



Made by your Thoughts

A word-map front cover that turns the mind itself into the illustration — no stock, no photography, just type and thought.

Science Fiction / Time Travel | Original Illustration | Typography as Concept | Word Map Design

THE BRIEF

What if your mind was the map — and the territory?

Made by your Thoughts is a science fiction story about time travel, identity, and the question of whether the mind can be trusted to navigate a life it has already altered. The brief was to design a cover that communicated that psychological complexity without relying on a character illustration or photographic imagery.

The design challenge was to make the mind visible — to find a visual language for thought itself. The solution was to let the emotion words float as the entire front cover composition, creating a word map that IS the illustration rather than decorating around one.

ASSETS & CREDITS

No stock. No photography. Every element original.

Illustration: Flowing line illustrations, organic shape elements & all design elements — Original Artwork (Adobe Illustrator)

Every visual element on this cover is original artwork. The flowing blue lines that suggest neural pathways and time streams were drawn entirely in Adobe Illustrator. No stock illustrations, no photography, and no pre-made assets were used at any stage.

THE WORD MAP CONCEPT

When the words are the illustration, the concept and the design become the same thing.

The front cover uses floating emotion words — Fear, Passion, Love, Anger, Calm, Freedom, Happiness, Joy, Envy, Stuck, Spirit, Lazy, Alone, Independent, Family — as the primary visual element. There is no central image. The words are the cover.

This was a deliberate decision to match the story's central question: if your thoughts make you who you are, what happens when those thoughts are disrupted by time? The reader's eye moves around the cover the way thoughts move through a mind — non-linearly, associatively, without a fixed center.

DESIGN DECISION

Placing both positive and negative emotion words on the same cover without hierarchy — Happiness sits near Lazy, Love near Fear — was intentional. The story is not about good thoughts versus bad thoughts. It is about all of them together, the full spectrum of a mind trying to hold itself together across time.

THE FLOWING LINES

Neural pathways. Time streams. The shape of a mind in motion.

The blue flowing lines that run through all three panels — front cover, spine, and back cover — serve multiple functions simultaneously. They are visually decorative, but they also read as rivers, neural pathways, or the streams of time travel that run through the story's plot.

Crucially, the lines continue across the spine and connect front to back. This makes the full spread read as one continuous piece rather than three separate panels. The reader who sees the full spread open on a table sees a single flowing composition. The reader who sees only the front cover sees the lines entering and leaving the frame — suggesting a world larger than what is visible.

DESIGN DECISION

Running the lines through the spine — rather than stopping them at panel edges — was the single design decision that unified the whole spread. Most book cover designs treat the spine as a connector between two separate designs. Treating it as part of a continuous flowing illustration elevated this from three panels into one composition.

ITERATION PROCESS

Two versions. One critical refinement at each stage.

1. **First draft** — Word map concept established on front cover. Spine empty — no text, no author name. Back cover blurb present but contained spelling errors throughout. Barcode and author name missing. Emotion words included 'Envey' (misspelled) and some word placement felt scattered without compositional logic.
2. **Final version** — Spine completed with full diagonal title treatment and author name. Barcode added to back cover. Author name added to front cover. Spelling corrected throughout — navigate, constant, destiny, without, Envy all fixed. Word placement refined for better visual balance across the front cover composition.

DESIGN DECISION

The diagonal spine title treatment — running the full title at an angle rather than the standard horizontal or vertical — matches the non-linear, flowing quality of the rest of the design. It is a small detail that shows the typographic thinking extended to every panel, not just the front cover.

COLOR & MOOD

Calm enough to think. Cool enough to question.

Thought Blue
#A8D8E8

Cream
#F5EFE6

Ink
#2C2C2A

Deep Navy
#1B3A5C

The palette is deliberately restrained — cream, ink, and a single blue — because the concept carries all the visual weight. A complex palette would compete with the word map and reduce its impact. The cream background gives the black typography maximum contrast and readability. The blue lines introduce the only color, making them feel significant: these are not decorative flourishes but the key visual element of the design.

BACK COVER COPY

A question that the reader cannot answer until the last page.

When one's mind is what is supposed to help you navigate your life — would you be able to trust it in the very end?

Worlds are always changing. The only thing that is supposed to remain constant is your mind. But time travel changes everything your life has planned. What if love and freedom are the only things you can recall after years of travel? Would you go back and be able to change your destiny without losing your thoughts?

DESIGN DECISION

The opening question on the back cover — asking the reader directly whether they would trust their own mind — mirrors the word map on the front cover. The reader has just been looking at a mind full of emotions. Now they are asked whether they would trust it. Front cover and back cover are asking the same question in different languages.

WHAT I LEARNED

The most conceptually strong covers are the ones where the design and the story ask the same question.

- **Typography as illustration** — When words are placed as a composition rather than as text, they become visual elements. The emotion words are not labels on a picture — they are the picture. This is a technique that scales to any story about interiority, identity, or emotional complexity.
- **Restraint is a design choice** — Using only cream, ink, and one blue rather than a full palette was a choice to let the concept breathe. Not every cover needs color complexity. Sometimes the most powerful palette is the one that gets out of the way.
- **The spine is part of the composition** — Treating the spine as a continuation of the front cover's flowing lines — rather than as a label between two panels — transformed three pieces into one. Every spread should be designed as a single piece first, three panels second.
- **Spelling is a design problem** — Typography errors break immersion for any reader who catches them, and readers always catch them. Proofreading copy is as much a design responsibility as choosing a typeface. On a cover where words are the primary visual element, this is especially critical.