From *Dear Z: The Zygote Epistles* (Etruscan Press 2020),by Diane Raptosh

*Dear Zygote,*

When I sing “Blackbird” to the visiting baby, her fingers hook sounds from my mouth

and fist them into furies of clay.

*What have I in common*

*with most living things, and how do I differ?* is the main question

that blinkers her boundary conditions. She dung-beetles along,

the human experiment grafting its skin onto madcap austerity, corporations

the nation’s trophy constituents, prisons harvesting children for profit—

the whole system sounding

its moves toward the sea-lurch

of language’s overturn. Men sublimate anguish through punishment modes—

the doomed blackbird practically tearing

its beak as it sinks its rolled hymns in blank

heartbreak of night. Hear this. Who will not feel his own pain can only inflict it.

Visiting pilgrim, to plainly despair

is to sip on the milk of the great human braille:

its tender uprisings. Its horripilation— that’s gooseflesh—

if it so happens you were awaiting

some new takeaway on that ‘68 standard.