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.
November 1988, Chicago
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 childish shriek 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!
Deadraving 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
Sunvictoriesounds!
The Morning

Black
Dawns
Crumple 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
Goldcleared
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 growns!
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!
Manythousanded wander I!
I touch I
And you seize
And hold you!
Yearn away I!
And you and you and you
Manythousanded 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 snuggly 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 way aroundroaring
For you
The way arounddreaming
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
Woman complaint
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
Screeeh
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  
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.