

ANN KENISTON

Residue

I began with what was left, like reusing
spolia, the great rectangular blocks

hauled off and adapted to some other
purpose. I didn't impose a moral or

chronicle the shards' scattering or rebuild
an arch or wall or lintel from them or rescue

some other apparently discarded thing
from dust. To receive grace, that woman

said, doesn't mean believing you've been touched
by God. It means opening your arms to doubt,

the repeated nonappearance of
the longed-for proof. And then the faithful

gathered on the porch to watch the lit-up hills
like a palette someone ought to lift

and paint with until night arrived
and wind rustled all the trees. Sometimes

in stories all the scattered pieces come to life
and cry out, like the weeping stones

in some versions of Orpheus' story,
the beauty of his song having impelled them

to express their pity, or the pieces
of Osiris' body strewn all over the world,

clamoring to be made whole so again
they could be scattered, then

gathered and again made whole.