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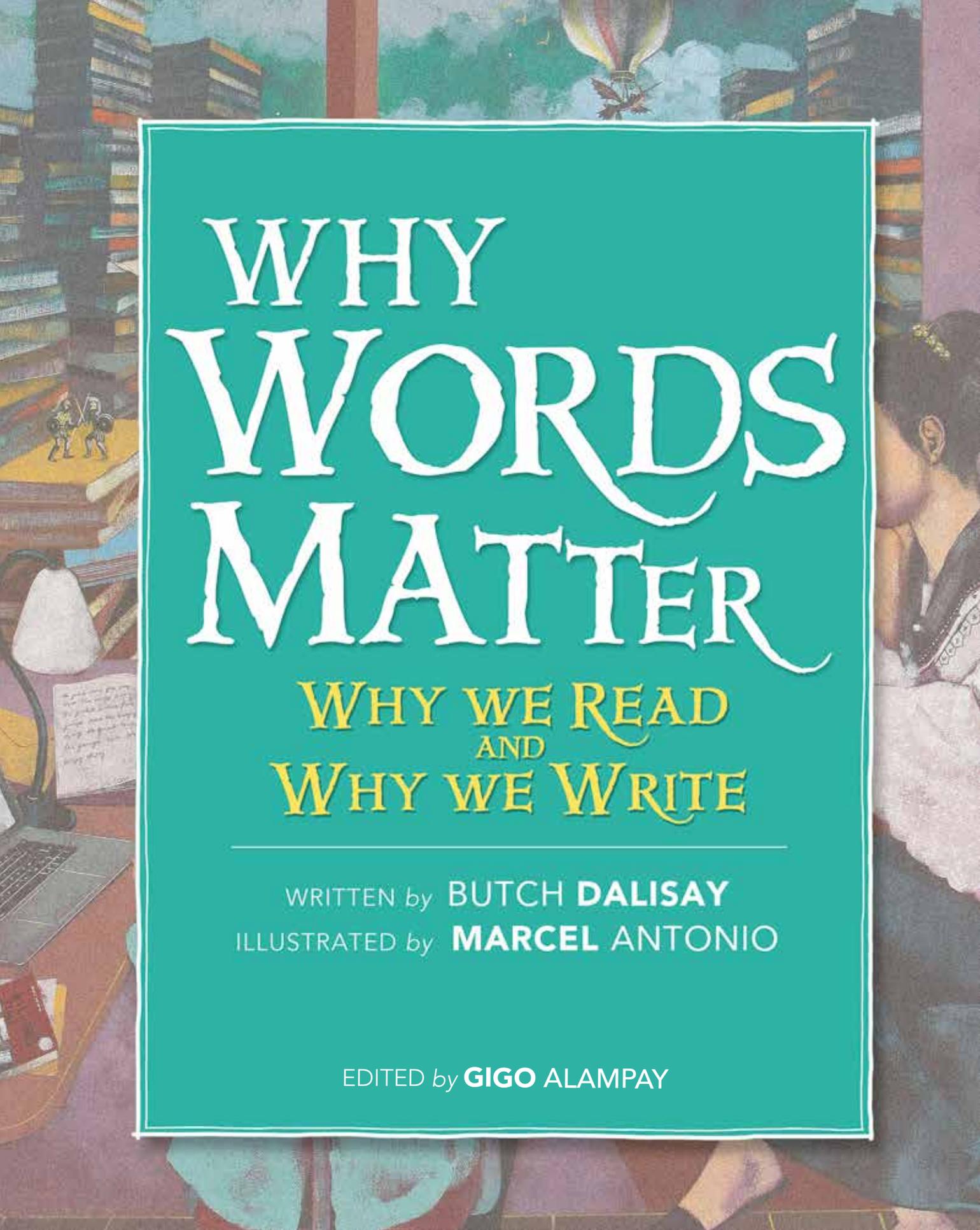
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All artworks featured in this book are by Marcel Antonio
Photography by Ocs Alvarez

All images originally rendered in acrylic on canvas

The National Library of the Philippines CIP Data

Recommended entry:

xxxx
xxxx

The background of the cover is a vibrant, multi-layered illustration. At the top, a hot air balloon with a basket and a small figure inside floats in a blue sky with white clouds. Below the sky, a cityscape with various buildings and a yellow hot air balloon is visible. In the foreground, a desk with a laptop, a lamp, and some papers is shown on the left. On the right, a person with dark hair and a headband is seen from the side, looking towards the left. The entire scene is framed by a teal border.

WHY WORDS MATTER

WHY WE READ
AND
WHY WE WRITE

WRITTEN by **BUTCH DALISAY**
ILLUSTRATED by **MARCEL ANTONIO**

EDITED by **GIGO ALAMPAY**

PEOPLE often ask me how and why I became a writer.

The easy answer is that I realized early on that writing was the only thing I really loved doing, and which I could do reasonably well.

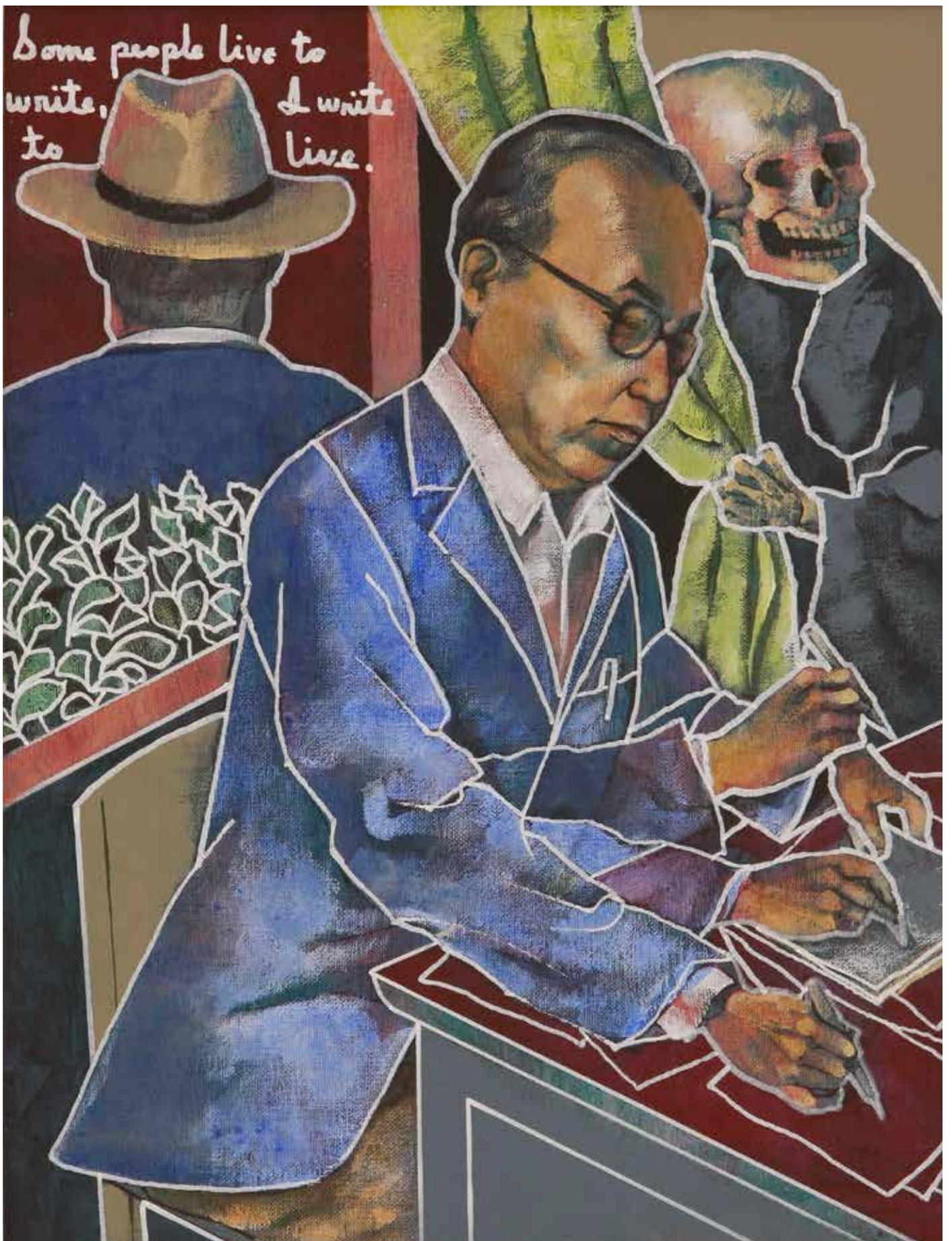
At some point, I fancied becoming a scientist, and even entered college as an engineering major. But I couldn't hack the math – in any case, I found words to be more fun than numbers – and so I resigned myself to becoming a writer for life: as a journalist, a playwright, a scriptwriter, a fictionist, a poet, and an essayist.

I do all these things not because I'm brilliant, but because I write for a living.

**Some people live to write,
I write to live.**

Some people live to
write,
to

I write
live.



to change
or
to make
history.



Writers have offered all kinds of reasons why they write.

George Orwell famously said that writers write for four reasons: sheer **EGOISM**, **AESTHETIC ENTHUSIASM**, *historical impulse*, and **political purpose**.

Sure, some of us write to be famous, or

to change or to make history.

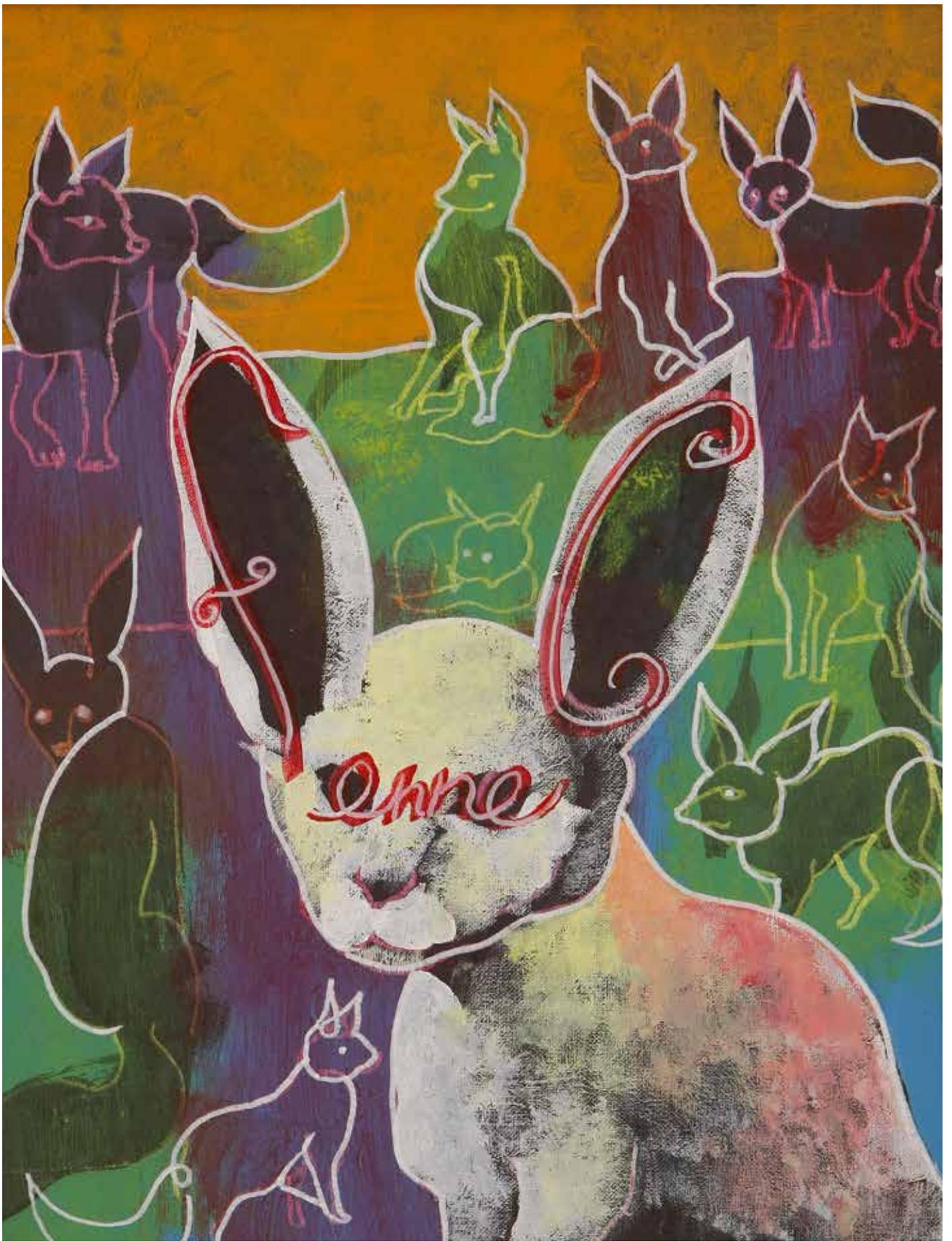
But it was the Nobel prizewinner Toni Morrison who, I think, gave the simplest and most honest reason why we writers write when she said, *"I wrote my first novel because I wanted to read it."*

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BECOME A WRITER?

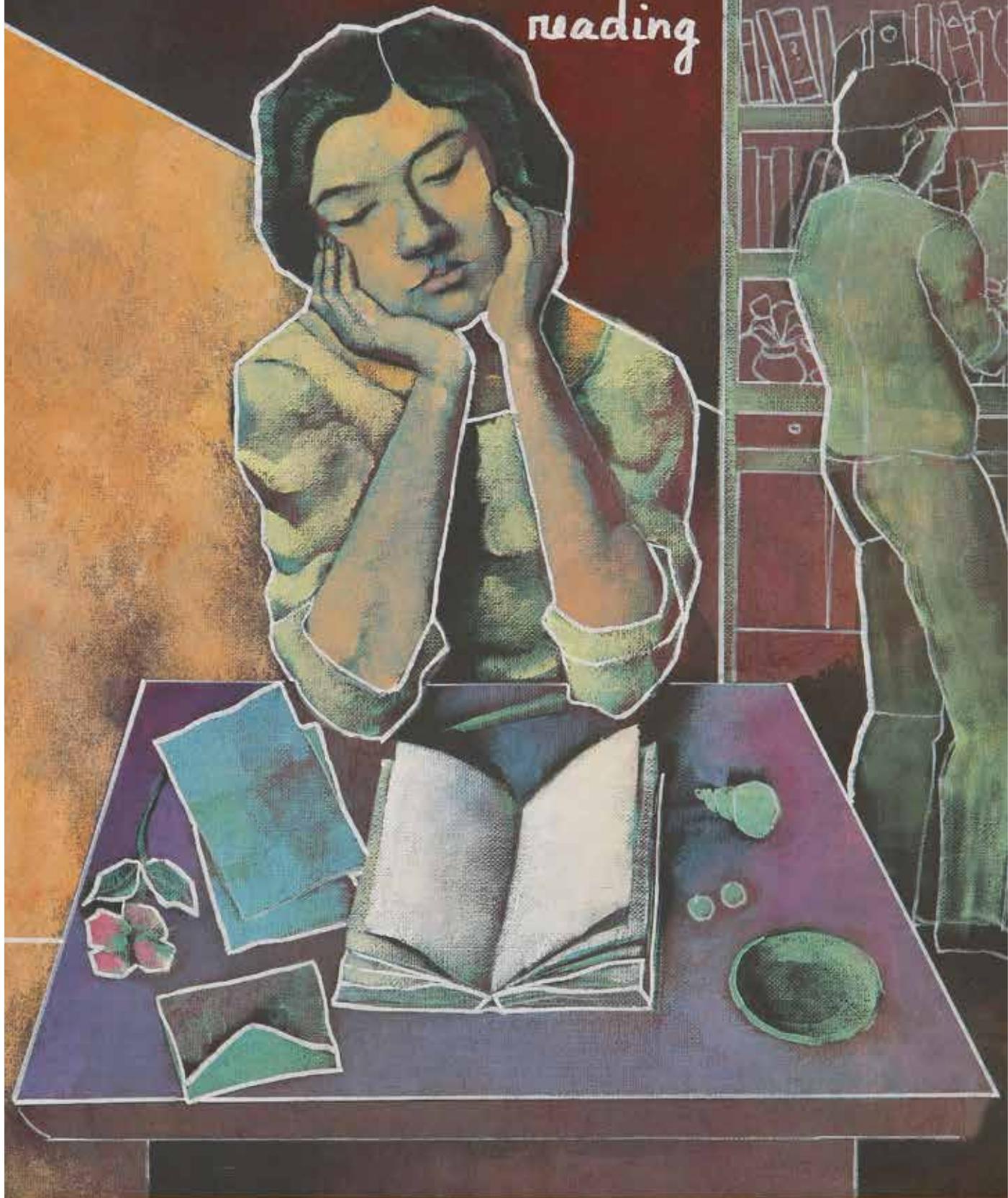
Let me toss out a few ideas.

First, a love of words, and a fascination with their origins, meanings, and uses.

As an adolescent, I used to spend an hour or two after school in the library, where I would flip idly through the pages of the big fat Webster's dictionary, picking up words I would never use (like **"fennec: a North African fox"**) but didn't mind meeting.



A love of books
and
reading



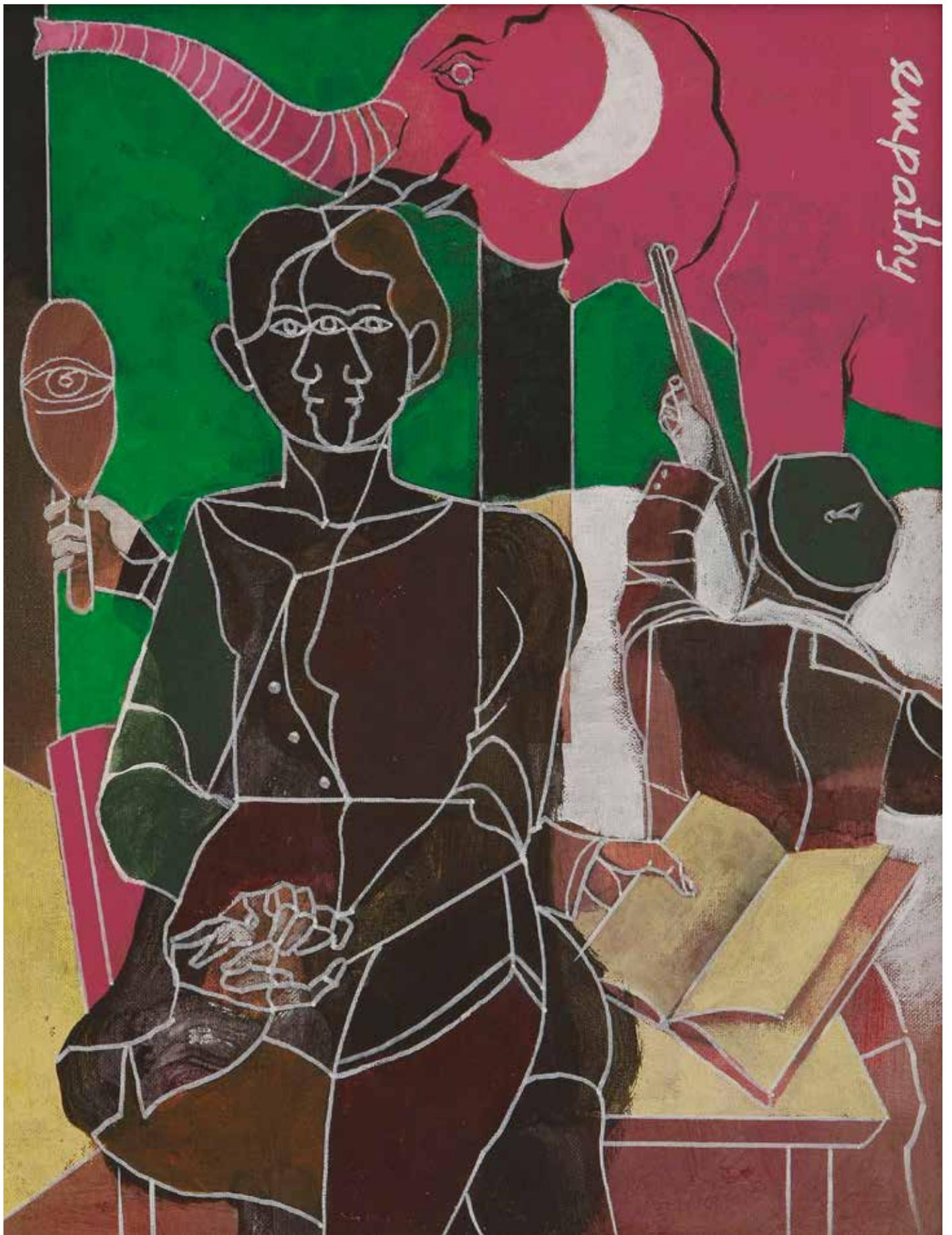
Second, **a love of books and reading.**

There's no other or better way you can learn about words and how they behave except by reading.

I was a reader before I became a writer, and I read everything – the Hardy Boys, history books, science books, maps, TIME Magazine, Liwayway.

Third, an insatiable curiosity about
the world and the way things work. We can't get every-
thing by direct experience, but we can read up on woodworking,
jewelry, macramé, gardening, automotive mechanics, and New
Zealand – in other words, things we may not be too interested in
ourselves, or think about on ordinary days.





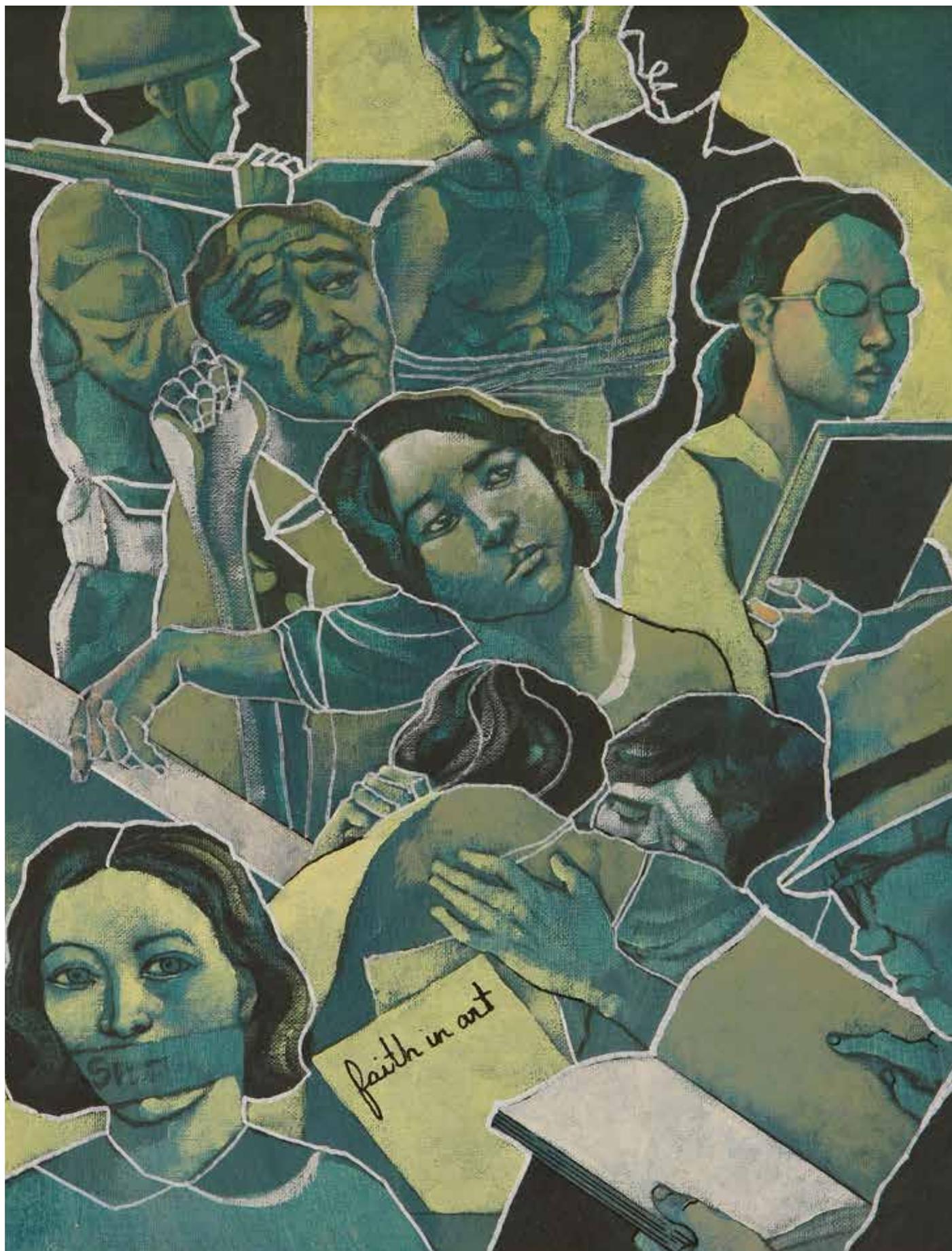
empathy

*Fourth, an **empathy** for people, a sense of how they think, feel, and act, and a keen understanding of the workings of human relationships. It all comes down to people and their motivations, or why we do what we do.*

Fifth, a sense of *narrative*, a desire, and the ability to imagine what happened or may have happened.

Sixth, **faith in art** – in my case the art of fiction – and in its ability to deal with the most complicated human issues and concerns.

Unlike *science*, art is not fact-based but truth-based, and often life's truths can be established not by *reason* but by **imagination** and **intuition**.



"Literature is what
makes us
human."



WHY SHOULD WE READ?

Why bother with books and literature, when it seems we can get everything we need on Google and Wikipedia?

We're often told that like the other arts, **"Literature is what makes us human."**

But what exactly does that mean?

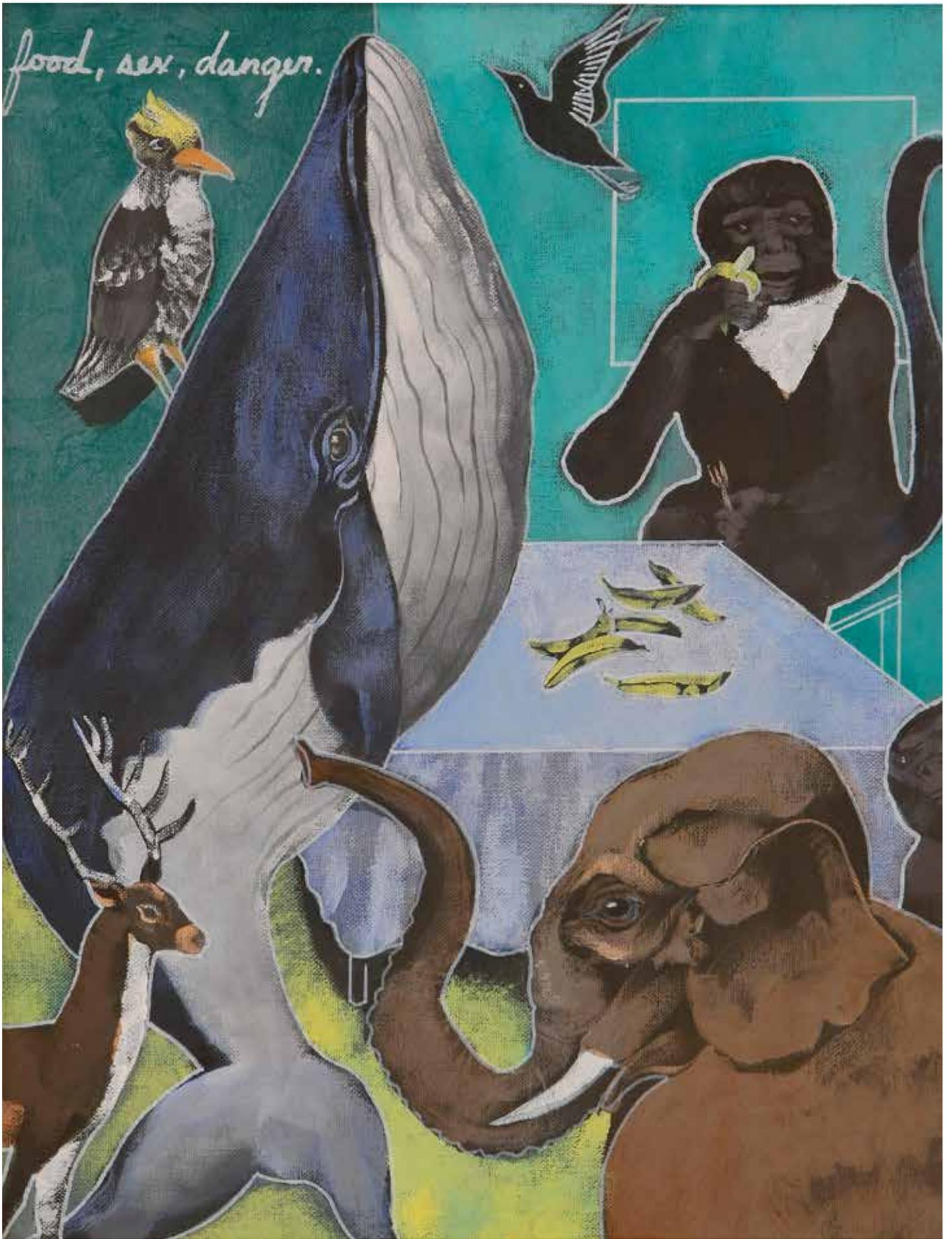
How does literature humanize us?

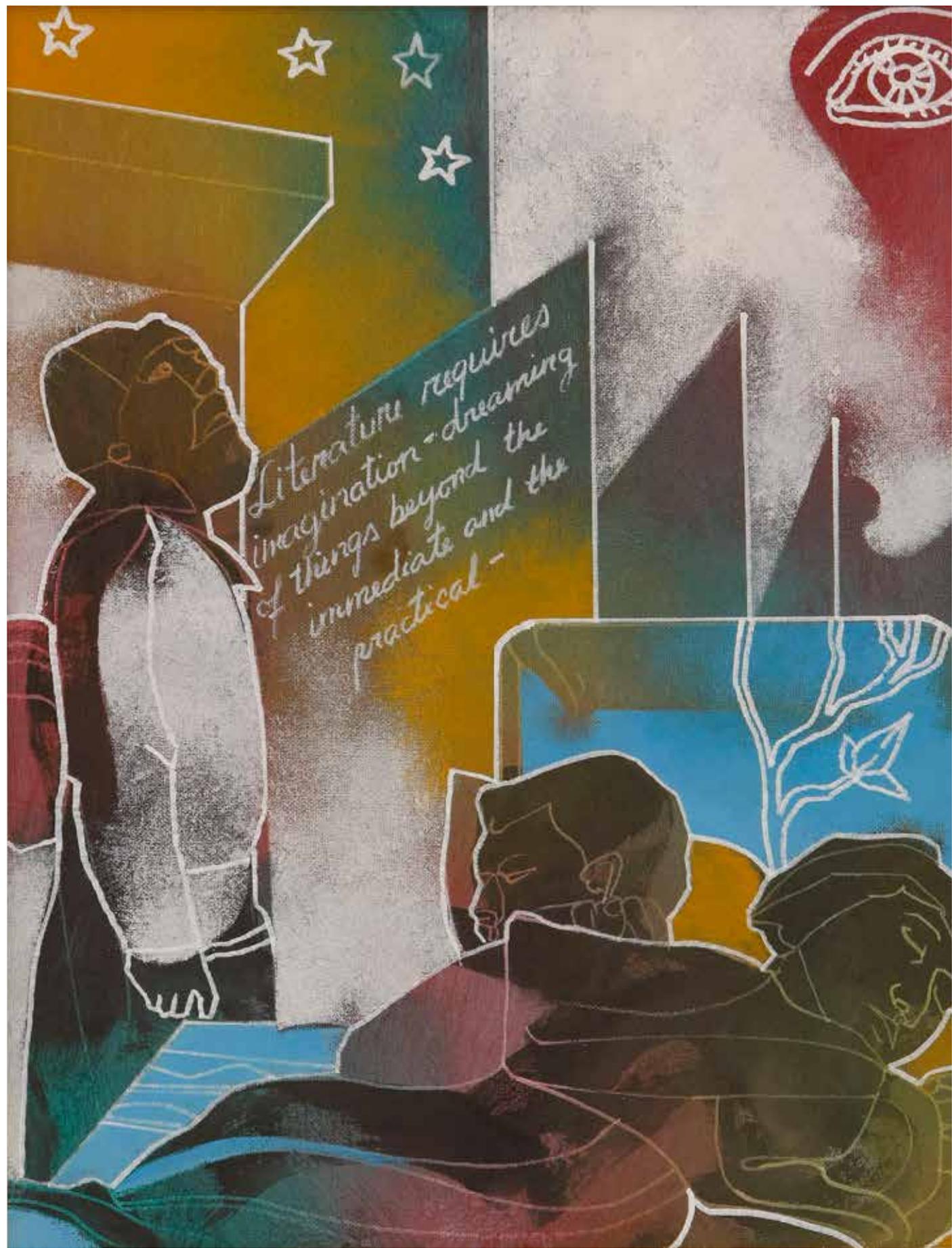
Literature relies on language.

Whales, monkeys, elephants, and birds communicate, presumably for the most basic things – food, sex, danger. We might even call their most basic utterances words and phrases. They perform a clear and practical function, and they form sequences of meaning, like saying, “There is food down there” or “I want to make a little baby with you.”

This is language, but it is not literature.

food, sex, danger.





Literature requires imagination

- dreaming of things beyond the immediate and the practical
- and furthermore, a medium of *transmission* and *preservation* of the products of that imagination.

We are told that animals can dream. *But, they cannot record and communicate these dreams like we do.*

Literature is our waking dream,
a dream we describe and share
through words.

These dreams – these stories we make up in our minds –

can teach,

can delight,

can disturb,

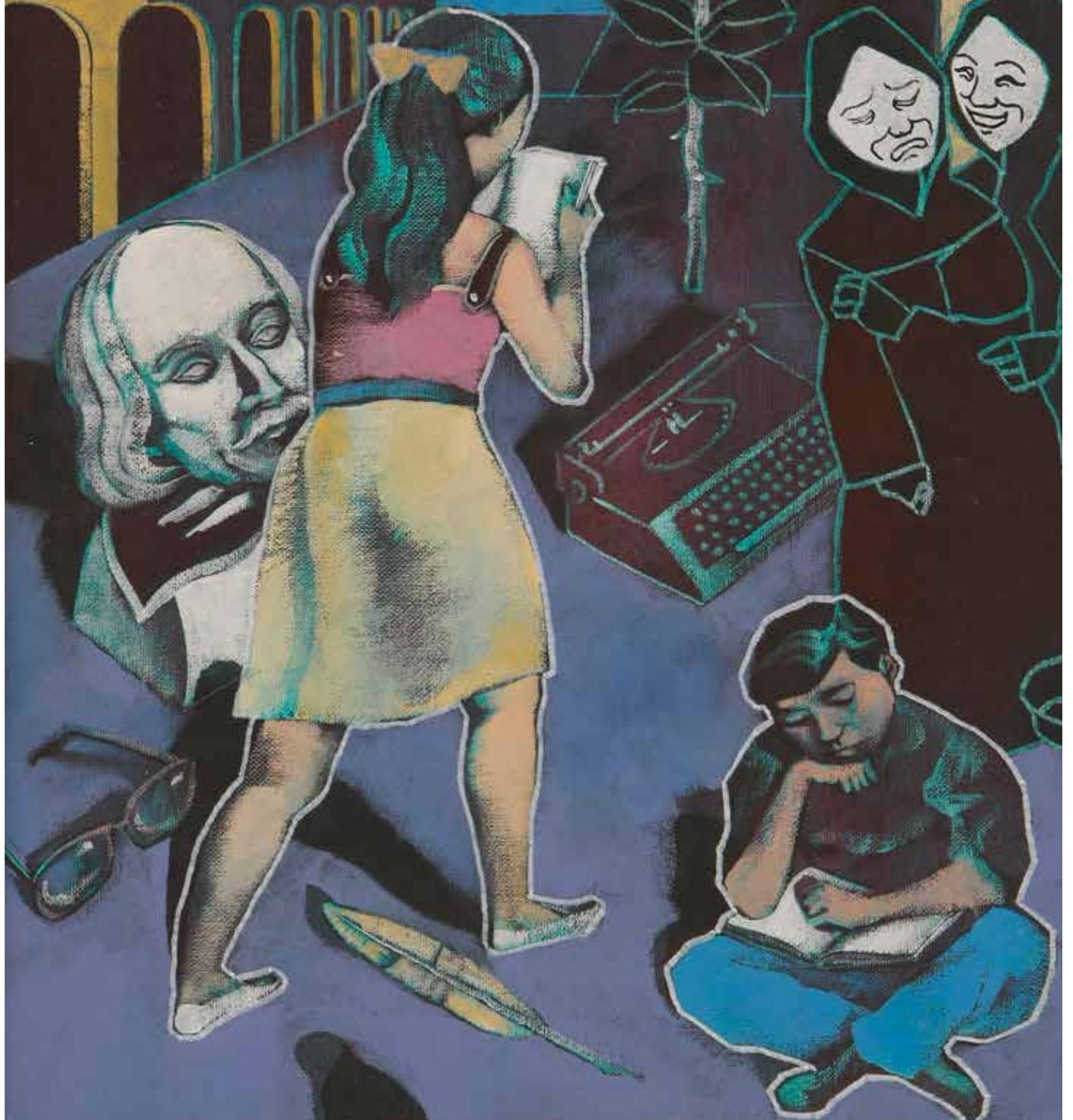
can enrage,

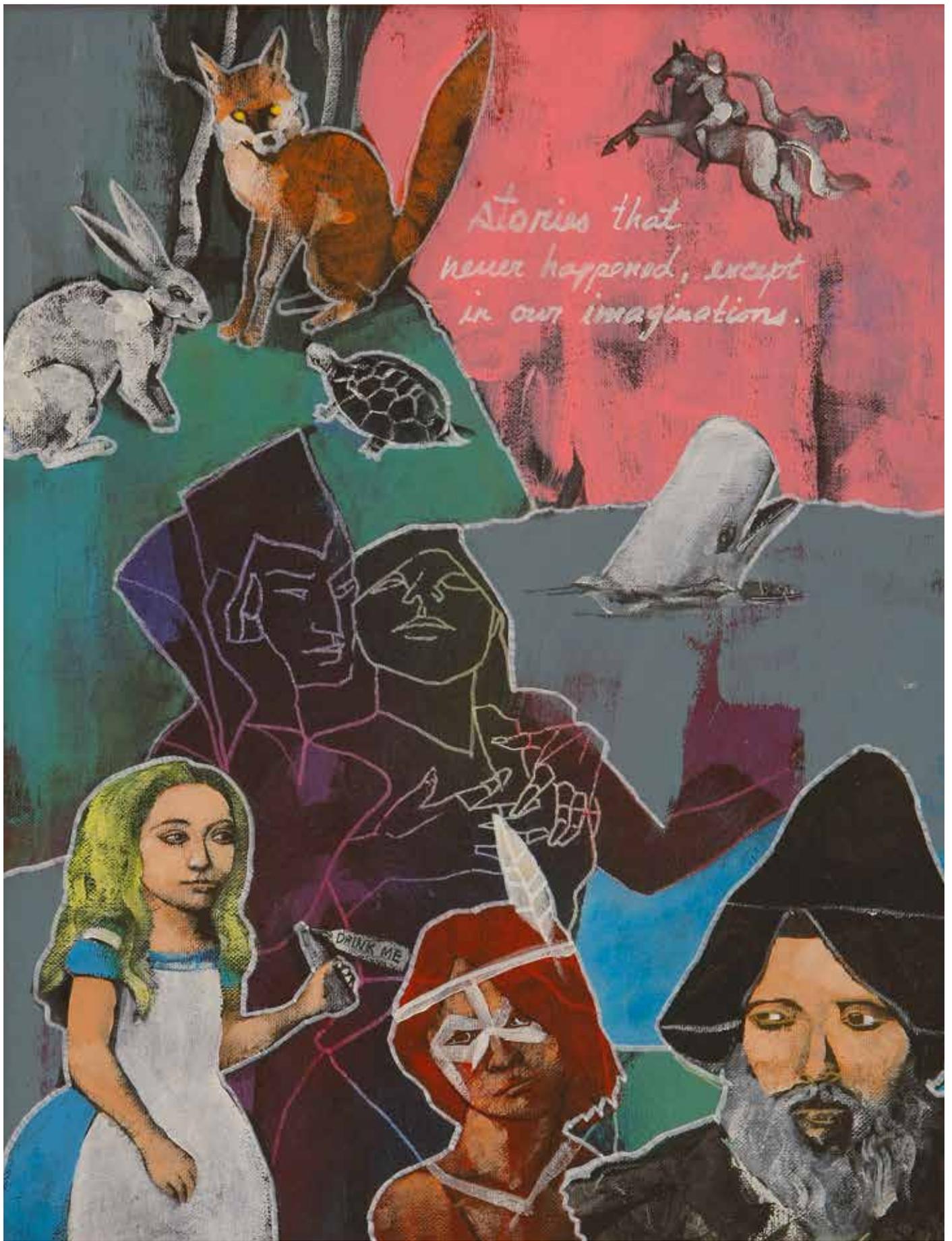
can exalt.

They can remember and can therefore preserve our memories
– *our thoughts and feelings* – as individuals and as a race.

As far as I know, ***no other species*** – nothing and no one
else – can do this.

Literature is our waking dream,
a dream we describe and
share through
words.

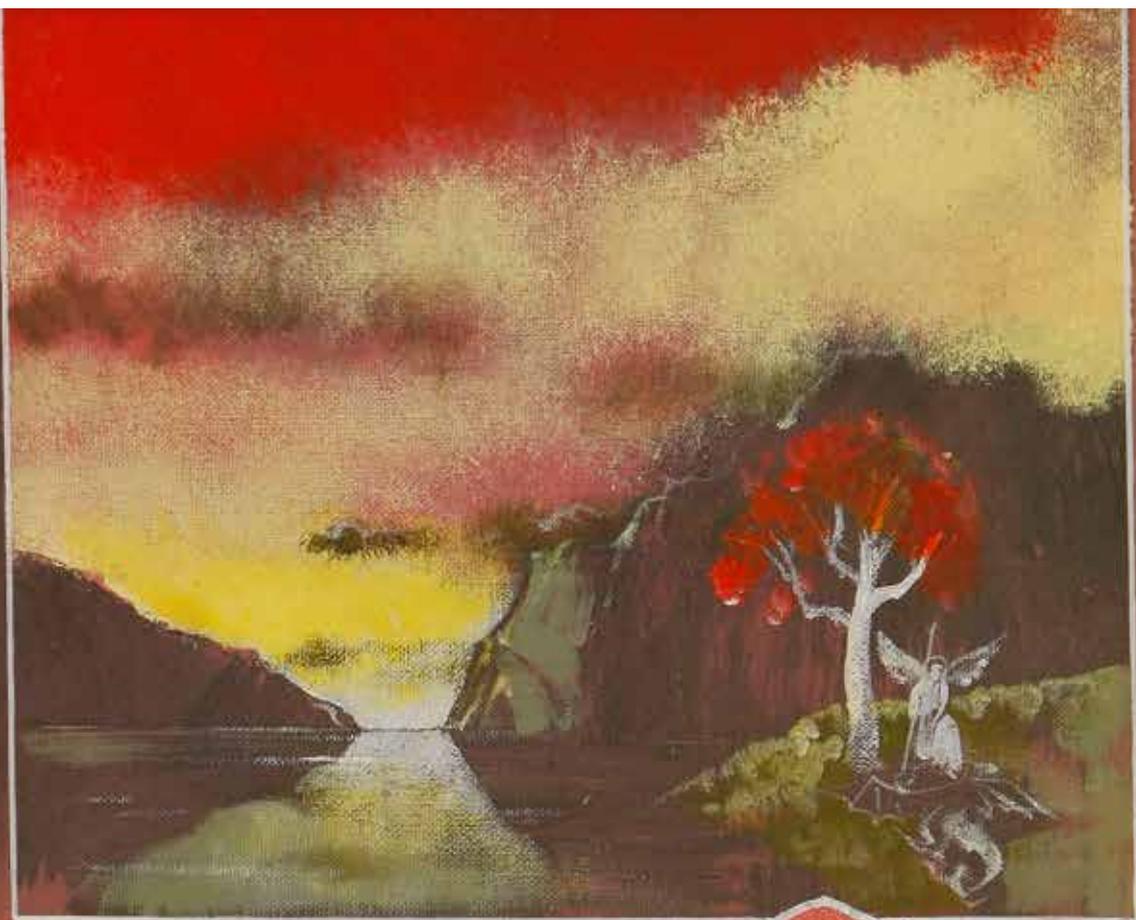




*Stories that
never happened, except
in our imaginations.*

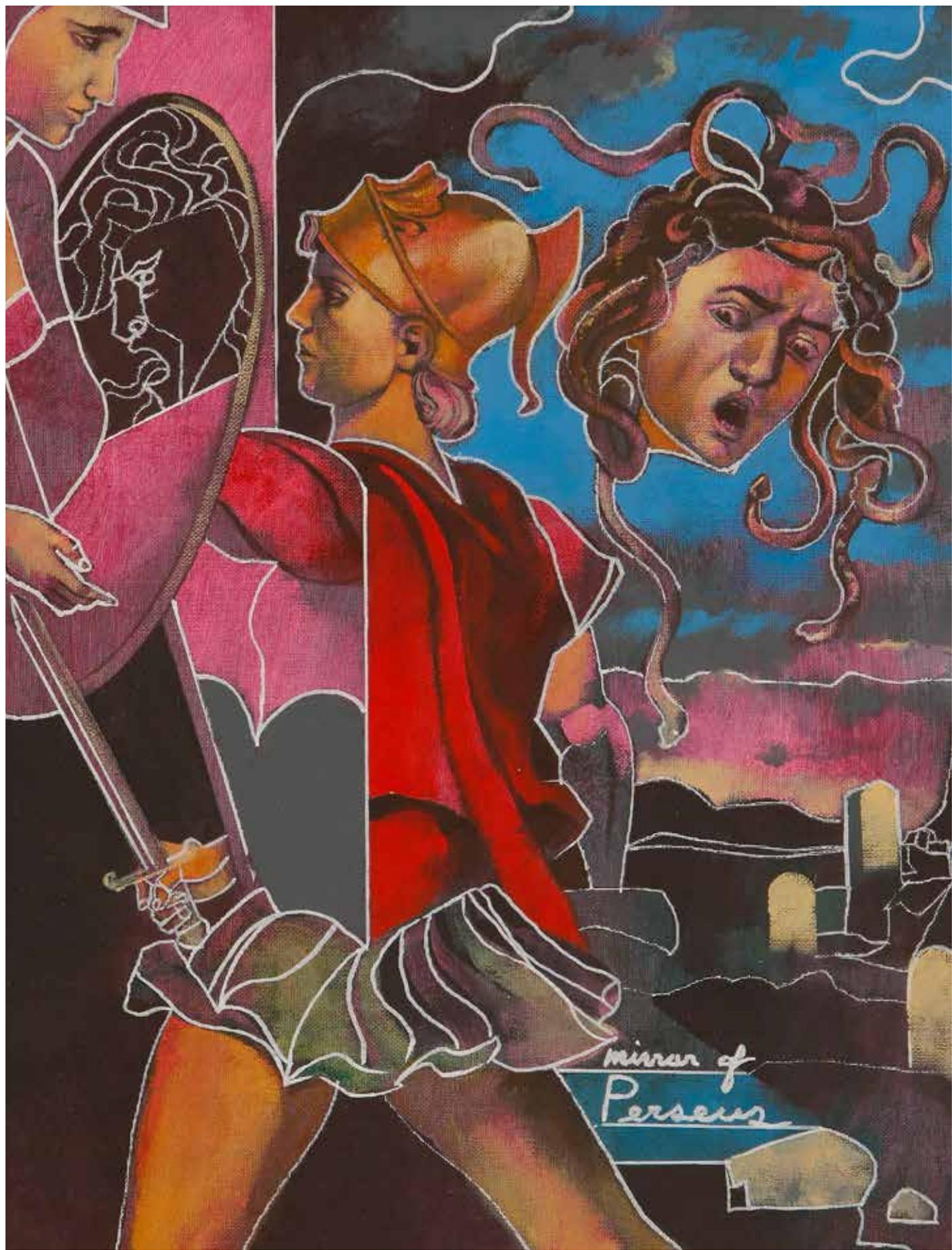
Literature makes us human, because it allows us to tell stories that make sense of our lives, **even stories that never happened, except in our imaginations.**

This is why and how belief in **things**
like Paradise are possible.



Things like Paradise
are
possible.





*mirror of
Perseus*

The ***magic of literature*** lies in how it deals with reality and reason through fantasy and the imagination, and approaches the truth through make-believe.

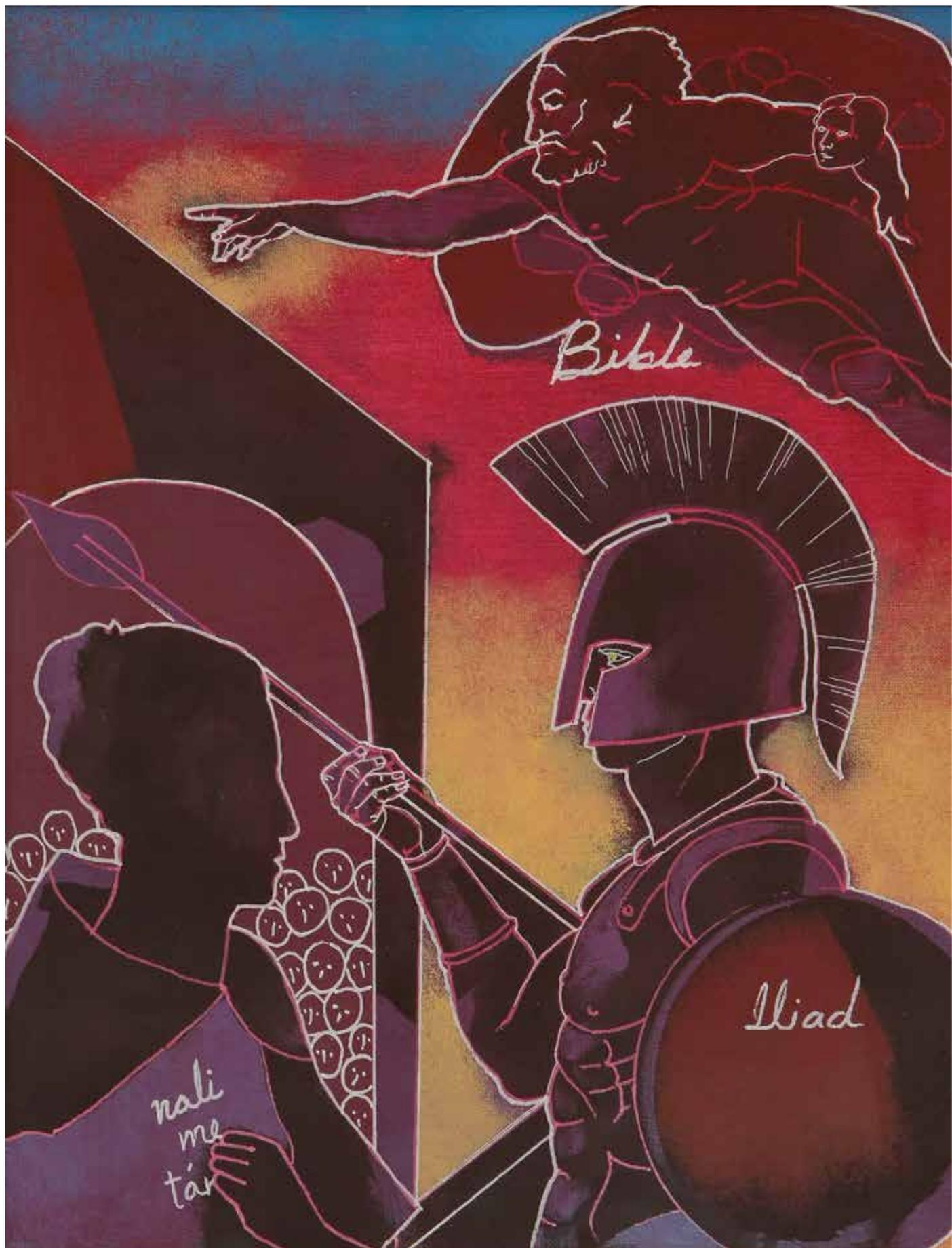
As one of my own teachers put it, art (or literature) is **“the mirror of Perseus.”**

That’s because – if you recall the story of the Gorgons – Perseus could kill Medusa, whose fatal gaze would have turned him to stone, only by using his shield as a mirror. Literature is that shield. By deflecting our gaze and seeming to look at other people, we are able to see the truth about ourselves, in all its harshness and unpleasantness.

It is therefore not enough to say that literature makes us human; rather, **literature makes us better humans,** by teaching us *discernment* and *critical judgment*.



Literature
makes us
better humans

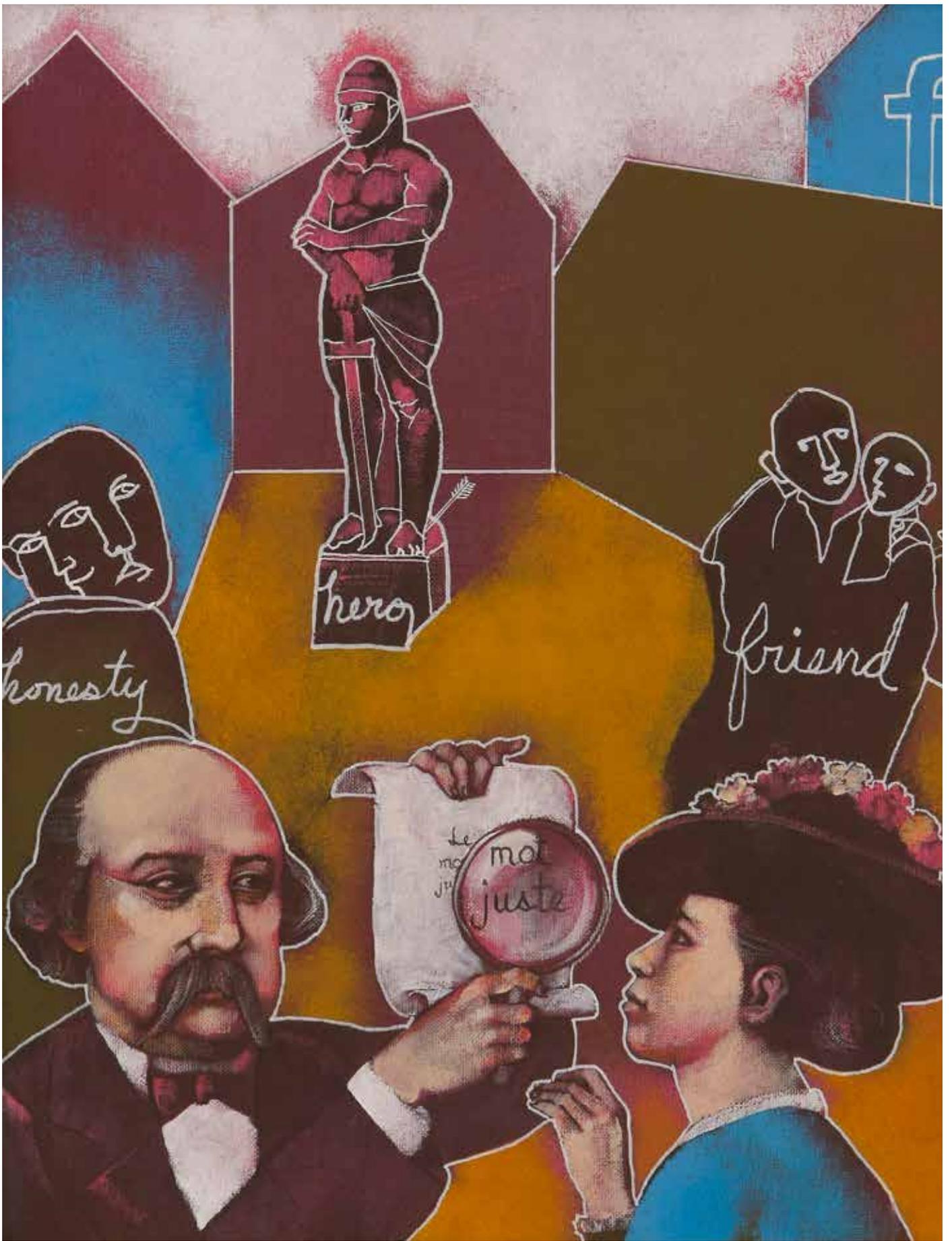


Literature is ***a history of the words*** that have made sense of our lives. **Like the Bible or the Iliad or the Noli and Fili,** it shows us at our best and worst, so we can choose how we want to live – whether as individuals or as citizens or as a society.

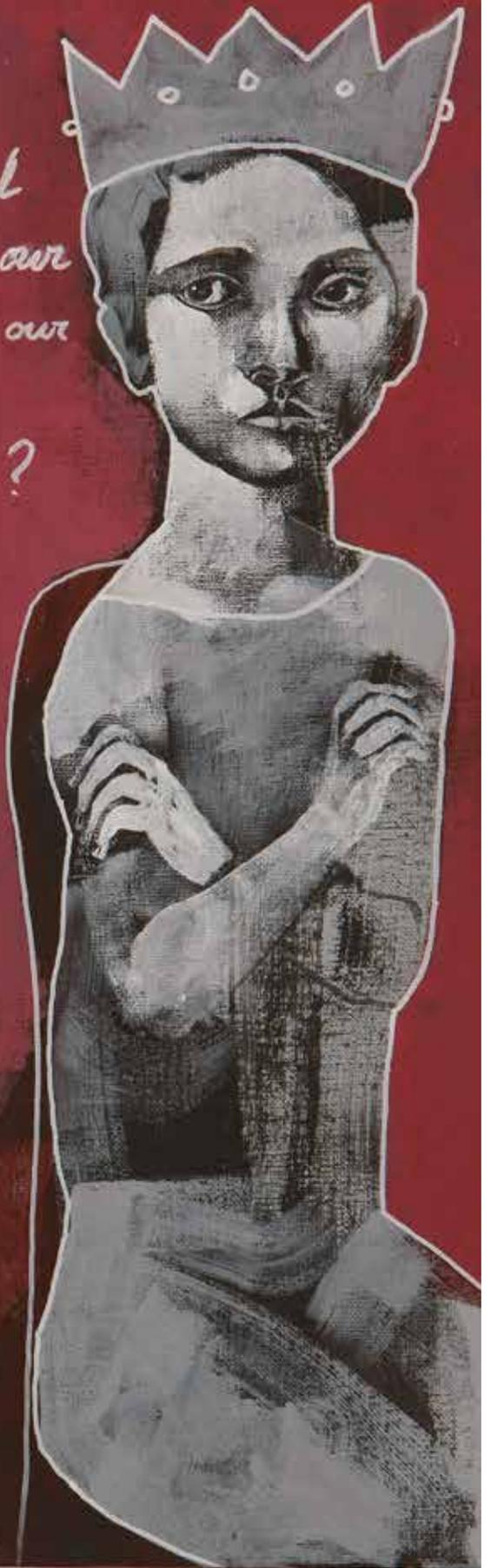
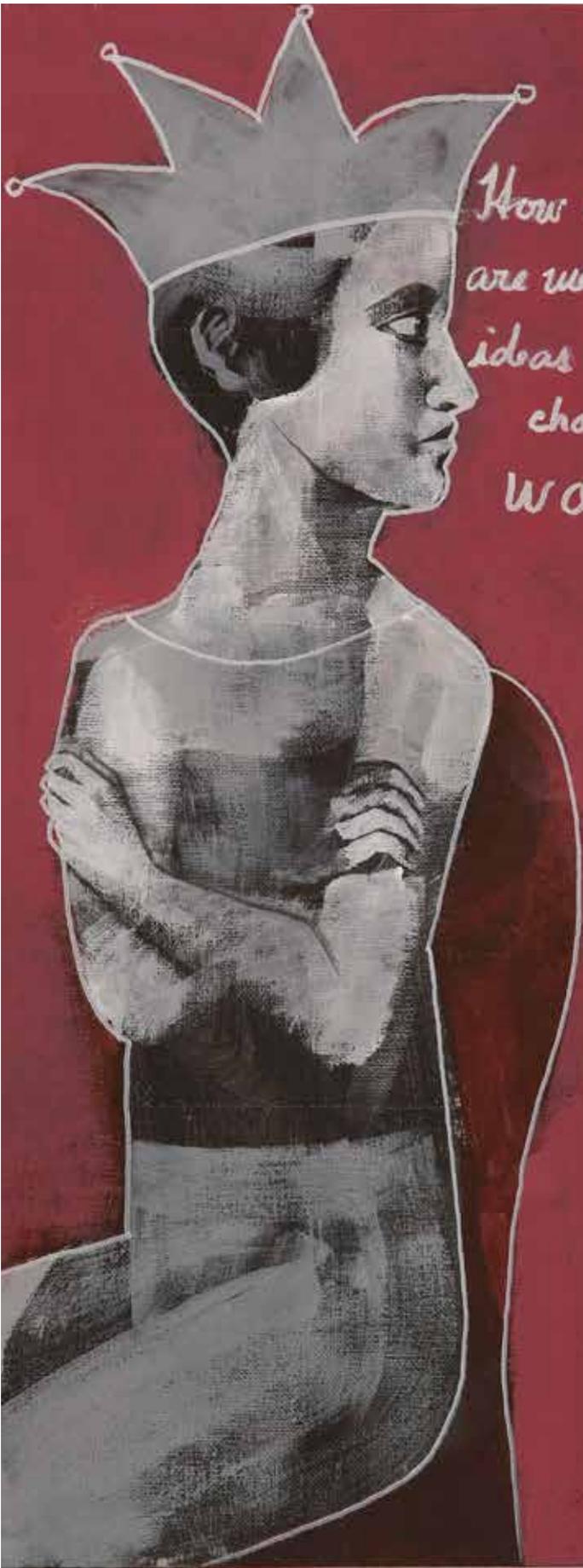
To help us use both our reason and imagination,
literature uses language,
and language uses words.

Through carefully crafted stories, poems, and essays, *literature shows young readers that words are supremely important in becoming a better person.*

This is especially true at a time when words like “**friend**” have been devalued by Facebook, and “**hero**” by those to whom **history**, and **honor** and **honesty**, especially in public service, no longer mean anything.



*How careful
are we with our
ideas, with our
choice of
words?*



Every entry and **every post** that we make on Facebook and on Twitter is a test of how well we have learned our language and literature.

I'm not talking about our grammar.

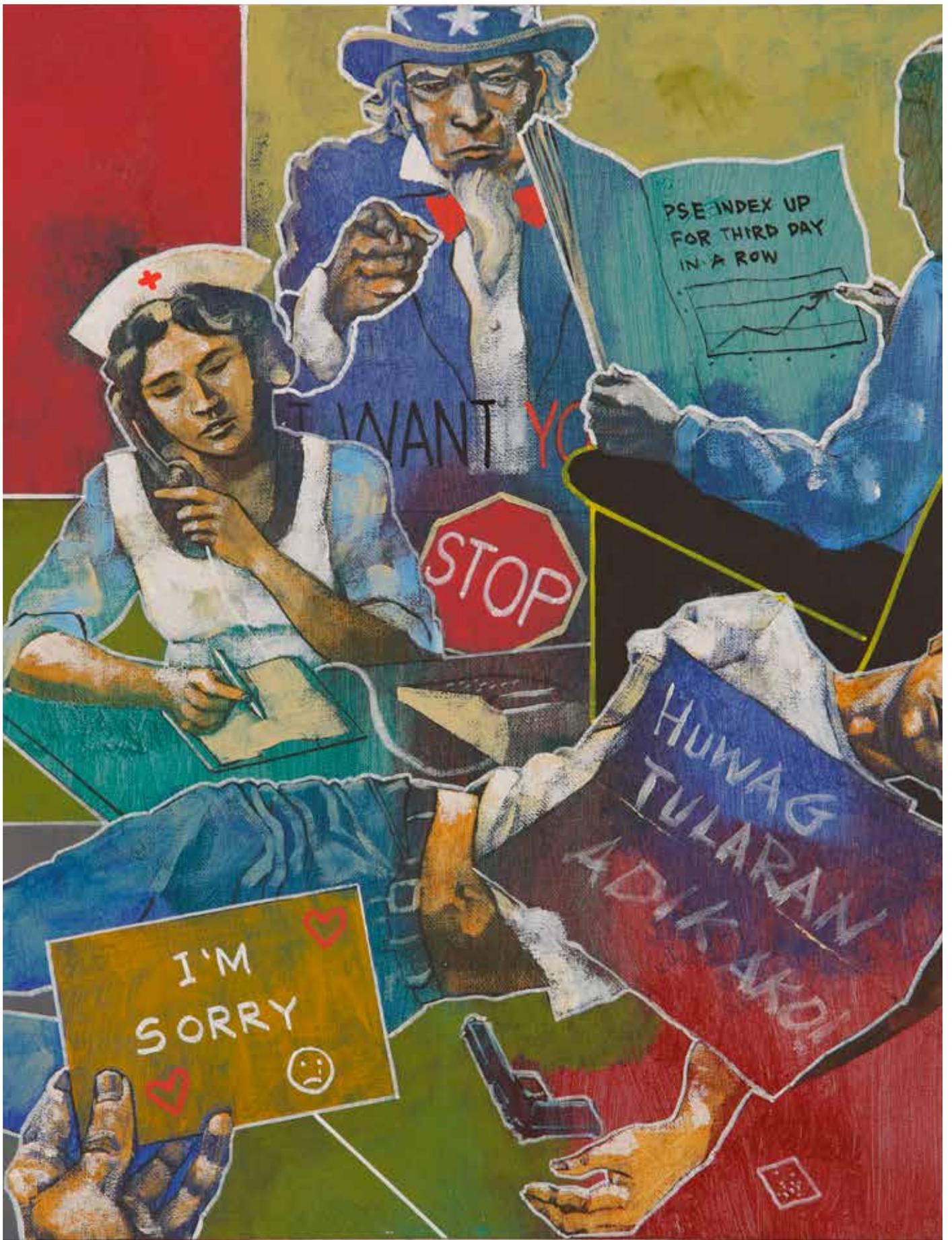
I'm talking about our sensibility – the way we think and express ourselves, the way we deal with other people, especially people holding an adversarial opinion.

**How careful are we with
our ideas, with our choice
of words?**

This is the first and the most important lesson of all literature:

Words have meaning.

And because they have meaning, *words have power*, and *words have consequences*.



I WANT YOU

STOP

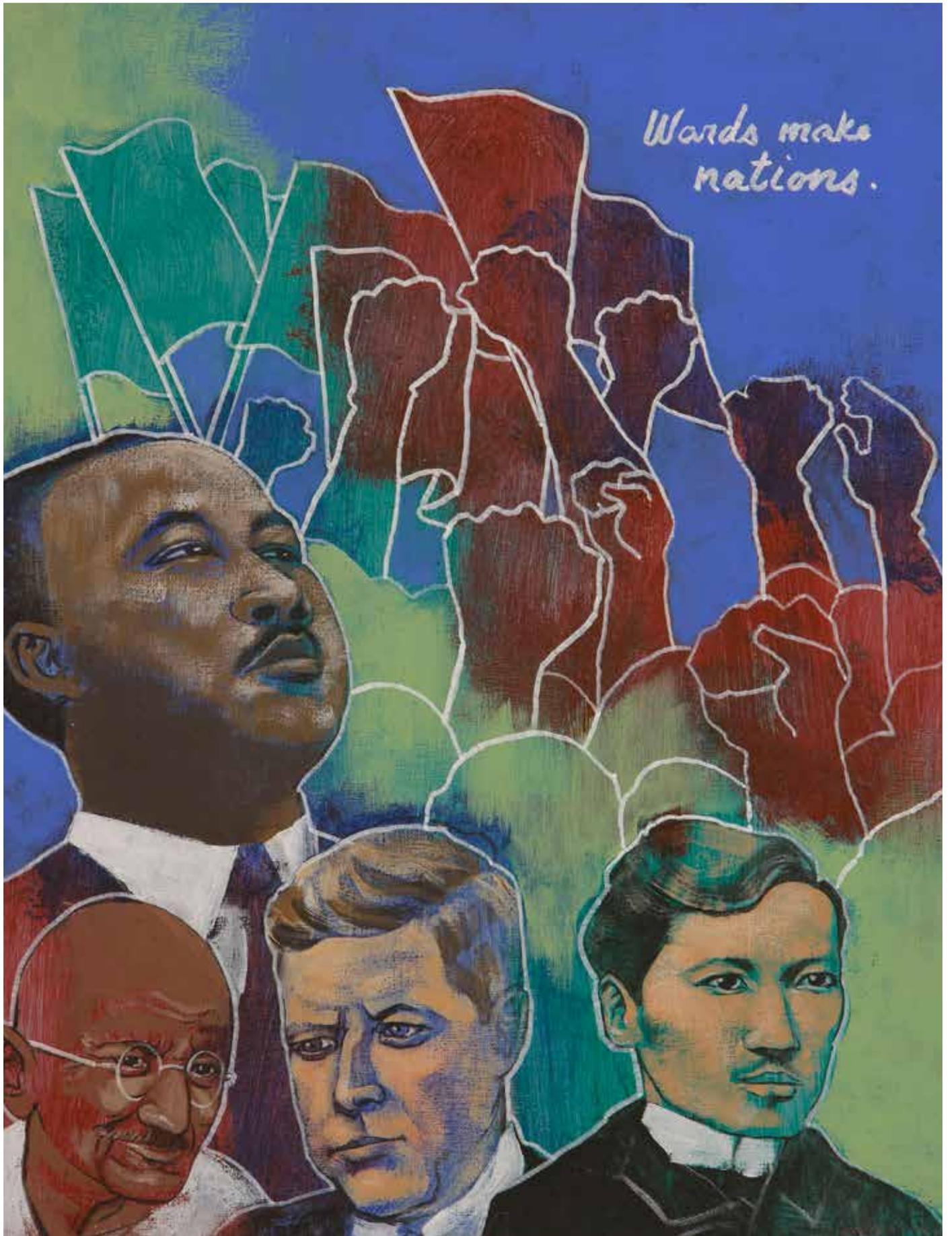
PSE INDEX UP FOR THIRD DAY IN A ROW



I'M SORRY

HUNAG TULARAN ADIKARON

*Words make
nations.*



Words *can hurt.*

Words *can kill.*

But words *can also heal.*

Words *can save.*

Words *make law.*

Words *make war.*

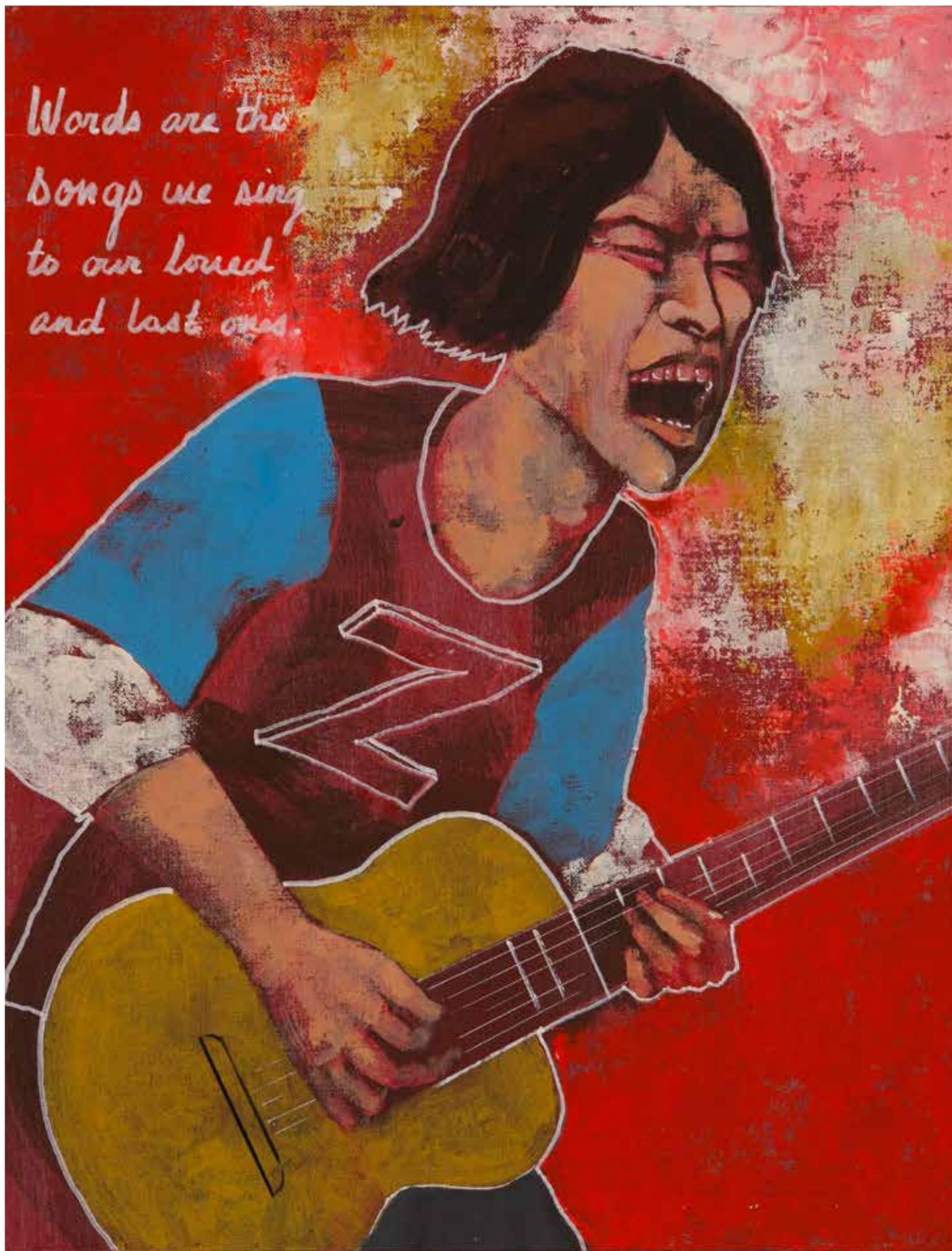
Words *make money.*

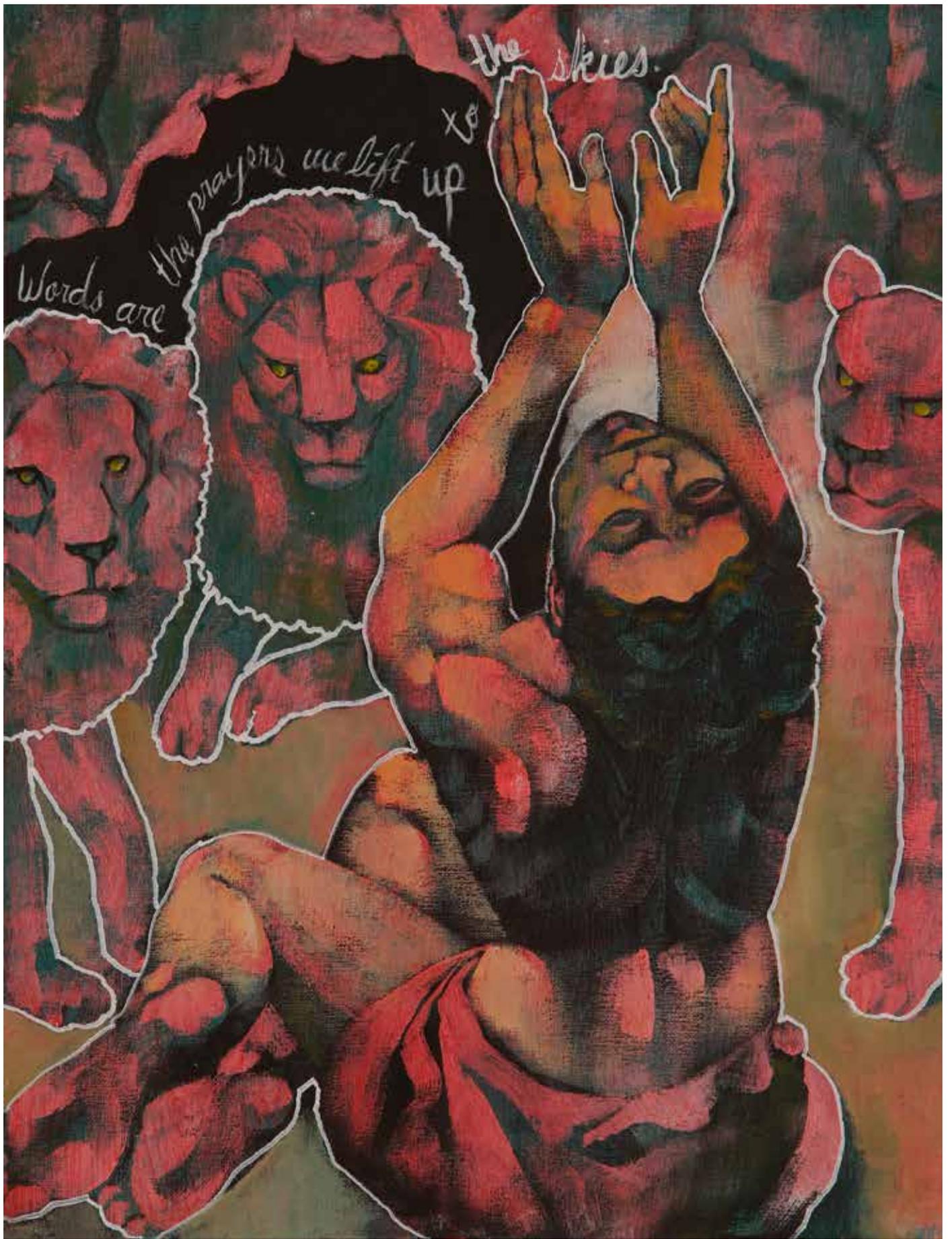
Words *make peace.*

Words make nations.

Words are the songs we sing to our loved
and lost ones.

Words are the
songs we sing
to our loved
and lost ones.





the skies.

x8

the prayers we lift up

Words are

Words are the prayers we lift up to the skies.

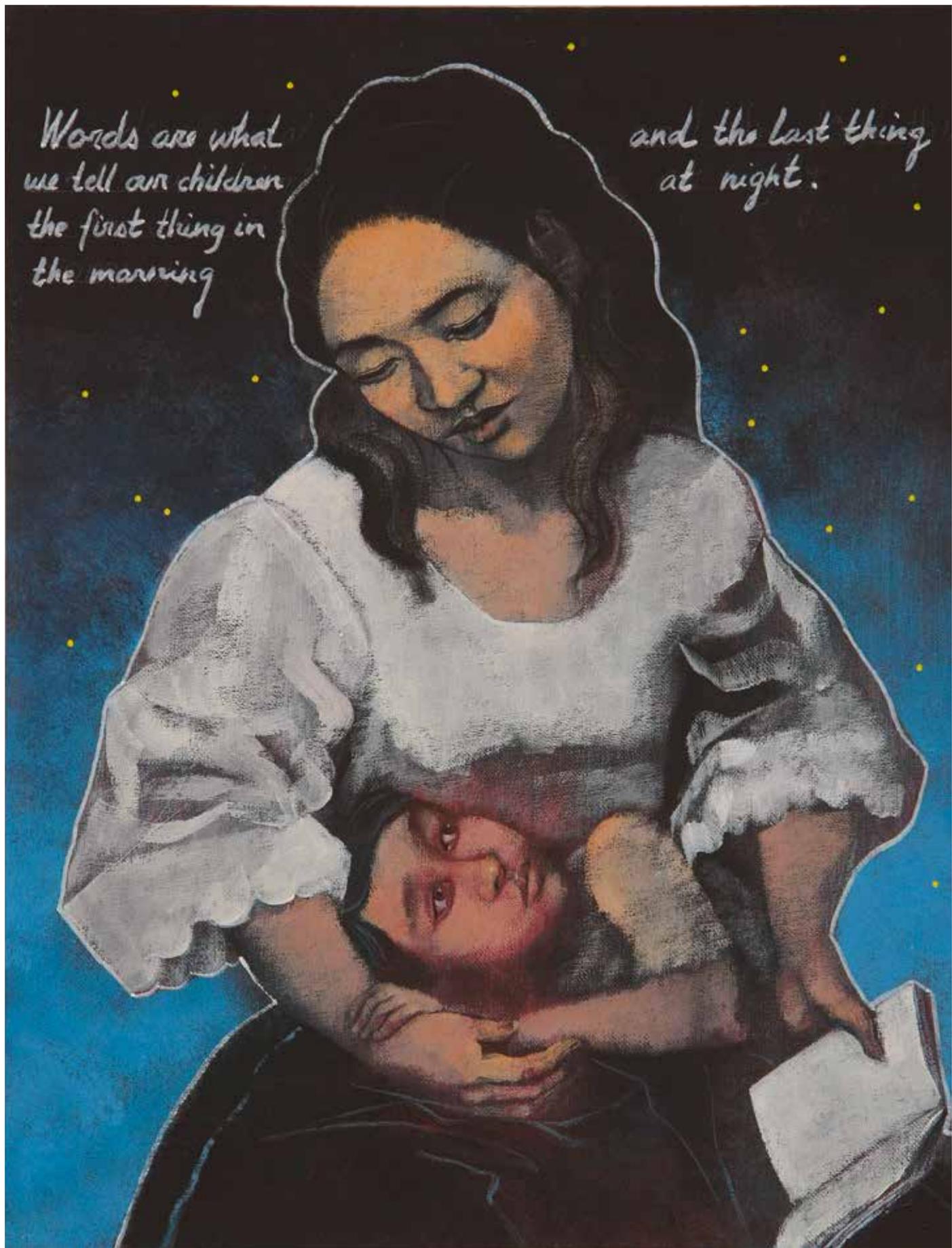
Words are the deepest secrets we confess.

Wards are the
deepest secrets
we confess.



Words are what
we tell our children
the first thing in
the morning

and the last thing
at night.

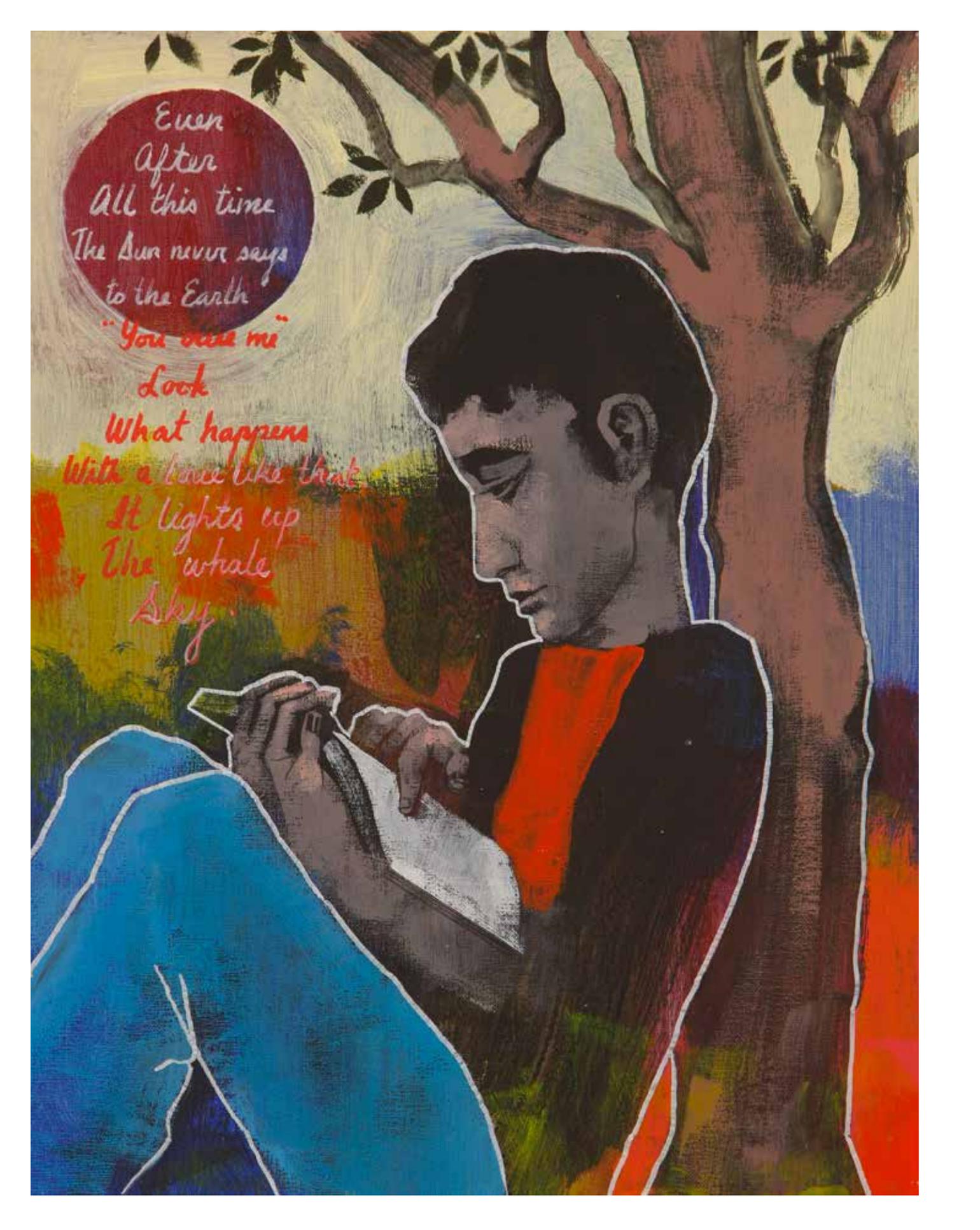


Words are what we tell our children the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night.

Words are all that some of us – *especially those whom we call writers* – will leave behind.

Words are all
that some of us -
especially those whom
we call writers -
will leave behind.





Even
After
All this time
The Sun never says
to the Earth

"You owe me"

Look

What happens
With a love like that
It lights up
The whole
Sky.

Seven hundred years ago, a Persian poet named Hafez wrote a short but wonderful poem:

Even
After
All this time
The Sun never says
To the Earth
"You owe me."

Look
What happens
With a love like that.
It lights up
The whole
Sky.

This, my friends, is **why we write**, and **why we read**.

We light up the sky of our minds with love – *the love of ideas, of our engagement with ourselves and with the world.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOSE "BUTCH" DALISAY JR. (*born January 15, 1954*) is a Filipino writer. He has won numerous awards and prizes for fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction and screenwriting, including 16 Palanca Awards.

He has published more than 30 books of fiction and nonfiction; his second novel, "Soledad's Sister," was shortlisted for the inaugural Man Asian Literary Prize in 2007. He is a Palanca Hall of Fame, TOYM, and CCP Centennial Honors List awardee, and the Jose Y. Dalisay Jr. Professorial Chair in Creative Writing has been endowed in his name at the University of the Philippines.

He has received Hawthornden Castle, British Council, David T.K. Wong, Rockefeller (Bellagio), and Civitella Ranieri fellowships, and has held the Henry Lee Irwin Professorial Chair at the Ateneo de Manila University; and the Jose Joya, Jorge Bocobo, and Elpidio Quirino professorial chairs at U.P. Diliman.

Prof. Dalisay taught English and Creative Writing at the University of the Philippines, where he also chaired the English department and served as Director of the UP Institute of Creative Writing, and as Vice President for Public Affairs.

In 2019, Prof. Dalisay was appointed as professor emeritus of the University of the Philippines.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

The *Chagallesque* works of **MARCEL ANTONIO** (born June 28, 1965) often involve mysterious themes, utilize fabular images that combine myth with reality, and inspire stories and imagination.

The son of Filipino painters Angelito Antonio and Norma Belleza, Marcel achieved early recognition when he launched his first solo show while still in college at the University of the Philippines. This was followed by a string of sold-out exhibitions, and he is today considered as among the most important artists of his generation. His paintings continue to be prized by collectors in the Philippine and Southeast Asian art markets.

Marcel has exhibited in numerous major galleries in the Philippines, and has also exhibited in Berlin, Australia, and Singapore.



CANVAS' 1 Million Books for One Million Filipino Children Campaign

aims to inspire in children a love for reading
by donating its award-winning books to public schools, hospitals,
and disadvantaged communities throughout the country.

*A child that reads is a creative, empowered, and imaginative child
who will learn independently, envision a brighter future,
and ultimately lead a productive and meaningful life.*

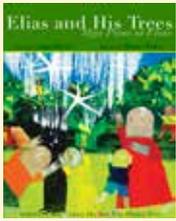
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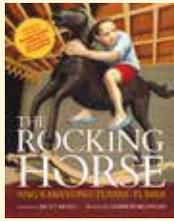
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CANVAS, a non-profit organization,
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of Philippine art, culture, and the environment.

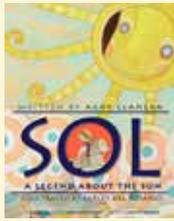
MORE BOOKS FROM CANVAS



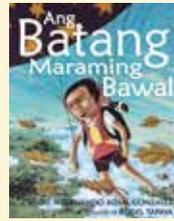
ELIAS AND HIS TREES
Adapted from "The Man Who Planted Trees" by Jean Giono
Adaptation by Augie Rivera
Art by Romeo Forbes



THE ROCKING HORSE
Story by Becky Bravo
Art by Elmer Borlongan



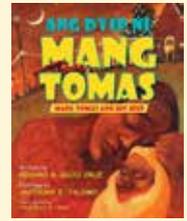
SOL: A LEGEND ABOUT THE SUN
Story by Agay Llanera
Art by Farley del Rosario



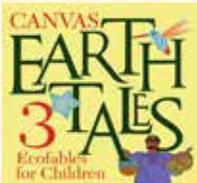
ANG BATANG MARAMING BAWAL
Story by Fernando Rosal Gonzalez
Art by Rodel Tapaya



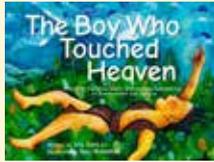
SI LUPITO AT ANG BARRIO SIRKERERO
Story by Rowald Almazar
Art by José John Santos III



ANG DYIP NI MANG TOMAS
Story by Genaro R. Gojo Cruz
Art by Anthony Palomo



EARTH TALES: 3 ECO-FABLES FOR CHILDREN
"The King and the Royal Trees," by Paul Aird and art by Ivee Olivares-Mellor
"The Hummingbird," art by Plet Bolipata
"The Star Thrower," art by Liza Flores



THE BOY WHO TOUCHED HEAVEN
Story by Iris Gem Li
Art by Sergio Bumatay III



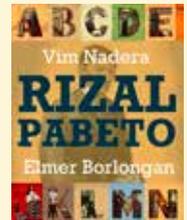
MESSAGE IN THE SAND
Story by Charmaine Aserappa
Art by Roel Obemio



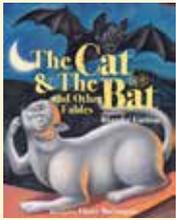
TAHAN NA, TAHANAN
Story by Maria Isabel Alarilla-Arellano
Art by Don M. Salubayba



DOLL EYES
Story by Eline Santos
Art by Joy Mallari



RIZALPABETO
Poems by Vim Nadera
Art by Elmer Borlongan



THE CAT & THE BAT AND OTHER FABLES
Written by Rhandee Garlitos
Art by Elmer Borlongan



NADIA AND THE BLUE STARS
Story by Francesca Nicole Chan Torres
Art by Liv Romualdez Vinluan



A FISH TALE
Story by Becky Bravo
Art by Daniel dela Cruz



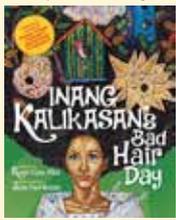
THE TRIANGLE MAN AND THE FLIGHTLESS DIWATA
Story by Kate Osias
Art by Dex Fernandez



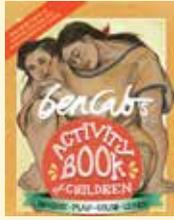
HERE BE DRAGONS
Story by Victor
Fernando R. Ocampo
Art by Jon Jaylo



MY BIG SISTER CAN SEE DRAGONS
Story by Rocky Sanchez-Tirona
Art by Liza Flores



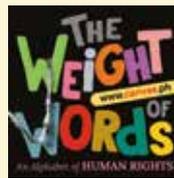
INANG KALIKASAN'S BAD HAIR DAY
Story by Reclé Etino Vibal
Art by John Paul Antido



BENCAB'S ACTIVITY BOOK FOR CHILDREN
Activities written by Karen Joy Desamparado-Foronda
Art by Benedicto Cabrera



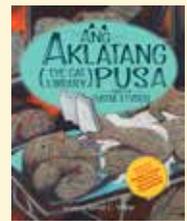
PANYAAN: THREE TALES OF THE TAGBANUA
Stories by Rhandee Garlitos and Annette Ferrer
Art by Sergio Bumatay III



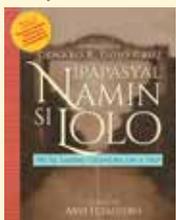
THE WEIGHT OF WORDS: AN ALPHABET OF HUMAN RIGHTS
Edited by CANVAS
Artworks by Electrolychee, Dan Matutina, Gerilya, John Ed De Vera, Jon Masolabe, June Digan, Keith Dador, Kevin Roque, Lala Gallardo, Meneer Marcelo, Palma Tayona, Wesley Valenzuela



KARAPAT DAPAT
Written by May Tobias-Papa
Art by I.N.K.



ANG AKLATANG PUSA
Story by Eugene Y. Evasco
Art by Jared C. Yokte



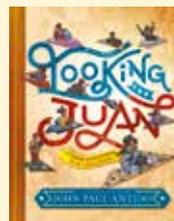
IPAPASYAL NAMIN SI LOLO
Story by Renato R. Gojo Cruz
Art by Arvi Fetalvero



RENATO BARJA'S CHILDREN'S STORIES
Stories written by Daniel Palma
Tayona and Gigo Alampay
Art by Renato Barja



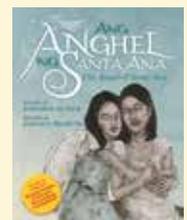
MAMITA'S GARDEN: AN ACTIVITY BOOK
Story by Nicolas Gabriel Garcia
Art by Pam Yan-Santos



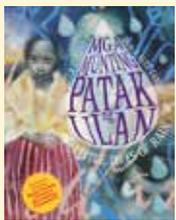
LOOKING FOR JUAN: A CANVAS ACTIVITY BOOK FOR CHILDREN
Activities written by Annette A. Ferrer and Gigo A. Alampay
Art by John Paul Antido



SI PONYANG AT ANG LIHIM NG KUWEBA
Story by Melvin John B. Atole
Art by Sarah M. Geneblazo



ANG ANGHEL NG SANTA ANA
Story by Josephine de Dios
Art by Johanna Helmuth



MGA MUNTING PATAK NG ULAN
Story by Jessica Luciano Olmedo
Art by Alee Garibay

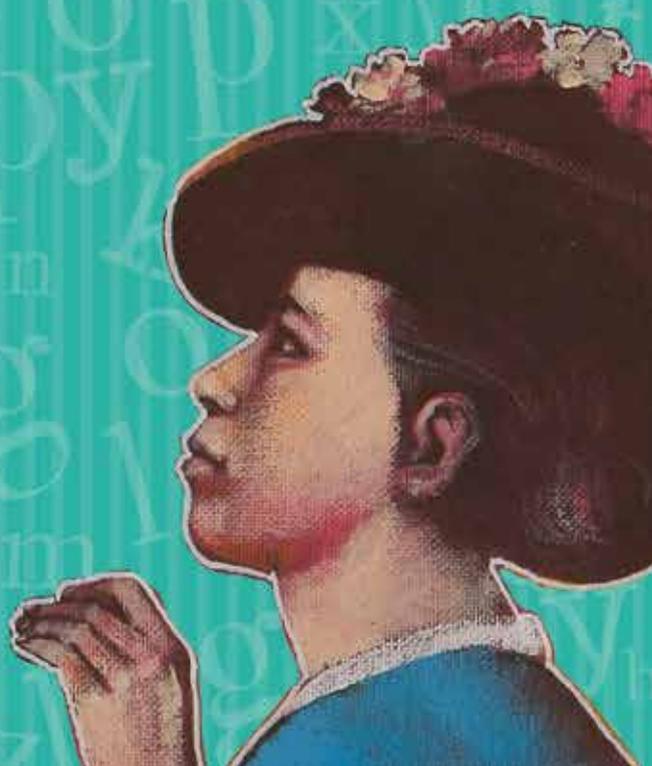


ANG KAHON NI LOLA
Written and art by Ioannis Sicuya



SILENT WITNESSES
Stories retold by Gigo A. Alampay
Art by Renz M. Baluyot







"PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME HOW
AND WHY I BECAME A WRITER"



*So begins multi-awarded writer
Butch Dalisay's poetic reflection –
complemented by the uniquely
lyrical art of Marcel Antonio –
on reading, writing, language,
literature, and the enduring
power of words.*



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creative possibilities. open conversations. meaningful change.

