

(Untitled)

for Agnes Kiernan Dixon

A red-tailed hawk holds back time, motionless
in these unseen winds. *Hold yourself still,*
listen she seems to say. So I do
and what I hear are stories
rising
up from the land
cupped in the open hands
of my ancestors.

I will not trade one way of seeing for another
you said
when they delivered you up
to the flesh and blood eating animals
of the boarding school. But at some point
you agreed when they asked you to leave
behind those symbols from home
that were imbued with information
on where to find food, how to process grief
and how to cope with change that felt like
being swallowed alive. What they
must have done to you to convince you
to leave behind all the things
that sustained you, I cannot imagine.

But I will remember your pain, try
to give it a voice, lend
your long-stolen stories a bodily venue
that breathes them back to life in a way
that allows us to heal.

Remember our stories of grief, they say,