

ped piper of celia's cafe

his fingers move with certainty on the strings
head bowed, eyes closed, in a private ecstasy
his smoky voice curls around me, draws me in

I taste the whiskey that has roughened it, aged it too soon
he opens his eyes, looks straight at me
I feel the chill narrow passageways he has traveled

there stands the glass he sings that will ease all my pain
and I'm with him in a dreary room by a clouded window
a nicotine-stained shade fails to halt a relentless dawn

can it ease all my pain? it's my first one today
the easy chair is shabby. he sits without resting
there stands the glass that will hide all my fears

will it hide all my fears? the audience is quiet now
from tables here and there smoke floats to the ceiling
fill it up to the brim. fill it up to the brim.

I watch the wounded man he sings of reach
I catch my breath. the guitar sighs its last silver note
collectively, we exhale.

he raises his head, smiles at us, the lights come up
he has taken us to the place where we choose how we'll die
the only way back is alone