I Opened My Door

— A translation from Uyghur.

I opened my door
in hopes that a girl might come bearing flowers

I took off my clothes
to make sure she could recognize me

I removed the masks
from my two faces, white and black

I rubbed the colors from my smile
brushed the dust off of my sorrows
ripped up
my poems that sang of eternal devotion

Sweeping away all the trash of my heart
I prepared myself to love

October 2009, Khotan

About the poet
Ghojimuhemmed Muhammed was born in 1971 in a village near Guma, in the south of China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. After completing high school, he worked for more than ten years in a cotton garment factory, and since 2005 has worked at the Khotan City Bus Station. Beginning in 1990, his poems have been extensively published in all of the major Uyghur-language literary journals, and he has become widely recognized as one of the leading voices in contemporary Uyghur poetry. His work, in Joshua Freeman’s English translation, has appeared in Asymptote.

About the translator
Joshua L. Freeman is a PhD candidate at Harvard University, where he studies the literature and history of Central Asia. His poetry translations have appeared in journals including Crazyhorse, Berkeley Poetry Review, Asymptote, Gulf Coast, Words Without Borders, Hayden’s Ferry Review, and Tengritagh.