

Back Up Quick They're Hippies

By Lani O'Hanlon

That was the year we drove
into the commune in Cornwall.
"Jesus Jim," mam said,
"back up quick they're hippies."

Through the car window,
tents, row after row, flaps open,
long-haired men and women
curled around each other like babies

and the babies themselves
wandered naked across the grass.

I reached for the handle, ready, almost,
to open the door, drop out and away
from my sister's aggressive thighs,
Daddy's slapping hands.

Back home in the Dandelion Market
I unlearnt the steps my mother taught,
bought a headband, an afghan coat,
a fringed skirt — leather skin.

Barefoot on common grass I lay down with kin.

Source: *Poetry* (March 2018)