



Volume 5. Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918
August Stramm, "Storm" and "Battle" (1914)

August Stramm (1874-1915) was a civil servant and reserve officer with a predilection for experimental poetry. He was an enthusiastic supporter of war and saw the violence of war as a restorative property. He died on the eastern front in 1915; prior to his death he attained the rank of battalion commander. Stramm captured the sights and sounds of war with a thoroughly modernist sensibility, evoking the symbolism of Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine.

I. "Storm" (1914)

Black bares itself in white
The playfully gay blue mists scowl yellow like hail.
Brightness flares
Presses to the ground.
Raging
Stoned
Shut!
Deathly mad clings to the night.
Feebly opening its veins
Extending out in blue
Trembling in the trees
Weighs heavily
Lifts itself
Bares its fists
Square-edged, hard and sharp
Clouds ring out
Fears light up
It stands and stretches itself
Seizes the gurgling
And chokes it
Lunging towards it
Stifling itself
Gobbling, rolling
Into
The
Void!
Eye
Lids open and wail!
Tears
Waves

Loosening
Terror!
Lights
Glare
High in the arch!
Sounds
Pulsate
Free
Strong
Winning sounds of the sun!
II. "Battle" (1914)

Moaning wrestles
And
Stomps into the earth
Grappling chokes
Wiggles, ransacks and heaves
The heavens stand
And
Clasp torn by convulsions
Slashing crashes
And
Rings out piercingly to the ground
Knowledge stagnates
Hope trembles and scowls
Anticipation bleeds
Screaming advances upward
Life goes up in flames
The last fires
Sputter
Beasts
Sink their claws into
Death
Rising up
To the heavens.
Daylight dies
The night
Blooms around
The funeral shroud
The earth covers
And
Love forces open the womb
The stars tremble
Radiance bridges across
Time climbs up
And
Smiling collects drops
And
Collecting smiling
Smiling collecting striding
And

Collecting strides
Smiling striding fading away
And
Striding fades away
Fading away smiling striding
And
Fading away strides towards
The obstinate space.

Source: August Stramm, "Gewitter" ["Storm"] and "Schlacht" ["Battle"] (1914), in *Das Werk* [Works], edited by René Radrizzani. Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1963, pp. 111-12, 77-78.

Translation: Richard Pettit