Writing this book has taken me in many unexpected directions. It started at a time when smartphones were just being invented and when reeducation camps were rare. I learned as I wrote that ideals such as human liberation cannot be broken by suppression. As Ursula K. Le Guin writes in *The Dispossessed*, “You can only crush (ideals) by ignoring them. By refusing to think.” The people who taught me to think beyond the banality of digital and material enclosure in Northwest China are my Uyghur and Han friends. This book is dedicated to them and the narrative figures they became: Ablikim, Alim, Aziz, Batur, Chen Ye, Emir, Hasan, Mahmud, and Yusup. These men showed me how gendered, ethno-racial violence can affect all aspects of social life. They taught me how to be a friend by welcoming me into relationships of friendship even when doing so made their lives even more difficult. I am honored that they shared their stories with me. Although this book moves into the abstract ideas of global social systems, it is their life stories and experiences that make those ideas breathe.

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After the youthful days of the first-floor sky
there arose beside those carefree trees a sad, uneven city
where a baby girl passed from hand to hand

—From “Lumberjacks” by Tahir Hamut, March 3, 2018,
Seattle (Trans. Joshua Freeman)
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ئانا یۆرتوئک نامان بولسا،
رەڭگى روەنەک سۆنۆوەن بولماست.

If your mother’s home is at peace,
Your color and spirit will not be broken.