

# THESIS

---

**Azeen Aamir**

# ABSTRACT

Humans are social animals, who tend to find connections with everything around them, whether it be another human, animal or even inanimate objects. We think in metaphors. They help us bridge our gap between the familiar and unfamiliar. This tendency to project human like qualities onto non-human agents, known as anthropomorphism, is the most common of all metaphorical modes. It is an ancient and almost universal practice, from ancient myths to Aesop's fables to poetry, art and movies.

As I moved further into the topic, I decided to narrow down my research and focused on exploring our metaphor-riddled relationship with animals in different aspects. For example, how the simplistic nature of animal cartoons helps us understand real life concepts by making them less overtly anchored in reality. Or the ways of using animal metaphors as a visual device to communicate an inexpressible idea.

By using animal metaphors as a tool, I intend to visualize my fears and phobias, most of which are rooted in my childhood experiences. By choosing a certain few animals, I explore how it interacts with me and my surroundings. I rely on the animal's physical features and body language in my work as a metaphor for the underlying feeling of fear.

# ANTHROPOMORPHISM

"Giving human attributes to animals, inanimate object or other non-human things."

## Religion & Mythology

The perception of a divine beings in human form. Deities represented specific human concepts, such as love, war, fertility.

For example:

- Greek deities Zeus and Apollo.
- The Hindu murtis.



# PERSONIFICATION

Personification is an anthropomorphic metaphor which occurs when a thing or abstraction is represented as a person.

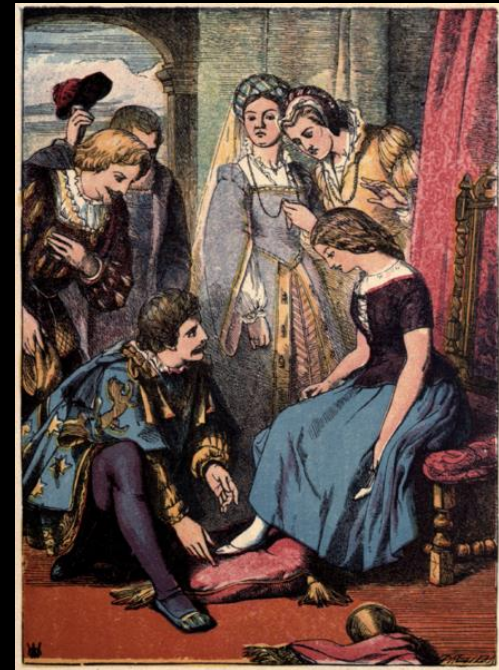
## Fables

The Jataka Tales from India illustrate principles of life through animals.

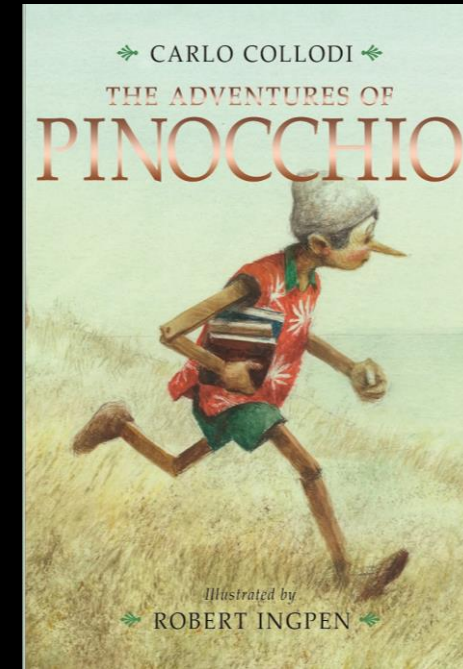
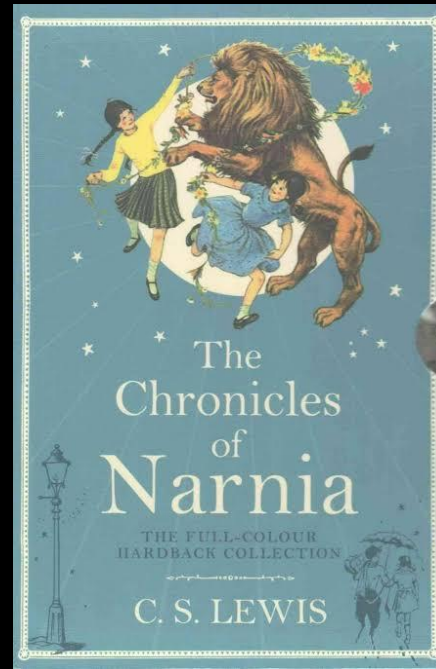
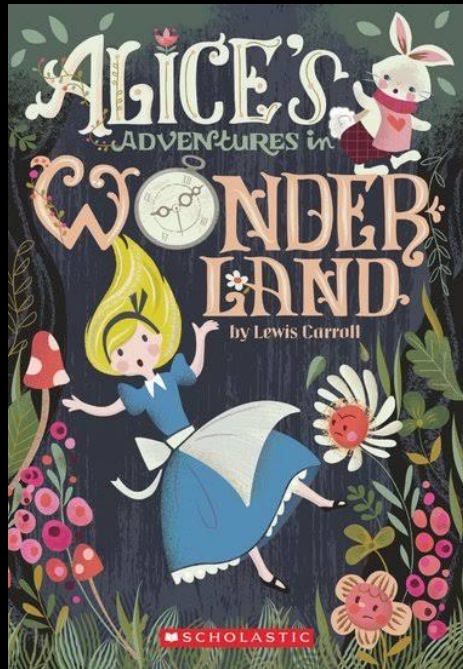




## *The Grimm brothers Fairytales*

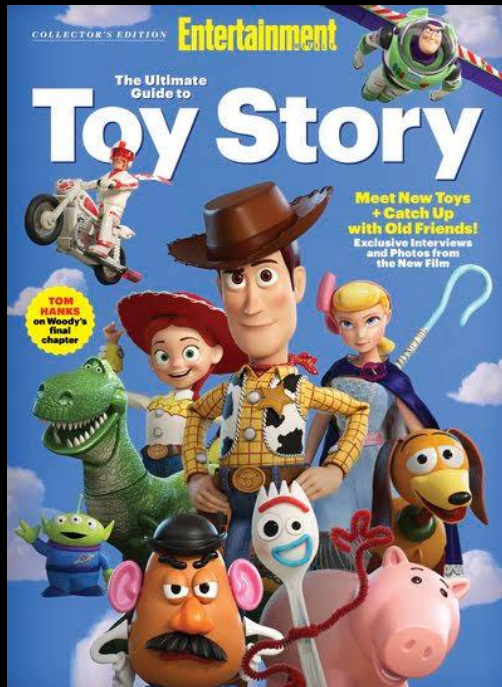


## Modern literature





## 20<sup>th</sup> century movies



# STEREOTYPES OF ANIMALS

- For after being brought up from childhood with these stories, we develop certain opinions of the several animals.
- When anthropomorphizing an animal there are stereotypical traits which are associated with a particular specie.
- They are taken from myths, sometimes based on their real characteristics. Often animals are judged by their appearance.
- Till this day, certain animals are associated with genders, race etc.



# How, when and why we tend to anthropomorphize?

Since anthropomorphism is about giving human traits to nonhuman agents, the very first question that comes here would be, what counts as being 'human'? What are those characteristic that we perceive to be uniquely human? This will tell us how we can anthropomorphize a nonhuman agent.

## How do we anthropomorphize something?

- Physical features
- Emotions (e.g., pride, shame, guilt etc)
- Possess intentions
- Human Language
- Conscious awareness
- Desires

When we anthropomorphize an agent, it becomes responsible for its own actions and therefore, becomes deserving of blame and praise, punishment and reward. It also becomes worthy of moral care.

# How, when and why we tend to anthropomorphize?

## Why do we engage in anthropomorphic thinking?

- Effects similar to anthropomorphism arise when people think about other human beings, too. When they try and predict their mind.
- Anthropomorphism is guided by the same social cognitive mechanisms that enable people to think about the minds of other people.
- People are more likely to attribute a humanlike mind to non-humans, when they behave unpredictably and therefore need to be explained.
- Humans are curious creatures. they like to think about what's inside the animal/ object just the way one thinks about what's going on the other persons mind.

# How, when and why we tend to anthropomorphize?

## When are we most likely to anthropomorphize?

### Desire for social connection

- Lack of social connection with humans leads to seeking connections in non-human agents.
- Low status, disconnected people are more likely to seek such connections. (example 1&2)

### Predict, explain and control

- Human desire to explain the behavior of *any* agent.
- Lack of certainty or control.
- To understand something better.
- Desire to control.

### Similarity to self

- Based on observable features.
- Facial features, human voice etc.



1) Her: Love for Ai



2) Erika La Tour Eiffel, women who married Eiffel tower.

# **INITIAL VISUALS/ EXPLORATION**

---



# INITIAL VISUALS

In my initial visuals I started exploring different aspects of anthropomorphism, things that are related to it, what impact does it have ,pros and cons etc.

So I wanted to touch multiple aspects of it before I went in one single direction. These initial visuals include topics such as, role of anthropomorphism in advertisement, animal/ object association with human, Dehumanization.

Then I realized that rather than making stuff that is already very much known, I should use anthropomorphism as a tool to illustrate human emotions and mental states.



## 1.

Animals & objects that are often associated with genders, race, particularly used in a certain kind of advertisement. My visuals show feminine women, masculinity of a man, Africans/ black people and female sexuality

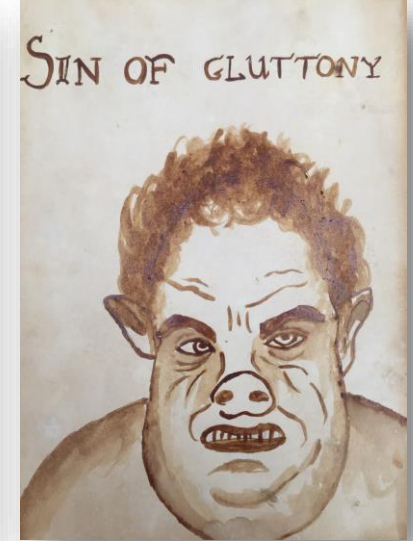
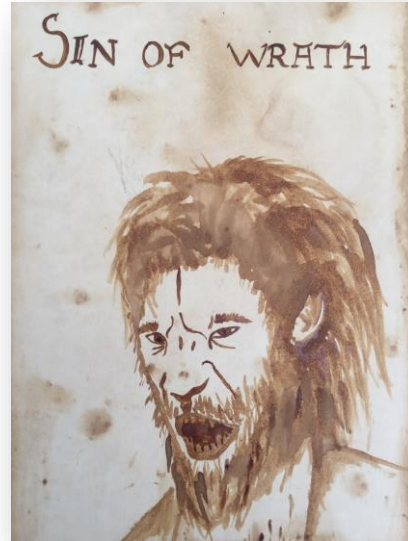


## 2.

I came to the realization that whatever I was making before seemed like it had already been done, its already out there and its really not giving me much space for creativity in my project. So after some more research I came to the conclusion that rather than trying to show what anthropomorphism is, I should use it as tool to depict character that are built on something that's very close to 'humans'.

Human emotions seemed to me the closest thing a human can feel, so I started sketching animal characters that represented a certain emotion like hunger, disgust etc.

My final visuals that came out of this whole idea were based on the seven deadly sins; Pride, sloth, greed, envy, lust, wrath and gluttony. And how they would look like in a fictional human world.



### 3.

For my last, finalized idea, I picked 4 commonly known mental disorders:

- panic disorder
- anxiety disorder
- bipolar disorder
- OCD

Doing a similar thing as before, im turning these invisible, mental states into physical anthropomorphic characters. Visualizing how look like, feel like, how they effect their victims etc. (detail in abstract)

Here my project took kind of different direction because now I started researching about the disorders and how they maybe feel like, how they could be represented metaphorically through animals etc.

#### My aim

- My idea is to give these intangible illnesses some substance and make them appear more physical.
- To give people, suffering from these illnesses, something to relate to.
- But also to allow others to step into the mind of the victim to see and feel what its like for them everyday.



Mental illness, also called mental health disorders, refers to a wide range of mental health conditions — disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Many people have mental health concerns from time to time. But a mental health concern becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affect your ability to function.

## Mental illness throughout history

- Since the middle ages, mental disorders and diseases have been seen as something evil or considered as a curse from god/ deities.
- Mentally ill people were considered to be witches or sorcerers and they became a victim of witch-hunt.
- Asylum care was often harsh and treated people like wild animals.
- It was only till the 19<sup>th</sup> century that mentally ill people were diagnosed and an extensive research on it started.
- The turn of the 20th century saw the development of psychoanalysis and asylum 'inmates' were referred as 'patients', and asylums were renamed as hospitals.

## Criticism on mental illness

- In the 1960s there were many challenges to the concept of mental illness itself.
- These challenges came from psychiatrists like Thomas Szasz who argued that mental illness was a myth used to disguise moral conflicts.
- sociologists Erving Goffman said that mental illness was merely another example of how society labels and controls non-conformists.

## Stigmas

- The US Surgeon General stated in 1999 that: "Powerful and pervasive, stigma prevents people from acknowledging their own mental health problems, much less disclosing them to others."
- In Taiwan, those with mental disorders are subject to general public's misperception that the root causes of the mental disorders are "over-thinking", "having a lot of time and nothing better to do", "not serious in life", "not paying enough attention to the real life affairs", "mentally weak",



## ROLE OF MEDIA IN PORTRAYING MENTAL ILLNESS

The general public have been found to hold a strong stereotype of dangerousness and desire for social distance from individuals described as mentally ill.

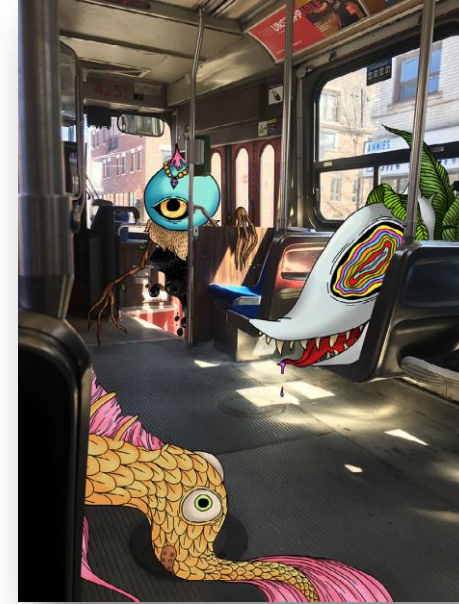
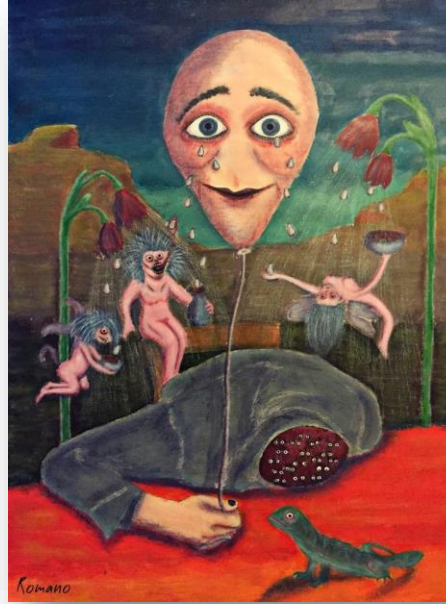


- In The Lion King, 3 characters (the hyenas) are depicted as being mentally ill, as evidenced by their rolling eyes, their high-pitched hysterical laughter.
- the hyenas represent the lowest social group in the animal kingdom and that they are to be feared and avoided.



- In Beauty and the Beast, the townspeople frequently refer to the intellectuals Belle and her father, Maurice as mentally ill.
- in a scene, maurice will be chained and hauled off in a “lunacy wagon.”

# Artwork



PROGRESS





# PROGRESS





# Metaphors

Metaphor is primarily considered a figurative expression by which a word or phrase is altered from its literal reference to a new and often wide field of reference.

## Other definitions

- Conceptual metaphors refers understanding one idea in terms of another. This idea was explored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson These metaphors are useful for understanding complex ideas in simple terms.
- Hobbes says that metaphors are merely an ornament to language. While they help us express ourselves more colorfully, they are dangerous. He believes they are a deviation from reliable literal sources.
- While in contrast Nietzsche says that metaphors are the fountain of meaning and truth.

## Figure of speech

Figures of speech are imaginative tools in both literature and ordinary communications used for explaining speech beyond its usual usage.

## Symbols

A communication element intended to simply represent or stand for a complex of person, object, group, or idea." It is a kind of figures of speech used for increasing the beauty of the text and has figurative meaning besides its literal meaning.

## Similes

Technically it means the comparison of two objects with some similarities. It is used to draw attention explicitly to the likeness of two attributes in one.

# Metaphorizing Human Emotions

Emotion is a multidimensional experience which consists of many different aspects. It is an abstract psychological concept. Some Speakers of a given language appear to feel that some of the emotion words are more basic than others. Means the words are sometimes not enough to explain an emotion.

basic ones include in English anger, sadness, fear, joy, and love. Less basic ones include annoyance, wrath, rage, and indignation for anger and terror, fright, and horror for fear.

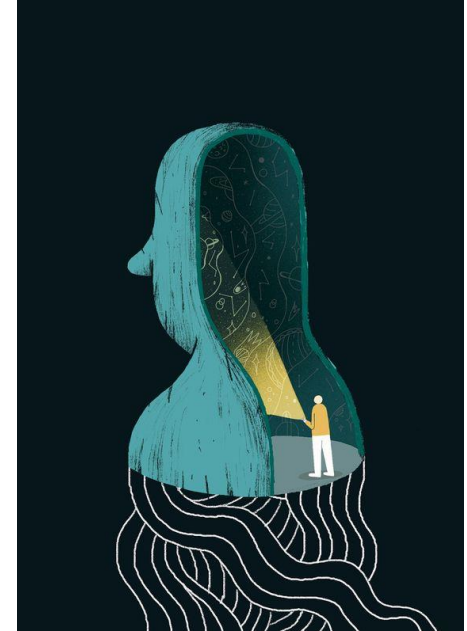
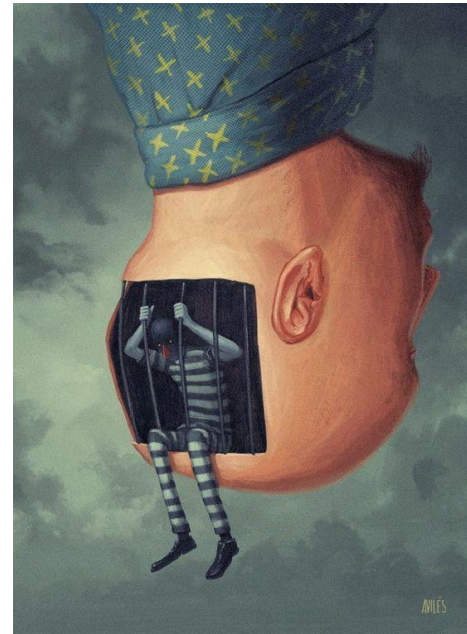
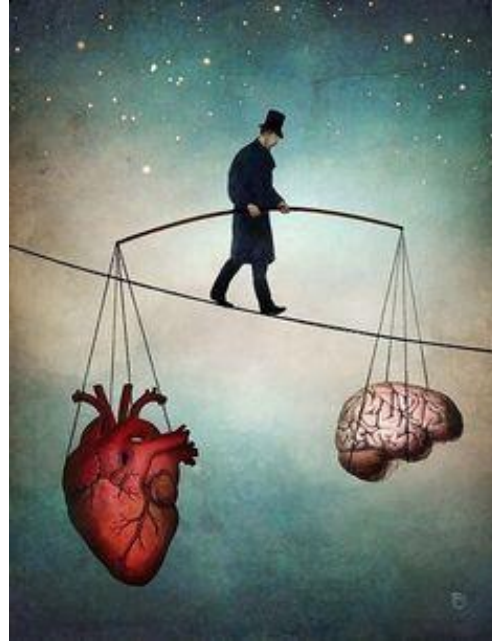
Figurative language can provide various aspects of emotion concepts, such as intensity, cause, control.

Conceptual metaphors can provide better understanding of an abstract idea (emotions) in terms of a the more concrete.

For example: Boiling with anger

metaphor is a fundamental property of all human thought, which allows us to understand abstract areas of our lives in terms of more concrete and embodied experiences.

## Example in Art



# Example in poetry

## **Explaining my depression to my mother: a conversation**

*By Sabrina Benaim*

Mom, my depression is a shapeshifter  
One day it's as small as a firefly in the palm of a bear  
The next it's the bear  
On those days I play dead until the bear leaves me alone  
I call the bad days "the Dark Days"  
Mom says, "try lighting candles"  
But when I see a candle, I see the flesh of a church  
The flicker of a flame  
Sparks of a memory younger than noon  
I am standing beside her open casket  
It is the moment I learn every person I ever come to know  
will someday die  
Besides Mom, I'm not afraid of the dark, perhaps that's  
part of the problem  
Mom says, "I thought the problem was that you can't get  
out of bed"  
I can't, anxiety holds me a hostage inside of my house,  
inside of my head  
Mom says, "Where did anxiety come from?"  
Anxiety is the cousin visiting from out of town that  
depression felt obligated to invite to the party  
Mom, I am the party, only I am a party I don't want to be  
at

---



# Phobias/ Fears

Phobias are persistent and irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that results in a compelling desire to avoid the dreaded object, activity, or situation. It actually presents no danger to the person or in which the danger is exaggerated.

People having neurotic phobias cannot account for their fear and experience intense anxiety if forced to face the phobic situation.

## **Phobia is a special form of fear which:**

- is not age or stage specific;
- is out of proportion to the demands of the circumstances and situation;
- is unadaptive;
- leads to avoidance of the fear-provoking situation;
- cannot be explained;
- is beyond intentional control; and
- continue over an extended period of time;

## **Causes**

- Phobias can develop at any age, and there are a few different reasons of its development.
- A bad Childhood experience that triggered it.
- It can develop unconsciously with the person even realizing.
- Fear a place or object or situation can depend on the culture and environment in which the person was brought up.

# Phobias/ Fears

## Some common Phobias

- agoraphobia (social phobia)
- arachnophobia (fear of spiders)
- Claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces)
- Acrophobia – fear of heights
- Aerophobia – fear of aircraft or flying
- Aquaphobia – fear of water.
- Achluophobia – fear of darkness
- haemophobia – fear of blood
- Trypophobia – fear of holes or textures with a pattern

# Artworks/ Inspiration with Animal Metaphors



'We can all occasionally be inconsiderate to our fellow travelers, but by respecting other people we can remember what it is to be human.'



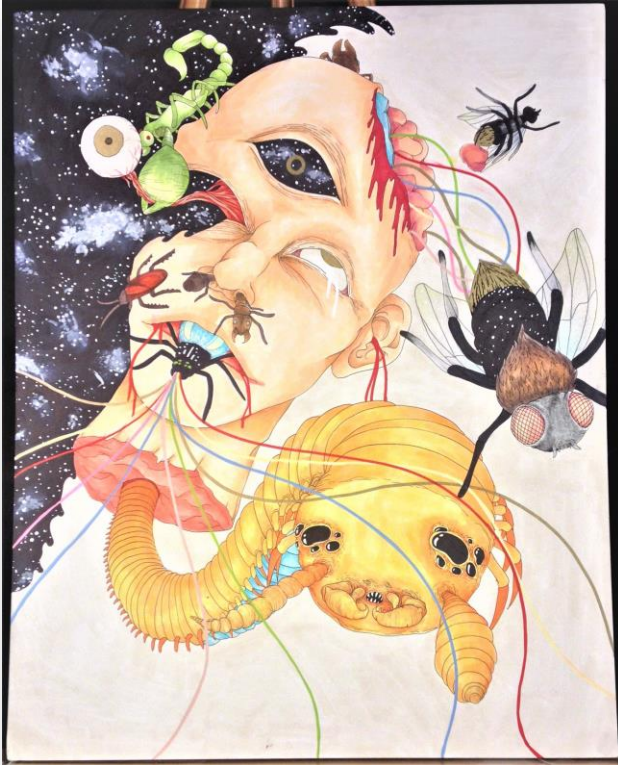
'With It's Everyone's Journey, we wanted to highlight that we often don't realize the impact our behavior has on other travelers and that a little effort can go a long way to making everyone's journey better.'

# Artworks/ Inspiration with Animal Metaphors



After people leave the room, their memories, dreams, or their emotions and experiences linger inside the room. He uses animal as the metaphor, in each room, representing the people and their personality.

# Artworks/ Inspiration with Animal Metaphors



*'Emotional corruption'*  
When your mind starts taking its own course and you're not able to stop it.



*'Constriction'*  
Created with the intend of representing panic attacks and anxiety. The snake has several faces that whisper vile lies and horrible thoughts that do not give the persona time to breathe or talk.



# My Project

