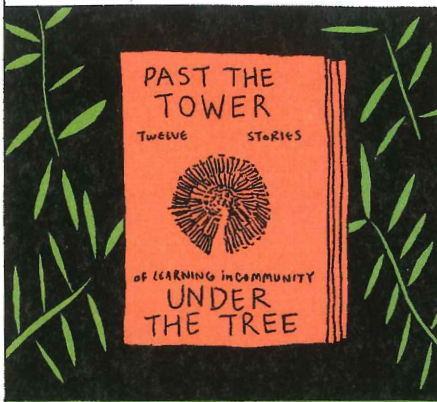


DRAWN CONCLUSIONS A GRAPHIC BOOK REVIEW

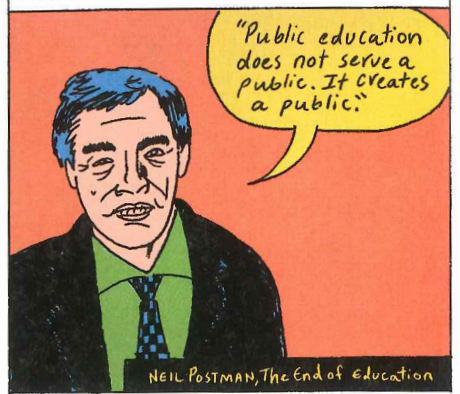
Past the Tower, Under the Tree: Twelve Stories of Learning in Community, EDITED BY BALAMOHAN SHINGADE and ERENA SHINGADE (GLORIA, \$38)

Past the Tower, Under the Tree collects TWELVE* ACCOUNTS OF EDUCATION BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY, FROM AN APPRENTICESHIP IN TRADITIONAL POLYNESIAN TATTOO TO UNCOVERING WHAKAPAPA BY TRAVEL.



*FOURTEEN INCLUDING PREFACE AND AFTERWORD.

CO-EDITOR ERENA SHINGADE'S INTRODUCTION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT CONTESTING FORMAL EDUCATION IS AN EVERGREEN CONVERSATION. IN THIS CASE, ERENA AND CO-EDITOR BALAMOHAN SHINGADE HAVE ROOTED THEIR COLLECTION IN THEIR LOCAL ARTS COMMUNITY.



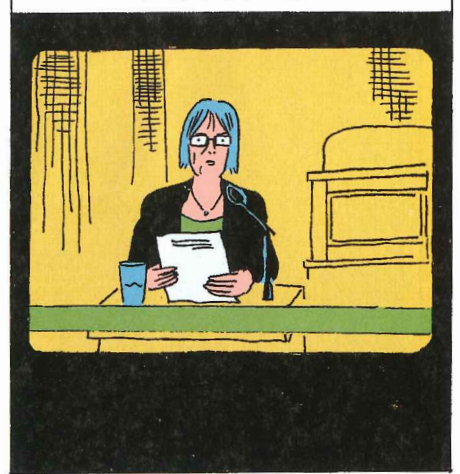
CONTRIBUTORS COME FROM ACTIVISM, LITERATURE, VISUAL ART AND MUSIC, AND USE MANY METHODS TO REPRESENT THEIR VARIED COMMUNITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES.



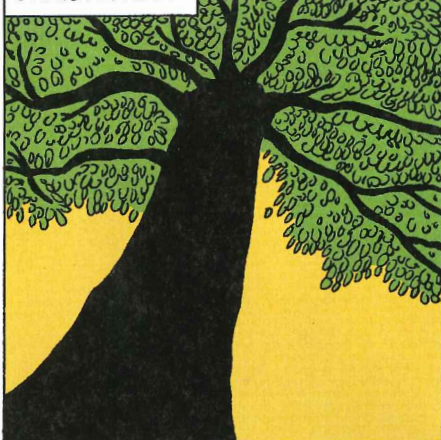
FOR EXAMPLE, ARTIST EDITH AMITUANAI CONTRIBUTES POLAROID PORTRAITS OF AUCKLAND HIGH SCHOOLERS FROM 2015 THROUGH 2018. THE PHOTOGRAPHS' PURPLE SKIES REMIND ME OF AMITUANAI'S DÈJEUNER SERIES FROM BACK IN 2007.



FORMER GREEN MP CATHERINE DELAHUNTY ADDRESSES FUTURE ACTIVISTS, STUDYING LEFTIST PRACTICE AS LEARNT THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND WITNESSING.



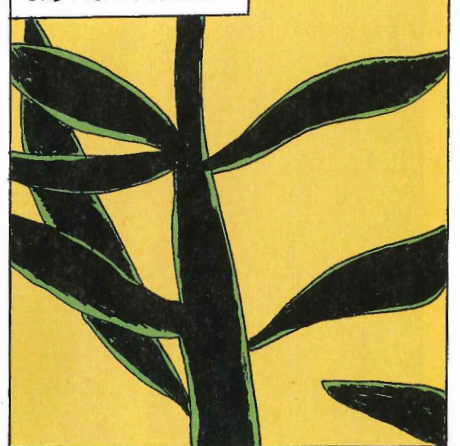
THE REMAINING PIECES FALL BETWEEN THESE POLES OF INTIMATE DOCUMENTARY AND PRAGMATIC THEORY, GAINING DEPTH THROUGH SOMETIMES-UNEASY COHABITATION.



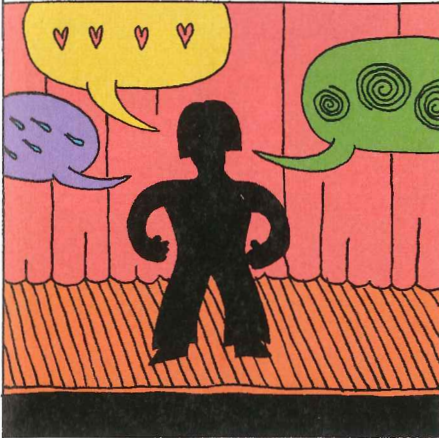
IN THE BEST WAY, THE BOOK HAS A STRONG EDITORIAL HAND. ERENA AND BALAMOHAN TURN UP AS CHARACTERS WITHIN KAHURANGIARIKI SMITH'S "MOMENTS WITH MĀMĀ". BALAMOHAN'S ESSAY "SINGING WITH PRACTICAL INTENT" MENTIONS CONTRIBUTOR MOKONUI-A-RANGI SMITH.



THIS CLOSE COMMUNITY VIBE SHARPENS THE ANTHOLOGY'S SCOPE, GIVING CONSEQUENCE TO THE BOOK'S ANTI-COLONIAL, ANTI-FASCIST UNDERPINNINGS.



THE COLLECTION'S FIRST TWO CHAPTERS ARE PERSONAL ESSAYS THAT WARM UP THE READER BY DESCRIBING SINGULAR, EXTENDED EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY-FORWARD EDUCATION.



MOKONU-A-RANGI SMITH'S "MARKING A RETURN" RECOLLECTS HIS STUDY OF POLYNESIAN TATTOOING WITH THE LATE CROC COULTER. HIS STORY-TELLING IS DELICATE AND DIRECT.



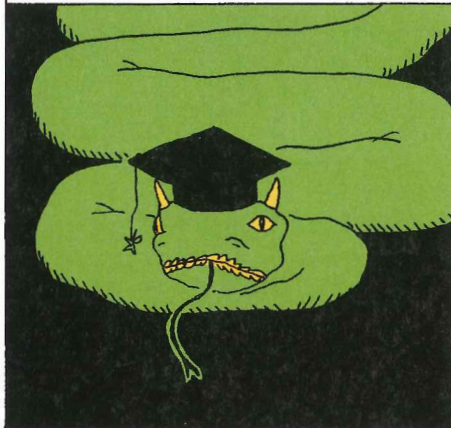
"MARKING A RETURN" STRIKES EARLY UPON A RECURRING THEME: THAT COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING HOLDS TIME FOR INTUITION AND THE UNPLANNED.



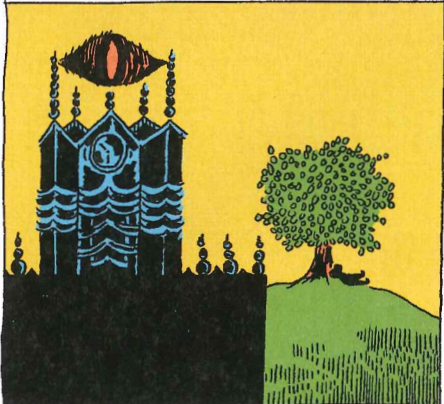
POET RICHARD VON STURMER SIMILARLY CENTRES SLOWNESS AS HE NARRATES THE MENTORSHIP THAT NURTURES HIS LONGSTANDING ZEN PRACTICE.



VON STURMER WRITES, "[I] REMAIN A WORK-IN-PROGRESS," A GENEROUS DECLARATION AGAINST THE ARTS INDUSTRIES' CURRENCY OF MASTERS DEGREES AND GOVERNMENT GRANTS.



THE TITLE *Past the Tower, Under the Tree* COULD BE INTERPRETED AS HOSTILE TOWARD FORMAL EDUCATION, IMAGINING THE UNIVERSITY AS SAURON AND COMMUNAL EDUCATION AS SO MANY SLEEPY HOBBITS.



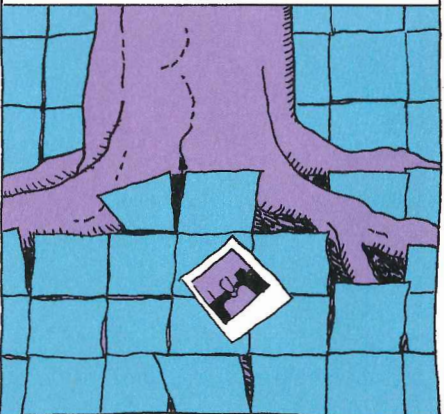
ERENA TEASES THIS DICHOTOMY IN HER POEM "DERACINATED WORKER CARRIES HER CV IN A PLASTIC SLEEVE".



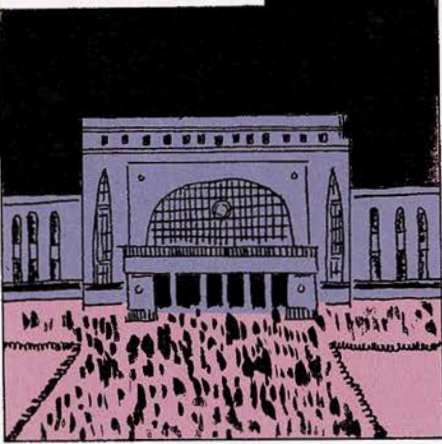
HOWEVER, MOST CONTRIBUTORS DO NOT CRITIQUE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION. INSTEAD, THEY CELEBRATE THE RICHNESS OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING, EXPLICITLY ASKING, "WHAT DO TEACHING AND LEARNING LOOK LIKE IN BELOVED COMPANY?"



IN PARTICULAR, AMITUANAI'S AFOREMENTIONED PORTRAITS CAPTURE HIGH SCHOOL'S SOCIAL EDUCATION, THE "TREE" AND THE "TOWER" SPRINGING FROM SHARED SOIL.



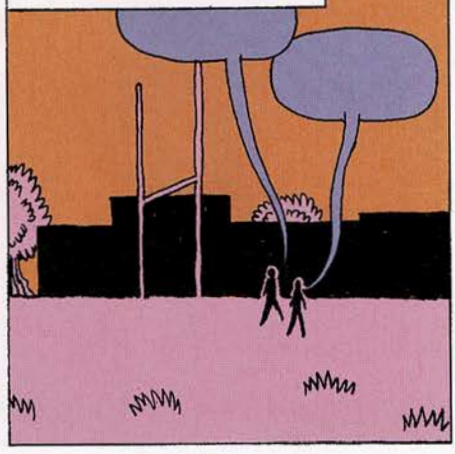
MANY CONTRIBUTORS HONE IN ON EDUCATION'S ENTANGLEMENT WITH FAMILY. AREEZ KATKI'S WISTFUL POEM "LINGUA FRANCA" IS ABOUT HIS MOTHER LEARNING SHORTHAND.



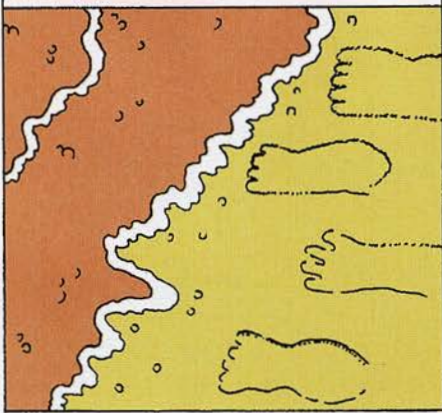
KATKI PRESERVES EDITS IN THE TEXT IN STRIKE-THROUGH FORM, A BRIDGE TO VON STURMER'S "WORK-IN-PROGRESS". HE EXCHANGES STRAIGHT OBSERVATION FOR TACTILE, SENSUOUS IMAGES.



ARTIST KAHURANGIARIKI SMITH MAINTAINS THIS FAMILY ALBUM MOOD IN "MOMENTS WITH MĀMĀ", WHICH INVOLVES A DIALOGUE WITH HER MUM ABOUT LEARNING TE REO.



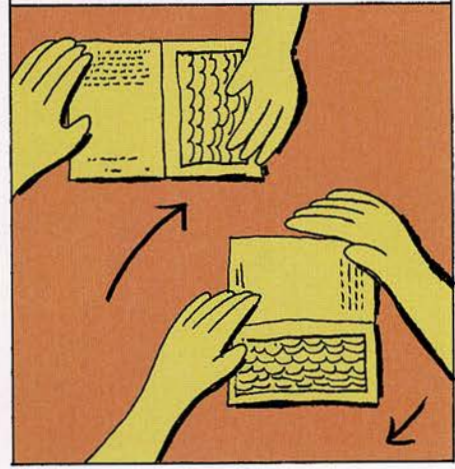
MATA AHO COLLECTIVE MEMBER TERRI TE TAU'S PIECE ON HER HUSBAND CONSIDERS ROMANTIC LOVE RATHER THAN PARENTAL. THESE THREE CONCENTRATIONS OF FAMILIAL SUPPORT AGAIN DISCLOSE THE SLOW TIME OF DEEP LEARNING.



ARTIST EMILY PARR'S "MOANA CALLING ME HOME" TRACKS PARR ENCOUNTERING ANCESTRAL WHENUA IN TAURANGA, SĀMOA AND TONGA. IT IS A TENSE JOURNEY THROUGH LAND DISPLACEMENT, FOREGROUND BY HISTORICAL VOYAGE VIA ARCHIVES.



STILLS FROM PARR'S VIDEO ARTWORK "MOANA CALLING ME HOME" ARE PLACED HORIZONTALLY, PROMPTING THE READER TO RELEARN THE BOOK'S MATERIALITY.



ANOTHER THEME IN THIS BOOK IS MUSIC AND DANCE AS SITES OF POLITICAL DEMONSTRATION FOR BETTER OR WORSE. BALAMOHAN'S "SINGING WITH PRACTICAL INTENT" TAKES THE FORM OF A CRITIQUE OF HINDUTVA NATIONALISTS CO-OPTING HINDUSTANI MUSIC.



BY STUDYING THE UNCOMFORTABLE ASSIMILATION OF CLASSICAL MUSIC INTO NATIONALIST RHETORIC, BALAMOHAN UNPICKS THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTHOOD. HE WRITES, "IT IS NOT INNOCENT TO PERFORM ON SAFFRON STAGES, AND TO MAINTAIN, AS MUSICIANS, THE SUPPOSED SEPARATION OF CULTURE FROM POLITICS."



NOVELIST DOMINIC HOEY'S PIECE ON THE 2000s' AUCKLAND RAP SCENE BRINGS OLD-HEAD ENERGY, HOEY CHASTISING ANYONE HE THINKS HASN'T PUT IN THE HARD YARDS.



COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSOR MOHAN DUTTA'S "IN OUR MOFUSSIL TOWN" EXPLORES PROTEST PERFORMANCE AS A UNIFYING FORM OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY.

"This cultural work of the Communist parties sustained the land occupations, told the stories of the occupations and created the public pedagogy of land redistribution."



DUTTA'S PIECE, A HISTORY OF PROTESTING WITH HIS ORGANISER AUNT PISHIMONI, EMPHASISES HOW POLITICAL STRUGGLES OCCUR IN THE HOME.

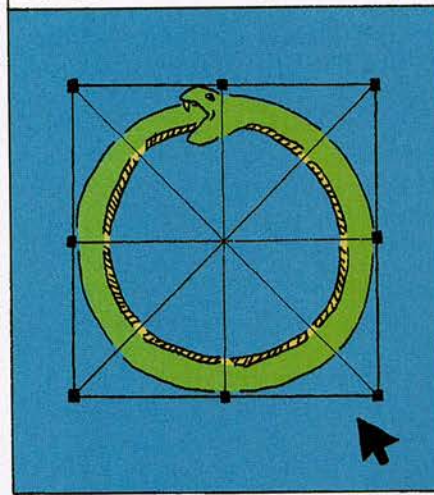
"Through the everyday performance of resistance in protest politics, we created a space different to that of union sign-up drives, adult education classes and the dissemination of translated Marxist texts."



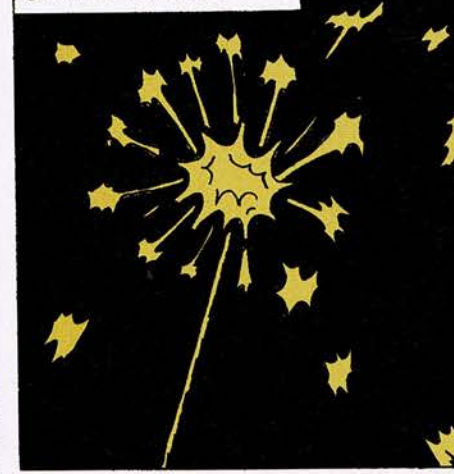
THINKING ABOUT MUSIC ACTIVISM REMINDS ME OF THE BIKINI KILL CONCERT IN AUCKLAND THIS PAST MARCH. DURING BETWEEN-SONG BANTER, SINGER KATHLEEN HANNA DESCRIBED HER MUSIC AS A COMMUNITY-BUILDING SUPPLEMENT TO MARCHES AND LETTER WRITING.



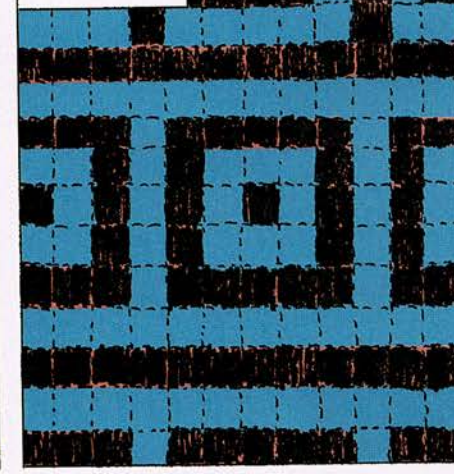
DESIGNER KATIE KERR'S CONCLUDING PIECE ON LEARNING BOOK DESIGN BRINGS THE COLLECTION FULL CIRCLE.



IT IS PERHAPS GLIB TO OBSERVE THAT MANY OF THESE STORIES HAVE AN INSPIRATIONAL BENT. THEY SPEAK TO A POSSIBILITY OF CREATIVE SATISFACTION.



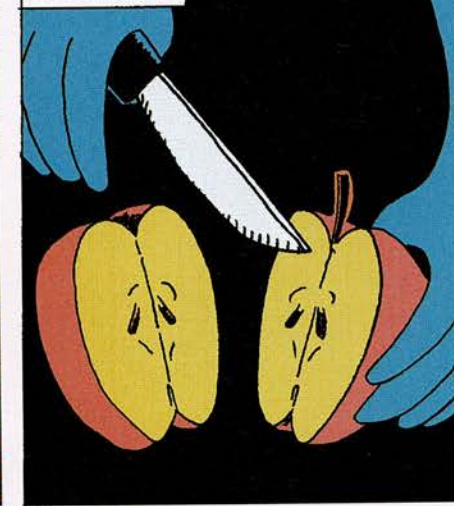
THIS BOOK IS A QUILT, EACH PIECE A PANEL, KERR'S HANDSOME DESIGN THE QUILTING HOLDING THE LAYERS TOGETHER.



LIKE LOOKING AT A QUILT, OR LISTENING TO LOU REED'S NEW YORK ALBUM, I RECOMMEND ABSORBING Past the Tower, Under the Tree IN A SINGLE SITTING.



READ IT CONTINUOUSLY BEFORE YOU REVISIT AND PRY OPEN EACH CONTRIBUTION INDIVIDUALLY.



THEO MACDONALD '23