

*Elusive life, Oregon.
Remembering Leke
Nakashimura. Leke
worked to keep matsutake
memory alive by
encouraging old and
young to follow him into
the forest, looking for
mushrooms.*

Spore Trail **The Further Adventures** **of a Mushroom**

ONE OF THE STRANGEST PROJECTS OF PRIVATIZATION and commodification in the early twentieth-first century has been the movement to commoditize scholarship. Two versions have been surprisingly powerful. In Europe, administrators demand assessment exercises that reduce the work of scholars to a number, a sum total for a life of intellectual exchange. In the United States, scholars are asked to become entrepreneurs, producing ourselves as brands and seeking stardom from the very first days of our studies, when we know nothing. Both projects seem to me bizarre—and suffocating. By privatizing what is necessarily collaborative work, these projects aim to strangle the life out of scholarship.

Anyone who cares about ideas is forced, then, to create scenes that exceed or escape “professionalization,” that is, the surveillance techniques of privatization. This means designing research that requires playgroups and collaborative clusters: not congeries of individuals calculating costs and benefits, but rather scholarship that emerges through its collaborations. Thinking through mushrooms, once again, can help.

What if we imagined intellectual life as a peasant woodland, a source of many useful products emerging in unintentional design? The image calls up its opposites: In assessment exercises, intellectual life is a plantation; in scholarly entrepreneurship, intellectual life is pure theft, the private appropriation of communal products. Neither is appealing. Consider, instead, the pleasures of the woodland. There are many useful products there, from berries and mushrooms to firewood, wild vegetables, medicinal herbs, and even timber. A forager can choose what to gather and can make use of the woodland's patches of unexpected bounty. But the woodland requires continuing work, not to make it a garden but rather to keep it open and available for an array of species. Human coppicing, grazing, and fire maintain this architecture; other species gather to make it their own. For intellectual work, this seems just right. Work in common creates the possibilities of particular feats of individual scholarship. To encourage the unknown potential of scholarly advances—like the unexpected bounty of a nest of mushrooms—requires sustaining the common work of the intellectual woodland.

In this spirit, the Matsutake Worlds Research Group—the group that made my matsutake research possible—has tried to build playful collaborations into our individual and collective work. This has not been simple; pressures to privatize worm their way into every scholar's life. The tempo of collaboration is necessarily sporadic. But we have coppiced and burned, and our common intellectual woodland flourishes.

This means, too, that the intellectual equivalents of forest products have become available to each of us as gatherers. This book is just one harvest of those products. It is not the last: a woodland draws us again and again to its shifting treasures. If there is one mushroom, might there yet be more? This book opens a series of forays to our matsutake woodland. There will be more, to China, to trace commerce, and to Japan, to follow cosmopolitan science. Consider the further adventures in these companion volumes:

In China, exuberance about global trade has transformed even the most remote villages, creating a “rural China” with transnational trade at its heart. Matsutake is the ideal vehicle to follow this development. Michael Hathaway's “Emerging Matsutake Worlds” traces the making of distinctive paths for global commerce in Yunnan. The book explores

conflicting transnational pressures of conservation and commerce—as seen, for example, in the hard-to-explain presence of pesticides on Chinese mushrooms—showing how particular places, including matsutake forests, develop within global connections. One surprising finding is the importance of ethnic entrepreneurship: in both Tibetan and Yi areas, pickers and village-based dealers work within ethnic circuits. Hathaway examines both the cosmopolitan character and the traditionalist preoccupations of the new ethnic aspirations promoted by matsutake.

Opening science, and knowledge more generally, to cosmopolitan history is an urgent task for scholars. Matsutake science in Japan turns out to be an ideal site for understanding the intersections between science and vernacular knowledge, on the one hand, and international and local expertise, on the other. Shiho Satsuka's "The Charisma of a Wild Mushroom" delves into such intersections to show how Japanese science is always already cosmopolitan and vernacular. She develops a concept of translation in which all knowledge is based in translation. Rather than the immaculate "Japanese" knowledge of both Orientalist and nationalist imaginations, matsutake science is translation all the way down. Her work moves beyond familiar Western epistemologies and ontologies to explore unexpected forms of personhood and thingness within the poorly differentiated human-nonhuman world matsutake shows us.

What kind of book is this that refuses to end? Like the matsutake forest, each contingent gathering sponsors others in unexpected bounty. None of this would be possible without transgressing against the commodification of scholarship. Woodlands, too, offend the plantation and the strip miner. But it is hard to make woodlands fully disappear. Intellectual woodlands too: ideas born in common play still beckon.

In "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," Ursula K. Le Guin argues that stories of hunting and killing have allowed readers to imagine that individual heroism is the point of a story. Instead, she proposes that storytelling might pick up diverse things of meaning and value and gather them together, like a forager rather than a hunter waiting for the big kill. In this kind of storytelling, stories should never end, but rather lead to further stories. In the intellectual woodlands I have been trying to encourage, adventures lead to more adventures, and treasures

lead to further treasures. When gathering mushrooms, one is not enough; finding the first encourages me to find more. But Le Guin says it with so much humor and spirit that I give her the last word:

Go on, say I, wandering off towards the wild oats, with Oo Oo in the sling and little Oom carrying the basket. You just go on telling how the mammoth fell on Boob and how Cain fell on Abel and how the bomb fell on Nagasaki and how the burning jelly fell on the villagers and how the missiles will fall on the Evil Empire, and all the other steps in the Ascent of Man.

If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it's useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair, or what have you, and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people, and then later you take it out and eat it or share it or store it up for winter in a solid container or put it in the medicine bundle or the shrine or the museum, the holy place, the area that contains what is sacred, and then next day you probably do much the same again—if to do that is human, if that's what it takes, then I am a human being after all. Fully, freely, gladly, for the first time.¹