

Thirteen for Supper

I tell you it was bloody hot in that kitchen
with its open fires
great pots of bean stew steaming, unleavened bread
baking over hot coals, the pungent scent of roasting lamb
sweat dripped between my breasts, my arms exhausted
from chopping and stirring, up since five
they said thirteen for supper that night
an unlucky number I whispered to no one
later I poured wine and passed bread
put out more olives and dates
but there is no sign of me in the famous painting
only a walk on part, a bitter footnote
sometimes I look again to be sure, maybe
I missed it on the lower left, on hands and knees
sweeping crumbs under the table
no, not even there

Claire Scott