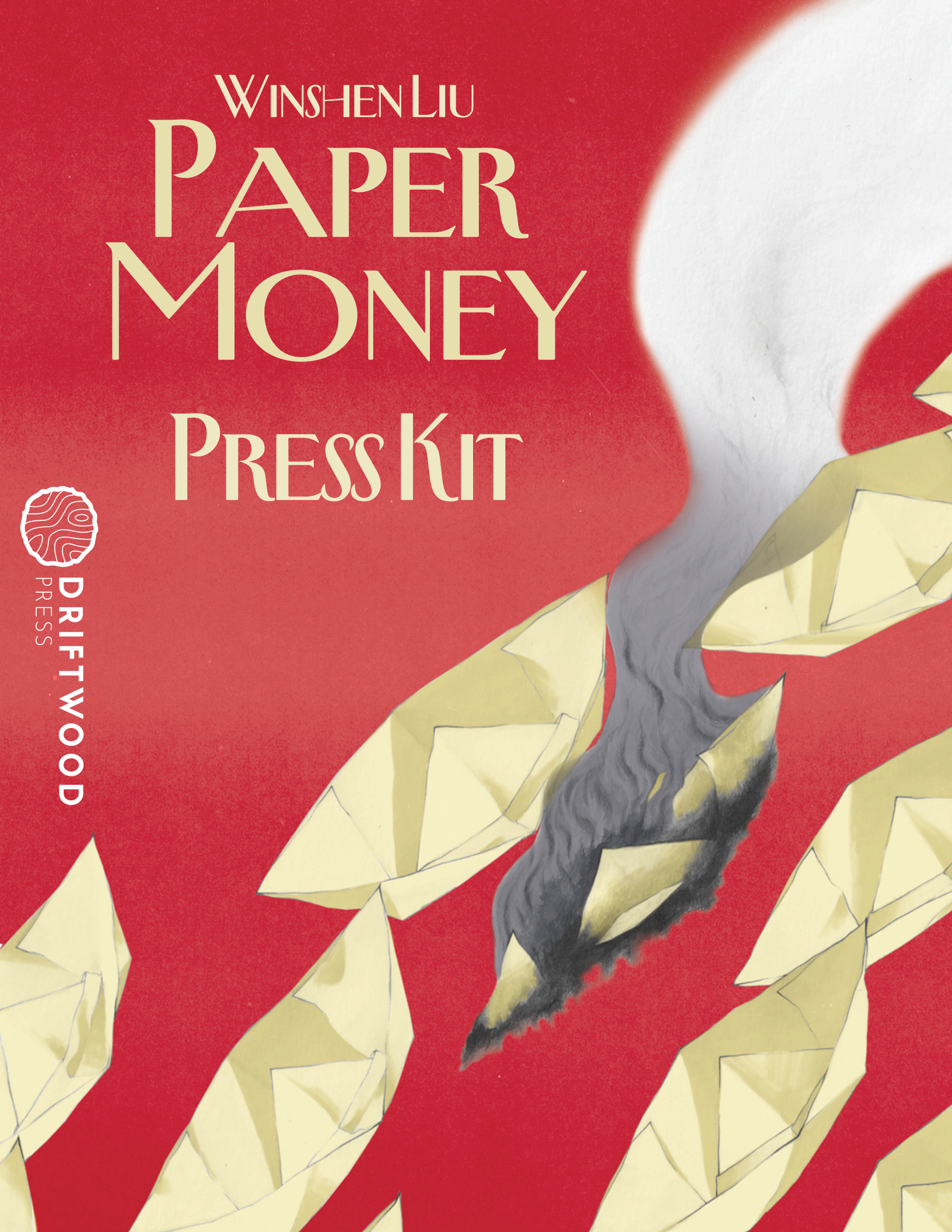


WINSHEN LIU  
**PAPER  
MONEY**  
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## **WINSHEN LIU'S PAPER MONEY**

is a sensory and sparse exploration of grief and the complexity of the second-generation Taiwanese immigrant experience in America.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Winshen Liu's poetry has appeared in *Cincinnati Review*, *Electric Literature*, *The Malahat Review*, and *The Rumpus*, among others. She is grateful to the University of Mississippi faculty for their mentorship and the de Groot Foundation for supporting her work. In addition to writing, she loves long-distance train travel, baking and bakeries, and stickers. You can follow her work at [winshenliu.com](http://winshenliu.com).



# ADVANCED PRAISE

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"Winshen Liu's *Paper Money* begins with 'Conjugation,' a poem that inventively enacts the slipperiness of language, especially for those immigrants who must negotiate a relationship with a new tongue, and therefore a new system of meaning. 'Catch // the rise before it falls to rose, lilac / to lily, orchid to orchard. Tell me / where we missed: strike // one, strike two, the clock strikes / twelve, the mouse runs down, and you're out / now sick, stricken, stroke.' It is a destabilizing and exhilarating ride. Other poems echo a legacy of poverty and ingenuity, in equal measure. It is food that provides the fundamental bond to family and cultural memory, in which Taiwan arrives in the steam of jasmine rice, a fig in the 'fancy food store' gives birth to yearning and to rhyme, and the 'nectared geyser' of white peaches becomes the nexus of elegiac pleasure. These poems awaken our own yearning for the universe of the senses that Liu renders with an exquisitely refined depth of observation. Tadpoles in a stream are 'jellied rain.' The throats of frogs are 'engorged / with the unsaid.' As the sensuous present tense meets up with the eternity of the dead, the ashes of the body become 'front teeth and fresh / paint, magician's wave and cuff links.' The impact of the whole is one in which the elegance of craft provides compressed containers for histories and feelings that would otherwise be unmanageable in their immensity, a treasure in paper money always on the verge of going up in smoke."

**— DIANE SEUSS,  
AUTHOR OF FRANK: SONNETS AND MODERN POETRY**

"Winshen Liu's poems examine peaches for ripeness and, with the magic only the best writers can conjure, finds a way to measure our own grief, hunger, poverty, and desire. These poems are a balm for anyone with an achy heart or an empty wallet. Winshen Liu is a staggering writer."

**— JOSÉ OLIVAREZ,  
AUTHOR OF PROMISES OF GOLD**

"Elegant while elegiac, delicate and brimming with delicacies of image, Winshen Liu's *Paper Money* refuses to brittle where the feeling heart is most tempted to break. Every detail is precise like the arrangement of flowers, is considerate, is resonant with reverence and the aches of understanding. This work adeptly reveals the distances even love cannot completely close by trying to travel the distances only love can see. If money burns a hole in your pocket, spend it on this; send a poem up the sky to someone who needs a reminder that they're remembered, still."

**— CORTNEY LAMAR CHARLESTON,  
AUTHOR OF DOPPELGANGBANGER**

"Despite their weighty subjects—poverty, migration and its attendant losses, familial love, grief—the poems in *Paper Money* feel mobile and vibrant as butterflies, set aloft by the freshness of Liu's voice and the light touch of her lines. The playful charm and delicate textures of these poems belie a profound depth of feeling, like handmade lace draped over an insistent, pulsing heart."

**— MELISSA GINSBURG,  
AUTHOR OF DEAR WEATHER GHOST AND DOLL APOLLO**

# LETTER TO THE READER

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## DEAR READER,

Thank you for picking up *Paper Money*. A dear friend who is also a poet once said to me she “usually peddles grief,” and I suppose that is apt for this collection too, though I did not set out to do this or realize I was doing so until the chapbook took shape. These poems came to me in the year after my grandfather’s death, when I found myself reflecting on emotional proximity in a context of geographical distance.

I have lived in the United States for most of my life, while my grandfather has been in Taiwan. Strung together, the days we have spent together may amount to less than two years, and yet, my relationship with him, especially as I grew older, was one of my most treasured. I wrote these poems to understand how such a bond could be formed, in parallel with an immigrant experience in America.

Naturally, there are threads focused on longing, money, and longing for money. There is the feeling of quiet and solitude too, even though many poems send open arms out to a full cast of family: grandfathers of course, but also aunts, mothers, fathers, cousins. I think it’s because one of my favorite reading experiences is when a work makes me feel the dichotomy of needing a hug and wanting, deeply, to give one to the speaker (or character, and sometimes the writer too); and so, I hope in reading these poems, you experience this too.

**WITH A HUG AND LOTS OF GRATITUDE,  
WINSHEN**



## **WHITE PEACHES**

For you, that week, we bought peaches like eggs:  
twelve in a box, more than we'd had in years:

pink-skinned and white-fleshed, portrait of Yang Guifei  
in the morning, supple and unblemished:

the fridge became a vault that only  
the right aunt, at the right hour, could open:

she sliced a wedge into tiny dice, rolled  
into your bowl, no longer ceramic:

we watched them tremble and brown on your fork  
and relearned what it meant to be eager;

the dilemma arose when four remained:  
six weeks had passed and so they wrinkled:

we each touched the peaches: but no  
one was hungry, not even at dinner.