

AFTER HEARING A WALTZ BY  
BARTOK

But why did I kill him? Why? Why?  
In the small, gilded room, near the  
stair?

My ears rack and throb with his cry,  
And his eyes goggle under his hair,  
As my fingers sink into the fair  
White skin of his throat. It was I!

I killed him! My God! Don't you hear?  
I shook him until his red tongue  
Hung flapping out through the black,  
queer,

Swollen lines of his lips. And I clung  
With my nails drawing blood, while I  
flung  
The loose, heavy body in fear.

Fear lest he should still not be dead.  
I was drunk with the lust of his life.  
The blood-drops oozed slow from his  
head  
And dabbled a chair. And our strife  
Lasted one reeling second, his knife  
Lay and winked in the lights overhead.

And the waltz from the ballroom I heard,  
When I called him a low, sneaking cur.  
And the wail of the violins stirred  
My brute anger with visions of her.  
As I throttled his windpipe, the purr  
Of his breath with the waltz became  
blurred.

I have ridden ten miles through the dark,  
With that music, an infernal din,  
Pounding rhythmic inside me. Just Hark!  
One! Two! Three! And my fingers sink  
in  
To his flesh when the violins, thin  
And straining with passion, grow stark.

One! Two! Three! Oh, the horror of  
sound!  
While we danced I was crushing his  
throat.  
He had tasted the joy of her, wound  
Round her body, and I heard him gloat  
On the favour. That instant I smote.  
One! Two! Three! How the dancers swirl  
round!

He is here in the room, in my arm,  
His limp body hangs on the spin  
Of the waltz we are dancing, a swarm  
Of blood-drops is hemming us in!  
Round and round! One! Two! Three!  
And his sin  
Is red like his tongue lolling warm.

One! Two! Three! And the drums are his  
knell.

He is heavy, his feet beat the floor  
As I drag him about in the swell  
Of the waltz. With a menacing roar,  
The trumpets crash in through the  
door.

One! Two! Three! clangs his funeral bell.

One! Two! Three! In the chaos of space  
Rolls the earth to the hideous glee  
Of death! And so cramped is this place,  
I stifle and choke. One! Two! Three!  
Round and round! God! 'Tis he throttles  
me!

He has covered my mouth with his face!

And his blood has dripped into my heart!  
And my heart beats and labours. One!  
Two!

Three! His dead limbs have coiled every  
part

Of my body in tentacles. Through  
My ears the waltz jangles. Like glue  
His dead body holds me athwart.

One! Two! Three! Give me air! Oh! My  
God!

One! Two! Three! I am drowning in  
slime!

One! Two! Three! And his corpse, like a  
clod,

Beats me into a jelly! The chime,

One! Two! Three! And his dead legs  
keep time.

Air! Give me air! Air! My God!