

Lisa Russ Spaar

*Ash*

*This heaven gives me migraine. – Gang of Four*

Forgive this stroke cashmere,  
thumb-print to the glabella, powdered smear,

palm-char paste, part spit, part bone-  
boss, dental floss, whole envelopes

of outographs, faces I've forgotten, holes  
of moments I've pictured that weren't mine to hold,

to picture, all I didn't say but meant, told,  
took without asking, hid, feared, sold;

hawk talon, stain, cloth sacked  
by placenta, ink husks, saline, subtracted

shadows, lost cosmos of menarche, brain cells,  
& this bindi fascicle of worry, the cross I draw myself.

## *Music Lessons*

*And my heart, where have I wasted it?  
– Chopin*

For so long, these exercises,  
clots of grapes hung from pergola staves,

red fox arpeggio, shiver of civet smoke, abandon, abandon,  
moths threshing the window screen.

So why weep into the piano of dimming field,  
ensnared, wired for loss, one note still to sound

between this day's scale & its erasure?  
What does it matter now, that wedging of wood shims

between gripe-clad fingers all night to extend my range  
one, two, notes beyond the octave?

Afraid was what I didn't want to be,  
turning the last page. Now I see

there is no landing, just the last tread & rise,  
then the crypt of stars.

Before that, for as long as possible,  
the exquisite, felted climb & fall.