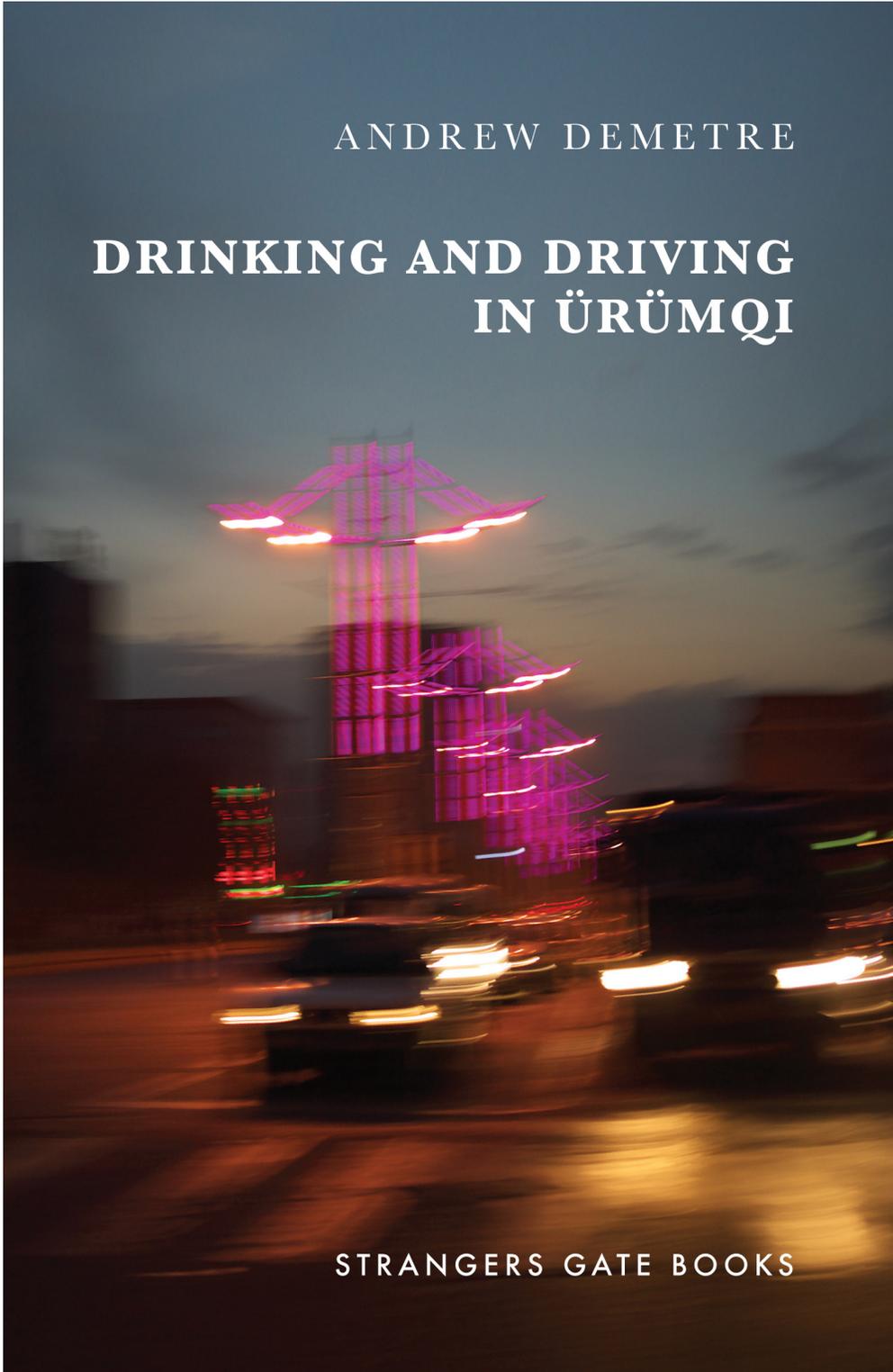


  
STRANGERS GATE

ANDREW DEMETRE

**DRINKING AND DRIVING  
IN ÜRÜMQI**



STRANGERS GATE BOOKS



For immediate release:

“A lively travelogue Anthony Bourdain would kill for . . .”

Leah Taylor, *Flavorpill*

## *Drinking and Driving in Ürümqi*

by Andrew Demetre

(Publication date: November 2013)

### **Book excerpt:**

“Going out on the town in Ürümqi could mean almost anything. Someone would fetch me—usually Rihangül’s precocious nephew, Abdul—from Rihangül’s apartment and whatever happened, happened. I knew my place as a guest. I handed over my trust and prepared for what came. Already that week I had dined on boiled sheep’s feet drenched in black vinegar, attended a grisly but moving sheep slaughter at an Uyghur abattoir, survived an Uyghur style dry shave with a straight-edged razor, enjoyed banana ice cream in an Uyghur creamery sutured into a bombed out alley, and met the most famous face in Xinjiang: the renowned comedian/actor Abdukerim Abliz—funny at first sight, larger than life, a chain-smoker, and fully present with his bountiful moustache and hilarious wagging finger. We met Mr. Abliz at Ciber Coffee, with its charcoal-fired brew, opulent private rooms, and white piano rotating atop a mirrored pedestal. No-internet-access Ciber Coffee had become my favorite local haunt because it was my only reliable source of palatable coffee.”

### **Cover copy:**

In 2009, with little preparation, writer-traveler Andrew Demetre went to Xinjiang, the far northwestern province of China, and encountered a rarely seen facet of that region’s obfuscated culture. In *Drinking and Driving in Ürümqi*, the author’s colorful debut book, Demetre enlists an adventurous spirit and nimble prose to carry the reader through a precarious night out as the unofficial, unmonitored guest of a local family and Uyghur minority Chinese Communist Party members in Xinjiang’s remote, riot-scarred capital city. Within a narrative mixing elements of memoir and reportage, Demetre balances a journalist’s eye for detail with the sensibilities of a novelist and captures an evocative portrait of a place, a time, and its characters—most notably the troubled mood and texture of the wounded city, along with a captivating depiction of Rihangül, a liberated Uyghur woman straddling disparate worlds.



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**Description:**

*Drinking and Driving in Ürümqi* offers readers a fascinating glimpse inside a rarely seen world and encompasses the author's raw impressions as he experiences the lavish hospitality, unique traditions, formalities, politics, and habits of this Silk Road culture: eating and preparing traditional foods; absorbing rumors and folklore; driving on sidewalks and across perilous uncontrolled intersections; educating his hosts on the finer points of counterfeit goods and Western music while being educated on the finer points of local etiquette and the genres of Uyghur music; conducting elaborate searches for "private rooms" in which to indulge various vices; navigating complicated gender and familial relations and the constant pull between public and private behavior; exchanging money at the black money markets; flashing rebellious gestures at the ubiquitous surveillance cameras; observing and dodging racial strife; meeting local celebrities; determining where to find drinkable coffee and the best pomegranate juice—but unsuccessfully avoiding his hosts' honored gift of profuse amounts of corn "vodka," a potent drink of questionable origin. The first American his hosts have encountered, Demetre visits Ürümqi as a guest rather than a tourist and develops a personal view of the hybrid and sometimes conflicted religious and cultural heritages in this region, revealing the universal desires, aspirations and emotions connecting all people.

**About the author:**

Andrew Demetre has lived and worked in cities across the United States and traveled extensively throughout North America, Europe, the Balkans, China, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. In recent years he has contributed to or appeared at numerous events witnessing to various aspects of the Uyghur culture of Xinjiang, China, at venues such as Barbes, Nuyorican Poets Café, WNYC's Greene Space, The Half King, Cornelia Street Café, Bowery Poetry Club, and on WFMU Radio. *Drinking and Driving in Ürümqi* is his first book. He lives in New York City.

*Drinking and Driving in Ürümqi* by Andrew Demetre

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