

Hiba Mokter

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BA Graphic Design

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Ways of Thinking ADDA4022/C

For this assessment, I confirm that I have NOT used Generative AI to support me in structuring my submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings.

I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to create text for my submission. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI for creative materials, such as images.

Semiotic Analysis = 504 words

Manifesto Writing = 524 words

Reflective Analysis = 590 words

Semiotic Analysis:



Fig 1. (Universal Studios, 2009, *Drag Me To Hell* Poster)

Drag Me to Hell is a supernatural horror film directed by Sam Raimi. It was released in 2009 and stars Alison Lohman the main focus of the poster being her character,

Christine Brown. It was created by Universals marketing team in order to promote the movie's release in mainstream cinemas.

The main subject of the poster immediately draws the viewers eye, Christine's face and body language angled back in an almost anguished scream. Her expression connotes fear and a sense of helplessness against the supernatural threat; she is screaming out to seemingly no avail. She is portrayed as the stereotypical female victim often seen in the horror genre aligning with the myth of the 'damsel in distress', scared and helpless clearly victimised by the inhuman force grasping her on all sides. As Saussure states "the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" (Saussure, 1959, p.67) highlighting how this stereotypical portrayal is not concretely reflective of reality but purposefully encoded through culturally conventional signs expected by horror audiences e.g. Christine's being blonde, her terror being the focus.

The hands pulling at Christine are withered and unnaturally clawed, the skin appearing decayed. Their unwanted grasp and monstrous appearance are symbolic and connote threat and the supernatural signifying how the protagonist is being haunted by demonic forces outside of her control. Cobley and Janz remind us that "the sign, then, can be said to have the power of connotation. Like all signs, it can – potentially – invoke the action of existing sign-systems." (Cobley and Janz, 1999, p.42) highlighting how the unsettling hands trigger culturally established sign-systems typically aligning with demons, evil spirits and corruption. This is further encoded by the flames surrounding the main character and the bottom of the poster, the fire awaiting below her (polysemic) connoting burns and unbearable heat but also functioning as a signifier of hell and torture.

Barthes states that “the text constitutes a parasitic message designed to connote the image” (Barthes, 1977, p.g 25) suggesting that within visual media text works alongside encoded visual signs to direct audiences interpretation to align with the posters intended meaning, This can be seen in the poster’s tagline “she’s going to hell” having an intentional certainty in the terrifying fate that Christine is faced with whilst also creating a sense of enigma and suspense with the viewer. The concrete tone functions as an enigma code that leads audiences to wonder whether she can avert this disaster or meet the end inevitably predicted for her. The film’s title ‘Drag Me To Hell’ pushes this ominous uncertainty further as ‘Hell’ connotes torture and punishment whilst ‘Drag’ signifies a harsh force and lack of agency building on the notion that Christine’s future safety is out of her hands making the threat appear uncontrollable and external.

Originally my own view of the poster was more surface level considering it a typical horror design, now because of my own research and in-depth investigation its semiotics I realise each addition to the final poster was very intentional.

Bibliography:

Saussure, F. (1959) *Course in general linguistics*. Philosophical Library New York.

Cobley, P. and Janz, L. (1999) *Introducing Semiotics*. Icon Books Ltd.

Barthes, R. (1977) *Image Music Text*. Fontanna Press.

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Figure 1: Universal Studeios. (2009) *Drag Me To Hell Poster*. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1127180/> (Accessed: 15 December 2025)

Manifesto Writing:

1. Try to give other people the benefit of the doubt when you can.
 2. Strive to be the best version of yourself, not someone else.
 3. It's okay to not always know what you're doing, life is full of surprises anyway.
 4. Be open to new things, second chances aren't a crime either.
 5. Strive for good intentions in all things.
 6. Imperfection with passion is always better than soulless perfection.
 7. Stable happiness is always the goal even if its from somewhere simple.
 8. Don't let caution prevent connection.
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5. Strive for good intentions in all things.



Fig 1, Myers, 2024), *Cardiff's Evolving Skyline Photograph*)

When it comes to the actions of myself and other people, it's important to consider the intentions behind them. As a Muslim intention is one of the most important aspects of our core beliefs being featured in the main records of the Quran, the Arabic term Niyah referring directly to the heart's intentions. A intentions always affect actions and this concept applies frequently when it comes to my own decision making and other people's sincerity. Whether its during prayer or just the way I treat other people attempt to look inwards and consider my thoughts behind it, after all "Without Niyah, even the most outwardly righteous act can lose all of its spiritual value." (Hassane, 2025) Even if your actions are stereotypically good if your intentions are selfish or deceiving, I think its evident making other people unconsciously unsettled. Conversely, when we act rashly, I think most people can overlook this imperfection as long the intentions were genuinely good. Construction sites are an eye sore and disturbances but the intention to develop and improve the surrounding area allows people to overlook its flawed

appearance. It's always better to be sincere and genuine in your actions to make fulfilling progress in your life.

6. Imperfection with passion is always better than soulless perfection.



As a person I struggled with being a perfectionist, within society perfection is always something that has been praised and idealised. Overtime within my own work and other pieces of design and media that I favour I've begun to realise that inherent imperfection isn't always a bad thing. Wabi Sabi for example is a Japanese aesthetic

and philosophy that highlights this idea as it “embodies the Zen nihilist cosmic view and seeks beauty in the imperfections found in all things,” (Juniper, 2003, p.g 11). Aesthetics and pieces of art that are imperfect are gaining popularity as time goes on, even when something like a comfort TV show or a handmade gift are flawed they still bring joy to people. Its all based on interpretation and personal tastes, as a result when I create something and put it out into the world I hope other people can see the genuine passion and enjoyment I’ve put into it even if its imperfect.

8. Don't let caution prevent connection

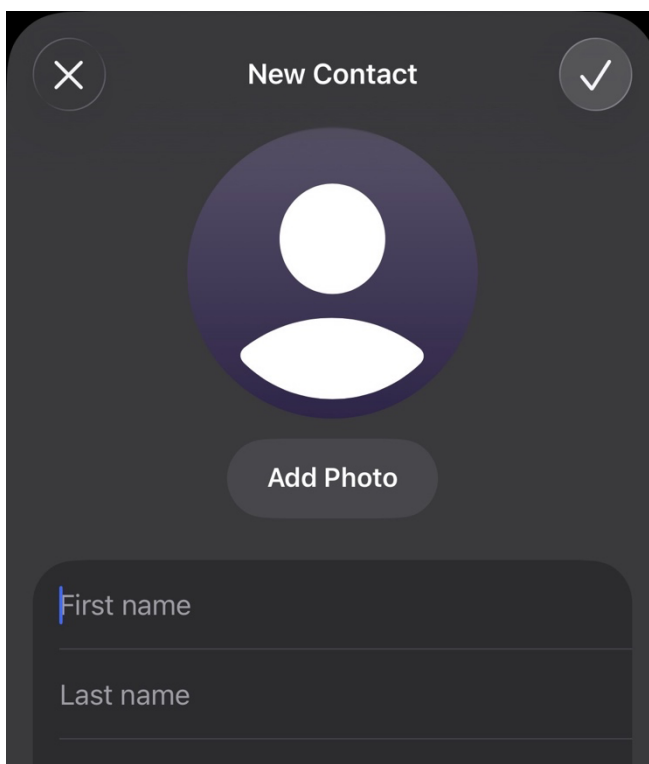


Fig 3, (*Phone Screenshot*, own image, 2025)

Connecting with other people is a risk most people take during every developmental stage of their lives, during school, the work place, and extracurriculars all parts of life in some way include interaction with others, This doesn't necessarily guarantee the people you attempt to speak with are going to be kind or good, still after years of trial and error I've come to reluctantly acknowledge that isolating yourself is never the right decision. Speaking with someone else even briefly can brighten your day, getting to know someone more than that also enriches your life even if they grow into an issue further down the line. Hawkley and Cacioppo state that "a perceived sense of social connectedness serves as a scaffold for the self, damage the scaffold and the rest of the self begins to crumble" (2010), essentially suggesting that we get stability from the positive presence of other people. That's why even if its not easy I believe caution shouldn't restrict connection.

Bibliography:

Hassane, E. (2025) *Importance of Niyyah in Islam- Why intentions matter*. Available at: <https://sakeenaacademy.com/importance-of-niyyah-in-islam/> (Accessed at: 14 December 2025).

Juniper, A. (2003) *Wabi Sabi The Japanese Art of Impermanence*. Tuttle. Available at: https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WHELF_UWTSD/11c0l68/alma9927868602421

Hawkey, L. and Cacioppo, J. (2010) 'Loneliness Matters: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Consequences and Mechanisms', *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. 40(2), pp. 8-27. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/abm/article/40/2/218/4569527?login=true>

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Figure 1: Sunner, B. (2024) *Cardiff's Evolving Skyline Photograph*. Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/gallery/changing-face-cardiffs-skyline-towering-29047375> (Accessed: 15 December 2025).

Figure 2: Metra, M. (2025) *Black Chawn repaired with Kintsugi technique*. Available at: <https://www.manuelametra.com/en/kintsugi-to-repaire-with-gold/> (Accessed: 14 December 2025)

Figure 3: *Phone Contact Screenshot* (own image, 2025)

Practise-based Writing:



Fig 1, (*Original Character Digital Illustration*, own image, 2022)

Original Characters aren't by any means a new concept, plenty of media forms movies, books and comics feature peoples own imagined characters within their narrative world. The same can be said for myself as during 2020's lockdown I delved into my own interests in all manner of the fantasy genre by illustrating my own original dragon inspired character. I used Ibis Paint on my iPad to bring the idea of what she would look like in my head to life, taking care to use images of people and the closest thing I could find to a dragon (a snake) as references for a more realistic

look. What I realised from this careful observation of several related references was illustrations based in realism were out of my usual comfort zone, however I pushed myself to portray her likeness accurately by contrasting the features I liked from a real person with the inhuman fantastical features of a dragon (horns, scales, slitted pupils).

I remember being extremely proud of the piece once I had finished it especially since it was much more detailed than my usual drawings at the time, despite this the more I looked at it the more faults I found with it eventually growing dissatisfied and not working on it any further. In hindsight I believe the reason I found myself displeased with this piece at the time was because I focused too heavily on realism causing the character to be lacking in any real expression or personality. In my excitement to produce accuracy I overlooked my previous success with pushing the boundaries of what could actually exist, which shows that an emphasis on technical accuracy can limit expressive potential. (Henriksen et al, 2021).

The colour palette primarily consists of a deep green and a warm brown with the red and orange being used as accents. At the time I had an interest in the intentional selection of colour palettes, so I tried to choose complimentary shades unlike my previous attempts with garish eye-catching colours. I still quite like the overall colour scheme since the red I did use ends up bringing the focus to her eyes and mythical features. It was useful practise helping me gain more confidence in choosing cohesive colours and establishing a hierarchy within the design, supporting Itten's discussion of contrast and colour relationships as a way of creating harmony and directing attention (Itten, J., 1970).

I also really enjoy how I shaded the skin, the model I was reference was highlighted in soft warm lighting allowing me to have real fun experimenting with a softer blending brush whilst replicating her shadows and facial structure. Hu & Li (2025) note that working digitally reduced the fear of permanent mistakes these new attempts giving me hope in trying new things and starting off my understanding of rendering without the reliance of line art, I ended up painting more than drawing forcing me to convey the shape and texture of the skin using values rather than relying on simple cell shading.

Overall, I feel I learnt quite a lot about turning my imagination into an actual design as the new things I tried out of excitement and genuine passion pushed me to consider realism in contrast with mythological fantastical aesthetics. This piece really kicked off my interest in character design and digital art leading to several of my own personal and educational projects today. Taking inspiration from reality and other sources that inspire me during my creative process is a step I now value highly assisting me now as well as into the future.

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Hu, B. and Li, Y. (2025) 'The role of digital drawing software in enhancing specific artistic skills and behavioral intentions in art education', *Cogent Education*, 12(1). [Accessed 13 December 2025].

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Itten, J. (1970). *The Elements of Color: A Treatise on the Color System of Johannes Itten, Based on His Book The Art of Color*. Edited (with a foreword and evaluation) by F. Birren, translated by E. van Hagen. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company. https://monoskop.org/images/4/46/Itten_Johannes_The_Elements_of_Color.pdf [Accessed 16 December 2025].

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