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| **Stramm, August (1874-1915)** |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| August Stramm was a German Expressionist poet and playwright; an important author of the Expressionist journal *Der Sturm* and its main contributor of ‘Wortkunst’, a form of literature characterized by the destruction of conventional language patterns.  Born in Münster on July 29, 1874, Stramm entered postal service, working on the ‘Seepostdienst’ (nautical mail service) between Hamburg/Bremen and New York from 1897 onwards and at the Berlin Postal Ministry since 1905. By then he started attending university lectures (e.g. philosophy, history, economy) and preparing for his doctorate which he achieved in 1909 with a thesis on unified global postal rates. In 1902, Stramm married Else Krafft, a successful writer of light fiction; they had two children. |
| August Stramm was a German Expressionist poet and playwright; an important author of the Expressionist journal *Der Sturm* and its main contributor of ‘Wortkunst’, a form of literature characterized by the destruction of conventional language patterns.  Born in Münster on July 29, 1874, Stramm entered postal service, working on the ‘Seepostdienst’ (nautical mail service) between Hamburg/Bremen and New York from 1897 onwards and at the Berlin Postal Ministry since 1905. By then he started attending university lectures (e.g. philosophy, history, economy) and preparing for his doctorate which he achieved in 1909 with a thesis on unified global postal rates. In 1902, Stramm married Else Krafft, a successful writer of light fiction; they had two children.  Having served his duty year in the Army (1896-97) Stramm became a reservist and by 1913 had been promoted to captain, the highest military rank available to civilians. In August 1914 he was called to arms, serving at the Western front for eight months and receiving the Iron Cross (second class) in March 1915. A month later he was sent to Russia where he served as a Company Leader and Battalion Commander. He was killed in action in Galicia on September 1, 1915.  Starting with a history drama (*Die Bauern*, 1902/1905) and Naturalist one-acters in Berlin dialect (*Der Gatte/The Husband*, 1909; *Die Unfruchtbaren*, 1910/12; *Rudimentär/Rudimentary*, 1912), Stramm absorbed more recent influences in 1912/13, writing Symbolist plays in the style of Maeterlinck (*Sancta Susanna*; *Die Haidebraut/The Bride of the Moor*) showing individuals struggling with superhuman forces. These plays were his first works published in Herwarth Walden’s journal *Der Sturm*. Stramm’s expressionist pieces, written in 1914/15 (*Erwachen/Awakening*; *Kräfte/Forces*; *Geschehen/Happening*), reduced all agents to mere abstractions uttering isolated words.  Stramm had made contact to *Der Sturm*’seditor in March 1914 and they soon developed a close friendship, exchanging ideas about modern literature with Walden confirming Stramm’s literary experiments.  Today Stramm is best known for his poems in which he made use of neologisms, one-word lines and the disruption of grammatical conventions, trying to find a new language for fundamental experiences, as can be seen in his long poems (*Die Menschheit*/*Humanity*, 1914; *Weltwehe*, 1915). Stramm’s love poems (*Du/You* or *Thou*, 1915) address the beloved human and/or supernatural other in unusual imagery, while the poems from the frontline (*Tropfblut/Dripping Blood* or *Drip Blood*, 1919) are an outstanding attempt to show the devastating nature of modern technical warfare using distorted language.  Stramm’s prose sketches in stream-of-consciousness technique (*Der Letzte/The Last One*; *Warten/Waiting*, 1914) and also his frontline letters to his wife and to Walden give proof of his understanding of and experiments with language, so recent research assesses them equal to his literary works.  File: StrammPhoto.jpg  Figure 1. Portrait Photo of August Stramm by Arthur Krüger (c. 1900)  Source: <http://www.ulb.uni-muenster.de/sammlungen/handschriften/nachlass-stramm.html>  File: StrammObituary.jpg  Figure 2. Title page of "Der Sturm" VI,11/12 (1915), empty but for the news of August Stramm's death in war (with the wrong date of September 2nd instead of September 1st)  Source: *Der Sturm* VI,11/12 (1915), title page Key Works *Die Menschheit* (1914)  Du. Liebesgedichte (1915)  *Weltwehe* (1915)  *Tropfblut* (1919) |
| Further reading:  (Adler and White)  (Jones) |