.
Whose hands became part of his body.
My life was bored with me.
But sometimes it has more patience.
Sometimes it sits for hours after
my speeches, saying Then tell me what to be.