

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Michael Crichton is one of the most famous and successful American authors who has created not only best-selling novels but also television series and films. He is unique in the fact that he is also a physician, producer, director, and screenwriter, who has contributed mostly to the science fiction and thriller genre. He was the recipient of Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1968 and the Association of American Medical Writers Award in 1970, and he also received a few awards for his work on the *ER* TV series and *The Great Train Robbery* movie in 1980. Michael Crichton's works are easily recognized from their distinctive style of having very thorough technical details, especially regarding technology. Because of this, Crichton, together with another famous American author, Tom Clancy, is considered the father of the modern techno-thriller. Some of Crichton's techno-thriller novels are also very successful, namely *The Andromeda Strain* (1969), *Jurassic Park* (1990), *Airframe* (1996), *Prey* (2002), *Next* (2006), and *State of Fear* (2004).

The term techno-thriller is used to define a novel, in which the excitement of the plot depends in large part upon the technical details and descriptions of

technology, including computers, weapons, software, military technology, or other machines. (“techno-thriller”) I think that in this modern day, techno-thriller has become a major appeal in the broader scope of the thriller genre. It emphasizes on plausible future technology, hence making it very exciting for many, especially for the increasingly tech-savvy people of today’s society. Furthermore, I believe this appeal is especially true for Crichton’s *State of Fear*.

State of Fear, first published in 2004, sparks controversy about the increasingly significant topic of Global Warming, because it contains Michael Crichton’s provocative point of view regarding the topic. *State of Fear* contradicts the popular belief of Global Warming being a modern-day crisis, and puts up eco-terrorism supported by futuristic technology to emphasize its purpose. Interestingly, *State of Fear* has enjoyed many favourable reviews and been dubbed “one of Crichton’s best” (Kirschling), and it received Geosciences in the Media award by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, or AAPG, in 2006. In my opinion, *State of Fear* truly brims with moments of tension and suspense, and it presents fascinating elaboration of the various technology and technical details.

According to Laurence Perrine, plot is “the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed.” (45) Naturally, the sequence of incidents or events to be discussed in a techno-thriller novel should consist of an element of plot that thrills and brings excitement to the reader and that makes the reader wonder about how the story unfolds. This element, according to Perrine, is what we call suspense. More specifically, Perrine writes that suspense is “the quality in a story that makes the reader ask ‘What’s going to happen next?’ or ‘How will this turn

out?’ and impels him to read on to find the answers to these questions.” (45) However, Perrine also explains that suspense cannot exist if the reader knows exactly what is going to happen in the story and why. Therefore, a good plot also needs a degree of unexpectedness of what happens in the story, which comes in the form of surprise. The element of surprise becomes pronounced when the story deviates widely or departs radically from the reader’s expectation (47).

When we discuss the plot of a story, Artistic Unity is a key element to determine whether it is a good plot or not. Laurence Perrine states that to achieve an Artistic Unity, everything must be relevant to the central intention of the story, contribute to its total meaning, and must also be arranged in the most effective order to make a logical story progression. (49) Therefore, I am interested and deliberately driven to discuss how Michael Crichton’s *State of Fear* delivers the excitement of its plot, which comes through moments of suspense and surprising revelations, and whether the arrangements of the elements of plot sufficiently present an artistic unity or not.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that are going to be analysed in this thesis are:

1. Which parts of the story act as suspense in the novel?
2. Which parts of the story act as a surprise in the novel?
3. How is the artistic unity presented in the novel?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem, this study has the following purposes:

1. To reveal the suspense in the novel
2. To reveal the surprise in the novel
3. To show how the artistic unity is presented in the novel

Method of Research

I use library research in writing my thesis. I begin by reading *State of Fear* as the primary text, followed by classification of data gathered from the novel in accordance with the purpose of the study. Next, I refer to books of theories of literature which serve as the base for my analysis of portrayal. In addition, I search for other references from the Internet to support my analysis. Finally, I draw conclusions based on my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. Chapter One consists of the Introduction, which includes the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problems, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. My analysis on the elements of plot in Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* is in Chapter Two. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. It is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices which consist of Synopsis of *State of Fear* and the Biography of Michael Crichton.