

1985

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Recommended Citation

Piccione, Anthony. "With Whitman at the Friendship Hotel." *The Iowa Review* 15.1 (1985): 31-31. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3157>

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With Whitman at the Friendship Hotel ·
Anthony Piccione

I call out crazed in fever in a room
in Peking where I've come afraid and alone
to find, something, the words maybe.
My family looks out from the gulf behind
their photographs on the rickety desk.

So I stand. With a bottle of red wine
and no talk for days, no talk
from my neighbors rushed and far flung,
the Chinese frozen in awe untouching,
and here, in the chest of all that is lost,
I read, out loud, Walt Whitman.

Someone's voice cracks, gathers, grows
calm by my feet on the green wash of rug,
and waves this meeting aside. Brother,
brother, here is our home. Who knows
what powers the world! I love the man.