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# Black Rock

GERRIE FELLOWS

I

In my kitchen musing one rain-splashed  
evening on the old plans of women climbing  
I turn my face against your jacket's hollow  
nap asking How can this have happened

And there is no answer No words

but the rooks' rough melody over Applegarth  
or against the roof of Black Rock the clatter  
of the wind mimicking your restless dreams  
the night breathing through your empty bed

II

It seems as if we kept coming back to make  
those moves In drifting heat the mind  
floating only the rope (umbilical cord  
of the flung body) moving through the hands  
teaching the fingerprints the route's codes  
its hesitations the tug to clip a runner

If I climbed now your gear clanking  
from my harness would your tall shadow  
with its rough grace reappear

III

I dreamt you were Persephone given time  
in the living world woke to some kind  
of salve or sweating mistaken having  
cut your skirt to fit my shape found you  
were still alive

After three years your presence in these  
clothes the shrunken jersey the jeans  
nipped in at the waist is odourless  
no more than a ghost You are gone

## IV

And yet in August putting away the stove  
and zipping the tent and last of all lacing  
our boots and trudging up to the glacier  
through the casually rigorous afternoon  
not climbing yet not expecting stonefall  
on the path I thought over and over  
This is how it was

Helen memorials are fixed or moving They  
are the lethal spin of a pebble in a gully  
or on a route a rockfall's thunder  
and in all these mountains the mounds  
of scree your true gravestone