

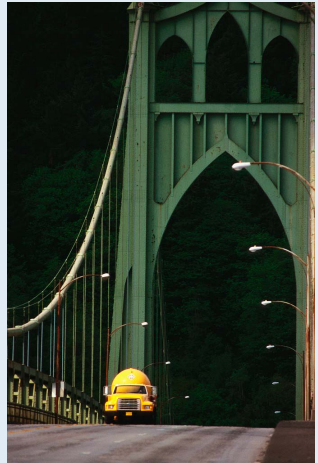
Elaine Bougie Gilligan

TRANSPORT

I cannot love
a car. Even if it moves
me, even if we go
pick up a friend,
take Mum to the doctor
and the bread and spuds
home from the market,
all that.

I can't spin romance
from four wheels
and eight windows, no.

But I could take a thrill ride,
a gum and radio rolling day
into the night of a silver-sided rig.
I could love a truck,
be a trucker, go where
a trucker goes and be
responsible for the load even
if I didn't choose it. I could even
be turkeys or screaming hogs
bound for slaughter—what
can you do? I could be
contraband in the panelling.



(.../2)



I could be lonely and sweet,
and far from home and never lose
myself or the centre of
that large, warm wheel.

I would sleep a mortal
and tousled sleep at rest stops.
I would do coffee and road food
and would ache in many places
and stretch, when I could.

If you put me on a city route
I would curse with the best of them,
growl the engine brakes and give you a blast for
cutting me off—you turd
in the 4-wheel drive.

If you sent me to Alaska or Nebraska
I would go quietly, and leave
some of my breath and sweat
there—a vapour trail on the freeway
the only mark of my passing.
I would do Canada in canola swaths
and Prince Georgian trees spires.

(.../3)

Give me a CB handle, love handles
and a dispatcher who needles me.
I'd give as good as I got, I'd do shifts
for my friends, and be big on handshakes
and iffy on hugs.

I could be in love, as a trucker,
and really miss my guy, and call him
from Eugene. I would come into his bed at strange
hours and make him glad
to be woken.

I could love a truck,
forgive its stink and its greasy
entrails. I could love the whole damn
continent and all its less-than pretty
road-side attractions. I will. I do. I am
an eighteen-wheeler, can you feel me
coming down your
road?

