**Lick and Split** *by Sally Russell*

*A Golden Shovel after Gwendolyn Brooks 'One Wants a Teller in a Time like This'*.

She combs my hair, smooths my skirt, tells me, 'Stand up straight.'

On with my scarlet beret for a photo on the porch. Round-shouldered,

I shuffle down the street, past the lake, tranquil

in September morning light, my progress eyed

by local lads sitting on a chip shop wall. The knowing

glances, pushing of phones into back pockets. One

with Iron Maiden tatts comes over. 'Whatcha got there?' He knows

I'm scared. *Y'know what? We'll play splits. For*

*every throw of my knife, you get a wish,* he said*.* *Oh, sure,*

I thought. I stood, feet apart. He slid his knife from the

sleeve of his jacket. Made to lick the blade the way

he'd lick a lover. Zap. Knife between my feet. My turn. I back

away, take aim. Zap. Through his foot. How they taught me in the home.