



**Juliane Liebert**  
**songs to the great void**

Poems

(Original German title: lieder an das große nichts. Gedichte)

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Sample translation by Gwendoline Choi

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**the last tribute**

this is the last tribute i will pay before  
they stop the human sacrifices, i will slaughter  
you and eat your eyes, one raw and one with honey and salt

**you are lost to me**

you are lost to me  
to metaphysics to time  
and its predictable gods  
to the doves, the taxi drivers  
they're everywhere

i see you constantly you're in  
atlantis on broadway at the bus stop  
when the bus stops you're already gone  
you broke my tongue there's  
hearsay that you didn't die  
when i entered the cemetery you weren't  
there at all who said anything about cancer?  
you're a sagittarius you're with friends playing  
football in denver you're lying in

the sun your lungs full of holes, still warm  
baby bird squeezed in your fist  
you're everywhere now that you're nowhere  
are your soles starry your soul  
a vacuum only the earth above you

is flat & rotating ever slower  
and the djs the waitresses  
the gods of physics and time and  
their servants, with your face they are

lost to me  
they are eyeless they are  
earless they have no  
words left

**the sea**

the sea the dog-eyed the chalk-footed sea  
a thousand fingers wide and countless chest depths deep, where it's lighter  
than anywhere else because the light from the water  
refracts back at you  
where your oversalty glances are a punch in the face  
where you can buy two glasses of vodka in exchange for a hag stone  
a night in the kelp would ruin your life  
for a single moment: the vastness  
as you see it in the mirror  
of a stranger's reflection  
in the train window, next to you, outside

**the reaping (from hard and soft machines)**

i have long lived by the moons  
sometimes white otherwhiles dark  
and wondered, and wondered  
why they never fall when i call  
these filthy rocks, unfaithful mutts, i've  
cut their leashes now

and instead of the sky  
dig myself into the earth. my back hurts  
it's so quiet  
in the house that I hear  
the neighbours' forks  
on their plates

**gogol**

nikolai, my party girl  
it was with these sentences, still breathing they  
buried you dead  
dug you up again, they did  
your head all contorted from  
your coffin staccato your last step  
you had visions we understood  
exhausted, we hurtle in plastic crates  
the clattering slabs covered with mirrors  
so that no one sees us so that  
alone and defenceless, we're canned  
like you, but you've got  
depth, a hunch for the slats  
that spell out the world, we've  
moved on: we're talking rubbish  
oh nikolai, my soiled treasure

(The Russian writer Nikolai Gogol died at the age of 42 from the complications of strict religious fasting. Many years after his death, his grave was opened for reburial. The poet's skeleton was found lying completely turned in his coffin. One obvious explanation for this is that Gogol was buried alive.)

### **my brother**

my brother said that he wanted to go travelling  
packed 30 kilos of stones in his backpack  
and walked into a river near vienna  
in june or july, we don't know  
on the 8th they fished one out, the cops say  
as tall and as heavy as my brother  
who has the same scars as my brother  
who had told us: he wanted to go travelling  
a few years, we said: but he had debts  
my brother did, and the man in the river has no  
papers, but the tattoo matches, you say:  
his height, weight, teeth and scars the same?