Denis Villeneuve's Arrival is a thought-provoking sci-fi masterpiece that shows what the world's reaction may be if extraterrestrial life decided to pay Earth a visit. Though largely based around humanity's reaction to the unknown, such as space aliens, the film's underlying theme begs the question of how and if someone would change their own destiny when seemingly given the opportunity to do so, or if destiny can truly be changed at all. This theme is shown through how the characters communicate with the unknown alien visitors, how the characters interact with each other, and certain choices the protagonist makes.

First off, the theme is introduced through the human interactions with the aliens. Shortly after the protagonists, Banks and Donnelly, arrive at the alien spacecraft, they come in contact with the mysterious creatures behind a glass-like wall, prompting Banks to state "I am human. What are you? Human" (Arrival). As Rangel says, "A language from another planet would challenge all of these characteristics and we would have to start all over from zero" (2016). Derry states that when Banks begins to communicate with the aliens, known as heptapods, she
presents the word "human" on a whiteboard and points to herself, showing the
heptapods what it means to be "human". *Arrival* implies that humanity's main
question for the aliens - “What is your purpose here?” - is perhaps the same
question that humanity should be asking itself (2).

*Arrival's* theme is also presented through how the human characters interact
with each other. Throughout the film, countries from all over the world collaborate
with one another as to better understand the heptapods' unexpected visit.
According to Lucking, "In *Arrival*, the problem of communication is projected
onto the stage of real world events. As tension intensifies all over the planet, the
countries which have formerly been cooperating in the effort to communicate with
the aliens sever video and radio contact with one other, despite Bank's protest that
'We need to be talking with each other'"(134). The theme is also shown in a similar
way when Donnelly tells Banks that she had made the wrong choice when the
heptapods presented Banks the dilemma of choosing between her daughter's
inevitable death or not having a child in the first place.

Finally, the film's theme is shown through the choices Banks makes. Before
the heptapods depart from Earth, they show Banks her future, or destiny, in which
Banks and Donnelly birth a daughter with a terminal illness. This presents Banks
with a choice – have a child only to watch her die young, or never have a child at
all. Banks, of course, chooses to have the child, presenting the question "Was there
really any choice at all, or was it meant to be?" Such a dilemma also begs Banks' question, "If you could see your whole life from start to finish, would you change things?" (*Arrival*).

Ultimately, the theme of *Arrival* seems to link destiny with communication. The film leaves the viewer with the thought that perhaps the way humans decide to interact with one another to share ideas and experiences determines their destiny, or maybe no matter the choices humans make, whatever is supposed to happen will happen in the end.
Works Cited


