

Martin Willitts Jr.

The Lake of Hakone in Sagami Province

Katsushika Hokusai, Picture # 24 of *Thirty-Six Views of Fuji*

I approach a minor village near an insignificant lake adjacent to clumps of pine. Pine needles tinkle wind-chimes in the slightest wind. In the distance, a window creaks open to let in fresh air. Behind the houses are sandy spaces all the way towards a long hill. At this angle, I can see Mount Fuji peeking, wearing a white-cone hat.

The lake is tiny. It does not reflect any images on it.

I could meditate here, shallow breaths, and let the air surround me like a lover's arms. Will this area accept a stranger? Or will the villagers insist I move on, taking my old bones to somewhere else?

A rich man can hire others to carry his heavy loads; but I have to carry as little as possible and dispose of anything I do not need. I can count all my possessions on one hand, and it is the same number of houses in this area. But the one thing I carry with me is love.

Yesterday, I discarded my cough. I had carried it too far, and its weight was slowing me down.

I found a new walking stick that had fallen from a diseased tree. I accepted this gift. It will help me struggle from place to place. Mount Fuji is kind to foolish old men. Perhaps, because it understands love.

I promised the mountain I would spend more time with my wife when I get home. This was an easy promise; one I am least likely to break. This walking stick will help me get home faster.

A stout branch for a crutch is better than a thin branch when I have a feeble limp.

I hear the branch in my hand, each time it touches the ground, saying, *This is not home. Home is what you think about all of the time when you are not daydreaming.*

Wind in pines makes sounds —

my wife is turning in sleep,

hugging her dreams tight.

Martin Willitts Jr has 24 chapbooks including the winner of the Turtle Island Quarterly Editor's Choice Award, *The Wire Fence Holding Back the World* (Flowstone Press, 2017), plus 16 full-length collections including the Blue Light Award 2019 winner *The Temporary World*. His recent book is *Unfolding Towards Love* (Wipf and Stock). He is an editor for the Comstock Review.