

August Stramm: Selected Poems

Translated from the German by Isham Cook

August Stramm was born on July 29, 1874, in Münster, Germany, and died on September 1, 1915, from a head wound on the Russian Front. As far as we know Stramm did not begin writing poetry until February 1914, six months before going off to war. The following selection of poems is taken from the Philipp Reclam edition (Stuttgart, 1979). Thanks to Lilo Difloe for helping me with the translation. This translation is also dedicated to Lilo Difloe, who committed suicide not long after this translation was completed.

I. C.

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*Primal Stroll*

Mumble and scream  
Foot before foot!  
Wink hasten hesitate  
Down to the river!  
Lapping and panting  
Farther...farther!

Monster!  
Shock and fury!  
Man and wife  
Stones in cramping fists  
Fuck off!...Fuck off!

Ecstasy and aching  
Hunger!  
Rind and leaf  
Farther!

Uprooted trunk  
In sinewy fist!  
Swing and strike!  
Bloody gunk!  
Gone!

Blinding beams  
From bloodred bulk!  
Powerfuller!  
Begone!

Blind Dark  
Horror around around  
Sleep and death  
Ghastlier!  
Help!

Peace and rest  
Farther and farther!  
River and vale  
Farther and farther!  
Water and sand  
Farther and farther!

Farther! Farther!

### *The Ride*

The branches grasp for my eyes  
In the monocle eddies white and lilac black and yellow  
Bloodred fume fingers toughly the tendons  
Creeps sliming high and cramps in the joints!  
From ways before me rips the sky pieces!  
A childshriek yells!  
The earth rages, crushes itself in curses  
Me and my animal  
My animal and me  
Animal me!

### *Early Spring*

Plump clouds hunt one another in puddles  
From fresh bowel bogs shriek stalks streams  
The shadows stand exhausted.  
Up screams the air  
In its circling, blows and howls and wallows  
And rips slash themselves abruptly  
And scar on the gray belly.  
The silence paws about heavily downward  
And burdens!  
There rolls the light itself up  
Sudden yellow and springs  
And specks squirt  
Pale  
And  
Plump clouds tumble about in puddles.

## *Storm*

Black snarls in white  
The bluesporthappy mists bristle hailyellow.  
Brightness quivers  
Deafens to ground.  
Raging  
Stony  
Locking!  
Deadraiving crawls around the night.  
Dull upwardveins  
Blue the stretching  
Shivers writhes  
Forces  
Heaves itself  
Lifts the fists  
Hardsharpedged  
Zings clouds  
Clears fears  
Stands and stretches itself  
Grips the gargling  
And mashes it  
After him plunging  
Himself stifling  
Rolling reeling  
In  
The  
Void!  
Eyes  
Misting over and sobbing!  
Brimming  
Welling  
Loosening  
Shocking!  
Lights  
Glaring  
High in arches!  
Clangs  
Swing  
Free  
Strong  
Sunvictorysounds!

## *The Morning*

Black  
Dawns  
Crumples shameful palish.  
Silence slinks to bed!  
Shocks peep  
Hearken  
Chirp  
Cringe  
Squeak feelingly  
Shrill defiantly  
Calling calling  
Wake up  
From branch to branch.  
In the nook gape breezes  
Pawing vapors.  
Slapping flitting crackling whizzing  
Tugs in the dun wan wisps!  
Bluepale glass streams to crystal!  
Clinking  
Flashes the sky above!  
Sparks blaze  
Splinters glow!  
Showering  
Swirling drops mirrors!  
Lightblended swings upward  
The brightness!

*Lovebattle*

The wanting stands  
You flee and flee  
Never stop  
Search not  
I  
Want  
You  
Not!  
The wanting stands  
And rips the walls down  
The wanting stands  
And ebbs the torrents away  
The wanting stands  
And shrinks the miles into itself  
The wanting stands  
And pants and pants  
And pants  
Before you!  
Before you  
And hating  
Before you  
And resisting  
Before you  
And bending  
And  
Sinking  
Treading  
Stroking  
Cursing  
Blessing  
Around and around  
The round round rushing world!  
The wanting stands!  
Happening happens!  
In linked spasms  
Press our hands  
And our tears  
Well  
Into  
The same stream!  
Neither you!  
Nor you!  
The wanting stands!  
Not  
I!

## *Appointment*

The gateway enfangs with striped cords  
My cane scolds  
Clink  
The freshspreadout bumpstone  
The giggle  
Startles  
Through the dark  
Deceitcornering  
In  
Warm trembling  
Stumble  
Hasty  
The thoughts.  
A black kiss  
Steals shyly to the gate outside  
Whirr  
The lanternshine  
Luminates  
After  
Him  
In the street.



## *Moonglare*

On my eyes stretches the shine.  
The sleeping glimmers in your chamber  
Yellows high upward  
And  
Sultries me!  
Pale  
Blanches the bed  
And stripes the covers  
Slips fresh the shirt  
Shivering  
On the moon.  
Now  
Glow you  
You  
Glow glow!  
Glasses  
Blues the hand  
In glaringhurting emptiness  
Snatches after the sky  
Moon and stars  
Crash  
Topple over me  
Whirl  
Grope  
Halt halt halt!  
And  
Quiver through to rest  
At the ancient square!  
In  
Your window up there  
Yawnweary  
Blinks  
The night!

## *Fulfillment*

My spores affront your pointedness  
Bluishly snicker the veinlets forth  
In sureness sneering  
In the  
Shimmering flab  
Shaky hills sway craving  
Small heads redden aloft and steepen safety  
The lip gnaws itself!  
Golden curl strangles downward  
And ensnare the neck  
After my fingers gropes your blood  
And seethes the fight.  
The souls twist and roll apart!  
High break the skirts the glance open  
Goldclearred  
Redsoftred  
Flame sizzles in the brain  
And sticks through me the look!  
Sinking sinking  
Hovering and sinking  
Swinging in the storm  
In the storm  
In the shriekrolling sea!  
Brickred  
Over us crosses death  
Sowing death!

### *House of Pleasure*

Lights strumpet from the window  
The epidemic  
Spreads over the door  
And exhibits woman's gowns!  
Femalesouls shame shrill laughter!  
Motherwombs yawn childdeath!  
Unborn  
Ghostifies  
Stewing  
Through the rooms!  
Shy  
In the nook  
Shamepored  
Slithers away  
The sex!

### *Fickleness*

My seeking seeks!  
Manythousand wander I!  
I touch I  
And you seize  
And hold you!  
Yearn away I!  
And you and you and you  
Manythousand you  
And always you  
Allpathed you  
Crazy  
Crazies  
Crazier  
Through  
The craziness  
You  
You  
I!

### *Untrue*

Your smile weeps in my breast  
The heatdogged lips ice  
In the panting smells leafwither  
Your look coffins  
And  
Scurries clattering on words.  
Forgetting  
Crumbling after the hands!  
Free  
Fucks your gownfringe  
Dangling  
Overthere overhere!

### *Boiling*

My weakness holds itself painfully  
In its own hands  
With my powers  
Play your knuckles  
Catchball!  
In your stalking rustles  
There  
My thinking  
And  
For you in the eyechasm  
Dies  
My last want!  
Your breath blows me to bits  
Shriekfull in longing  
Cool  
Adorns your dallying  
In the hair  
Itself  
Smiling  
My anguish!

### *Hesitating*

My eyes swing in your breasts  
Your head bends glowing red soft shadows  
On 'em  
The breath ashamed checks  
The surging.  
Lust claws me  
And sharp vapors bleed  
In its chains  
Rattles  
Reason.  
Finely  
Pinches the shyness the lips smiling  
Colder!  
My arm only  
Seizes  
In the swing  
You  
Heatish hot!

### *Passing By*

The house flickers in the stars  
My step stops and freezes.  
In your womb sleeps my brain.  
Doubt eats me up!  
Full  
Shades your bust in the window  
The peering shrouds me silent  
The stars stripe glowing iron  
My heart  
Charred!  
On your window  
Ices  
A windbreath ash.  
The feet carry farther the empty burden!

### *Heard*

The breath blows  
And  
Casts resistances  
The blowing quivers  
And  
Shakes holds to ground  
The breath roars  
And  
Crazes the burrowed deeps  
The roaring whizzes  
And  
Convulses the heartblood  
The breath storms  
And  
Rips time into eternity  
The storming rushes  
And  
Swirls to nothingness!  
You  
Breathes  
The  
You!  
And  
Breathing breathing  
Breathing  
Storms  
You!

### *Dream*

Through the bushes winding stars  
Eyes diving smoking sinking  
Whisp'ring splashes  
Blooming spearing  
Scents squirting  
Shower streaming  
Winds shooting bouncing swelling  
Fabrics ripping  
Falling startles in the deep night.

### *Strife*

Galling racking rearing releasing  
Crunching fuming shunning hate  
Quaking stomping foaming grieving  
Seeking shaking searching scared  
Turning stopping looking reaching  
Standing stirring sighing goin'  
Stroking crying  
Fondling chiding  
Shaming reviles  
And  
Fleeing attracts  
Cuddling protects  
Embracing struggles  
Tormenting kisses  
Forgetting  
Laughs!

### *Despairing*

Up above slams a shrill stone  
Night grunts glass  
The times stand  
I  
Stones.  
Far  
Glaze  
You!

### *Melancholy*

Striding striving  
Living longs  
Shuddering standing  
Looks seeking  
Dying grows  
The coming  
Shrieks!  
Deep  
Shutting up  
We.

### *Secrecy*

The listening speaks  
Glowing clamming  
Shudder squinting  
Blood heaves sigh  
Your knee leans still  
The burning streams  
Foam  
Seething  
To the sea  
And  
Our spirits  
Swish  
One  
In  
Itself.



### *Moonshine*

Pale and tired  
Soft and tender  
Tomcats smell  
Flowers groan  
Waters slurp  
Winds sob  
Shine bares the teaty breasts  
Feeling whines in my hand

### *Yearning*

The hands stretch  
Stiffness shakes  
Earth grows on earth  
Your approach distances  
The step drowns  
The standing chases past  
A look  
Has  
Is!  
Crazyvoid  
I is!

### *Reunion*

Your walk trembles  
In looking dies the glance  
The wind  
Plays  
Pale bands.  
You  
Turn  
Away!  
Time courts space!

### *Flowers*

Diamonds wander over the water!  
Outstretched arms  
Stretches the dun dust to the sun!  
Flowers swaying in the hair!  
Sparkled  
Splayed  
Spin gauzes!  
Scent  
White pearl pale  
Gauzes!  
Pink, shyly muted, shimmering  
Quivering stains  
Lips, lips  
Thirsty, crinkly, hot lips!  
Flowers! Flowers!  
Kisses! Wine!  
Blushing  
Golden  
Drunken  
Wine!  
You and I!  
I and you!  
You?!

*Dusk*

Light wakens dark  
Dark fights gleam  
Space disperses the spaces  
Tatters drown in loneliness!  
The spirit dances  
And  
And  
Quakes in the expanse  
You!  
My limbs seek themselves  
My limbs caress themselves  
My limbs  
Swing sink sink drown  
In  
Immenseness  
You!

Light fights dark  
Dark guzzles gleam  
Space drowns in loneliness  
The spirit  
Swirls  
Struggles  
Halt!  
My limbs  
Whirl  
In  
Immenseness  
You!

Light is shine!  
Loneliness slurps!  
Immensity flows  
Rips  
Me  
In  
You!  
You!

*Wonder*

You stand! You stand!  
And I  
And I  
I writhe  
Spaceless timeless ponderless  
You stand! You stand!  
And  
Grass grizzlies me  
I  
Grizzly myself!  
You!  
You!  
You binds time  
You curves the circle  
You spirits the soul  
You glimpses the glance  
You  
Circles the world  
The world  
The world!  
I  
Circle the universe!  
And you  
And you  
You  
Stand  
The  
Wonder!

*Pretty*

Knowing beguiling  
True and the lie  
Death birthing  
To die be  
Weep joy  
The passing away  
Strong and wimpy  
Impossible  
Can!  
Your body flames!  
The world  
Poof!

*Urge*

Shrieking struggling  
Resisting wrestling  
Groaning sobbing  
Falling  
You!  
Piercings cravings  
Winds clammerings  
Spasms faintings  
I and you!  
Releasing slipping  
Moaning waving  
Dwindling finding  
I  
You  
You!

### *Encounter*

Your going smiles in me and over  
And  
Rips the heart.  
The nod hooks and stretches.  
In the shadow of your dress  
Muddled  
Rolling  
Hurls  
Slaps!  
You rock and rock.  
My grasping snatches blindly.  
The sun laughs!  
And  
Silly timidity limps off  
Robbed robbed!

### *Curse*

You struggle and punch!  
The firebrands howl  
Flames  
Scorch!  
Not I  
Not You  
Not You!  
Me!  
Me!

### *Game*

Your fingers glisten  
And  
Rumble Jostle Tease Caress  
Pester Brood Doze Quiver  
Undulate around me.  
The chain snaps!  
The body grows upward!  
Through the lampshimmer sink your eyes  
And slurp me up  
And  
Slurp slurp  
Brighten  
Surge!  
The walls plunge!  
Space!  
Only  
You!

### *Allpowerful*

Searching asking  
You carry the answer  
Fleeing fearing  
You stand brave!  
Stink and filth  
You spread clean  
Guile and malice  
You laugh right!  
Delusion despair  
You snuggle blessed  
Death and squalor  
You warm the realm!  
Height and abyss  
You spurt paths  
Hell devil  
You smash God!

### *Recruiting*

Secrecy bends the gate  
Earth sky  
Waiting!  
Waiting!  
Unlocks your glance!  
Dazzle  
Crazes and seizes  
And touches  
Cramp in empty hands  
Your smile fights.  
Closed peeps the gate.  
My wait waits  
And  
God and heaven knock!

### *Evening Walk*

Through snugly night  
Silences our step hither  
The hands worry wan around clenched horror  
The shine sticks sharp in shadows our head  
In shadows  
Us!  
High flimmers the star  
The poplar hangs high up  
And lifts the earth up after  
The sleepish earth wraps the naked sky  
You see and shudder  
Your lips steam  
The sky kisses  
And  
Birth to us gives the kiss!



## *Memory*

Worlds are silent outside of me  
Worlds Worlds  
Black and ashy and luminous!  
Light in the light!  
Glowing flaring blazing  
Floating hovering dwelling  
Approaching stalking  
Stalking  
All the sore dying wishes  
All the harsh straining tears  
All the gruff scorning fears  
All the cold choking passions  
Through the seething flow of my blood  
Through the burning of my sinews  
Through the blaze of thoughts  
Storming storming  
Curving coursing  
Stirring because of  
You  
The way  
The way  
The way  
To me!  
For you  
The way  
The Iaroundroaring  
For you  
The way  
The youarounddreaming  
For you  
The way  
The flameruptured  
For you  
The way  
The untraversed  
Never  
Found way  
To  
Me!

### *Sentry*

A star startles the towercross  
The nag catches dust  
Sword clinks drowsily  
Mists waft  
Shower  
Stiffen shiver  
Chill  
Stroke  
Whisper  
You!

### *Signal*

The drum plods  
The horn grows up  
And  
Dying resists  
The head through dangling death  
Bristles  
Going going  
Bristling  
Goes  
And goes and goes  
And goes and goes  
And goes and goes and goes and goes  
Goes  
Plods  
Goes.

### *Arising*

The night  
Sighs  
Around the sleepish temples  
Kisses.  
Sword clinks paled through.  
Hate stretches high  
And  
Shuffles the dream through furrows.  
Whinneying stomps  
Shadows lances the forest.  
In the eye cry  
Stars  
And  
Drowning.

### *Wound*

The earth bleeds under the helmethead  
Stars drop  
The universe feels.  
Shudders thunder  
Swirl  
Emptinesses.  
Fogs  
Weep  
Distance  
Your look.

## *Devastation*

The skies blow  
Blood marches  
Marches  
On  
Thousand feet

The skies blow  
Blood rages  
Rages  
On  
Thousand feet.

The skies blow  
Blood melts  
Melts  
In  
Thousand stitches

The skies blow  
Blood smashes  
Smashes  
In  
Thousand shards.

The skies blow  
Blood sleeps  
Sleeps  
Beside  
Thousand deaths

The skies blow  
Death weaves away  
Weaves away  
Beside  
Thousand feet.

### *Valuable Death*

Cursing wraps the earth  
Pain rings the rod  
Murders stir creation  
Loves yawn grave  
Never bear end  
Always beget Now  
Madness washes the hands  
Eternally  
Undamaged.

### *Evening*

Tired weaves  
Stumping dawns  
Praying weighs on  
Sun wounds  
Flatters  
You.

### *Killed*

The sky feathers the eye  
The earth claws the hand  
The airs buzz  
Weep  
And  
Lace up  
Womancomplaint  
Through  
The straggle hair.

### *Assault*

From all corners scream the Fearing Wantings  
Screech  
Lashes  
The life  
Before  
Itself  
Here  
The panting death  
The skies rip.  
Blind butchered wildallover the horror.

### *Frostfire*

The toes die  
Breath melts to lead  
In the fingers sink hot needles.  
The back snails  
The ears hum tea  
The fire  
Slogs  
And  
High from heaven  
Slurps  
Your boiling heart  
Crinkly  
Crackly  
Cosy  
Simmery sleep.

### *War*

Pain gnaws  
Waiting stares horrified  
In labor shocks  
Bearing clamps the limbs  
The hour bleeds  
Question lifts the eye  
Time gives birth to  
Exhaustion  
Youthens  
The  
Death.

### *Guard*

The night weighs on the eyelids  
Sleepiness flickers and teases  
The foe hides  
The fife snarls  
Lost  
And  
All spaces  
Shiver  
Wrinkled  
Small.

### *Patrol*

The stones are hostile  
Window grins treason  
Branches choke  
Hills shrubs flake off quickly  
Screech  
Death.

### *Baptismal Fire*

The body shrinks the wide jacket  
The head hides the legs  
Shocked  
Chokes the shotgun  
Fears  
Rattle  
Rattle shrill  
Rattle slam  
Rattle stumble  
Rattle  
Stagger over  
Screech  
Fury.  
The glance  
Pricks  
Hiss  
The hands flex schnapps.  
The defying piles.  
Wanting eyes  
And  
Steely glance  
Shoots  
Stretch  
The  
Fate.

### *Shrapnel*

The sky casts clouds  
And rattles to smoke.  
Points flash.  
Feet teeter flying pebbles.  
Eyes giggle in the craze  
And  
Splay.



*Primal Death*

Space  
Time  
Space  
Move  
Rain  
Point  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Stretch  
Unite  
Add  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Turn  
Fight  
Crane  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Struggle  
Throw  
Choke  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Fall  
Sink  
Plunge  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Whirl  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Craze  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Whirr  
Space  
Time  
Space  
Stray  
Nothing.

*In the Fire*

Deaths shuffle  
Dying rattles  
Lonely  
Encloses  
Worlddeephigh  
Lonelinesses.

*Scream*

Days encoffining  
Worlds cemeterying  
Nights tower  
Bloods rear  
Woes expand all expanses  
Strangle  
Swing  
And  
Scatter  
Swing  
Strangle  
And  
Strange  
Rage  
Steam  
Whirl  
Crumple  
Tangle  
Woes Woes  
Woes  
Woeing  
Notall.

### *War Grave*

Sticks plead crossed arms  
Script hesitates pale unknown  
Flowers insulting  
Pollen bashful.  
Shimmer  
Tears  
Glazes  
Forgotten.

### *Question*

And  
Trunks shrink wide skies  
And  
Hearts sway brood grief  
And  
Stalks breathe wavy storms  
And  
Silence scares  
And  
Bends and goes  
And  
Going going  
Ways goals direction  
And  
Going going  
Love life death  
And  
Going going  
Endless wave storms  
And  
Going going  
Endless stems  
The  
Nothing.