

Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Themes and Conflicts in Michael Crichton's Novels

Bakalářská práce

Autor: Jan David (Anglická – Německá filologie)

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Libor Práger

Olomouc 2012

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne 17.8.2012

\_\_\_\_\_

## Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Biography of Michael Crichton and the Influences of His Life on His Literary Career ....	3
2.1 Michael Crichton’s Life.....	3
2.2 Influences on Michael Crichton’s Work and Choice of Themes .....	6
2.2.1 Childhood and Undergraduate College Experience .....	6
2.2.2 Studies at Harvard Medical School.....	6
2.2.3 Making Movies .....	8
2.2.4 Traveling .....	9
2.2.5 Contact with Psychic Powers .....	10
3. Themes and Conflicts in Michael Crichton’s Works.....	12
3.1 The Andromeda Strain.....	16
3.2 The Terminal Man .....	19
3.3 The Great Train Robbery.....	22
3.4 Jurassic Park .....	24
3.5 Rising Sun and Disclosure.....	29
3.6 The Lost World.....	30
3.7 Airframe.....	32
3.8 Timeline.....	35
3.9 Prey.....	37
3.10 State of Fear.....	41
3.11 Next, Pirate Latitudes, Micro .....	44
4. Conclusion .....	45
5. Resumé.....	47
6. Anotace .....	49
7. Abstract .....	50
8. Bibliography .....	51

## **1. Introduction**

In this thesis, I would like to concentrate on the themes and conflicts in the work of Michael Crichton, a significant American writer of fiction and nonfiction of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, who was called “Father of the techno-thriller”, since he is most famous for writing novels in this specific genre.

Using the novels by Crichton as primary sources, together with secondary literature on Crichton, and Crichton’s words taken from original interviews transcribed from various sources, I will proceed from his personality and the experiences that he went through during his life, as significant for his choice of themes, because there are certain similarities to his life stories and adventures. Further, I will discuss his literary beginnings, family life, literary awards he was awarded, and his interests as well. Crichton had various hobbies and occupations, and this fact was reflected in his works very well. Thus, I will show how these were important and what role they had in the development of his themes.

In the chapter that follows the description of his life, I will discuss some major influences on Michael Crichton’s work and demonstrate their significance on examples of his fiction.

The next chapter will be concerned with the major goal of my thesis, and that is the themes in the fiction by Michael Crichton. Firstly, I will give attention to an important feature of Crichton’s works – his “revitalisations” of classic genres. Secondly, I will deal with the basic characteristics of the genre of techno-thriller. This will be followed by a discussion of whether Crichton’s novels should be regarded as fiction or rather nonfiction. Then I will proceed to elaborating on the themes and conflicts present in concrete Michael Crichton’s novels. I will highlight only novels that were written under Michael Crichton’s real name, because he had written some under pseudonyms before he decided to show his real name. That is why I will choose the ones that were published as “Michael Crichton” novels, as they

are also of major importance and influence on today's literature. I will also point out the development of the themes and the way Crichton diverged from his typical themes to some new ones, because he did not write only in the genre of techno-thriller, but also historical novels for instance.

Thus, this thesis will provide an overall characteristics of Michael Crichton as a person and writer, who has a significant role among today's writers, especially with the width of his themes, which is why he is very close to today's readers.

## **2. Biography of Michael Crichton and the Influences of His Life on His Literary Career**

### **2.1 Michael Crichton's Life**

Michael Crichton was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1942 in Chicago, Illinois, and died on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008. His real, full name was John Michael Crichton. His literary career started already in his university years, especially during his studies at Harvard Medical School, where he also got his M.D. in 1969. He wrote short thrillers to earn for his studies there, together with his wife, who helped him to earn more money, as he said in one of his first interviews: “She [his wife] was working to put me through medical school, and every time the money was about to run out it was time to write another book” (Shenker 4).

Michael Crichton's literary beginnings were very interesting, as Crichton described in one of the interviews in 1969, during his studies at Harvard Medical School: “This spring I freed myself from classes and I wrote like a fiend”, commenting on the fact that he sometimes neglected school for writing and wrote his stories instead of sitting at lectures. As for the way he wrote his first books at that time, Crichton said that he wrote them fast and supposed that the readers would also read them fast, and he thought that he could make books more believable by pretending that the stories had really happened, talking about his novel *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) (Shenker 5-6). From 1969 to 1970, he worked at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, which contributed to his future literary work and his choice of themes, since his first themes were often concerned with medical and biological issues like genetics, cloning, and genetic engineering.

As concerns his family life, Crichton came from a family with 4 children and was married five times. He lived with Joan Radam from 1965 to 1970. After the divorce with her, he married his second wife, Kathy St. Johns, in 1978, but two years later they divorced again. In the following year, he married again, this time to Suzanne Childs. This marriage lasted for

only two years, before he got married to his fourth wife, Anne-Marie Martin, in 1987. This was the first wife with whom he had a child, a daughter named Taylor who was born in 1989. Although this might seem to be a reason for staying in marriage with Anne-Marie Martin, Crichton divorced for the fourth time, in 2002, and started living with his last wife, Sherri Alexander, in 2005, who gave birth to Crichton's only son John Michael Todd Crichton in 2009, the year following Crichton's death of throat cancer in Los Angeles on November 4.

Michael Crichton was awarded several awards during his career. One of the first prizes he was awarded was Edgar Award for the best novel for *A Case of Need*, in 1969. He was named the Writer of the Year in 1970 for his nonfiction called *Five Patients: A Hospital Explained*. In the following year, Crichton was nominated for Edgar Award for the best paperback original for *Grave Descent*. One of the most frequently awarded works by Crichton is *ER*, which was turned into a TV series and debuted between 1994 and 2008. This series was created and co-executive produced by Crichton himself, and this show got twenty-three Emmy Awards. By the end of the twentieth century, over 150 million copies of his novels and other books were in circulation. Crichton's novels have been translated into thirty-six languages (Golla ix). This famous author was called "Father of the Techno-Thriller", a new and very specific genre of fiction, by Tom Clancy (Golla ix). The basic features of this genre will be dealt with in a later paragraph of this thesis. The significance of Crichton and his topics for the world of literature is well represented by the fact that a newly discovered dinosaur was named after Crichton ("Crichtonsaurus bohlini") in 2002, which is a rather symbolic act of honouring Crichton, and also a way of valuing his contribution to the literary field, especially with his most famous and popular novel *Jurassic Park* (1990), full of masterful descriptions of dinosaurs ("Chronology" xiii - xv).

Michael Crichton was a person of many different interests and occupations, because, as Crichton stated, "It was an idea in my family that it was good to have an interest in many

diverse things” (“Michael Crichton” 1993, 11). He did not only manage to be a full-time writer, but he also directed movies, some of which were based on his own scripts. Apart from scuba diving, playing basketball and other hobbies, Michael Crichton was also a great collector of arts – he collected primitive as well as modern arts (*Checklist* 10), and in *Conversations*, we can further read an interesting remark on the interests of Crichton, where he made a kind of joke, concerning his family life as well: “In a biography he prepared for a speech at a convention of psychiatrists he listed his hobbies as ‘scuba diving, tennis, and getting divorced’,” thus regarding his divorces as a typical part of his life (Warga 24). He said that he does not basically have any time not filled with any kind of activity: “When I don’t know what to do, which is the awful time, I read all kinds of things. I just read and read. I’ll read half a book and put it down. I’ll read three books at once. [...] Just all kinds of odd interests” (McGilligan 20).

In the last years of his life, Crichton lived a rather “traditional life” (Trembley 11) with his fifth wife. The way they lived and the house they lived in is described in his words in his article called “Conventional Wisdom”, which Trembley remarks in her book, that since moving there, “nothing has been done. Not even minor cosmetic changes. My office at home has a bare light bulb in the ceiling [...] three years later the bare bulb is still there” (Trembley 11). In the same text, he also discusses the practical advantages of such a kind of living: “You can put your feet up on all the tables and chairs. You can put glasses on all the surfaces. No worrying about wet rings or scratches” (Trembley 11). One of Crichton’s life philosophies was that pleasure comes from “a sense of connectedness with others, some measure of control over one’s life, total absorption in meaningful activity and doing new things”, as Trembley quoted his words from an article called “The Happiness Report” (Trembley 12), which is closely connected with the way he viewed his lifestyle.



## **2.2 Influences on Michael Crichton's Work and Choice of Themes**

According to Trembley, we can find five basic influences upon Crichton's career as a writer, which can be traced from his life experiences. These will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **2.2.1 Childhood and Undergraduate College Experience**

The first of them is his childhood and undergraduate college experience – he was fascinated with “construction and observation of technology, which clearly shows in his works today” (Trembley 2). Crichton was also interested in films and their fantasy. Here, we can see another influence on his writings, because he brought some methods of filming into his writing and so, his novels include “visual, cinematic style that has become Crichton's hallmark” (Trembley 2). Already at the age of fourteen, Crichton wrote a travel article, called “Climbing up a Cinder Cone”, where he used and recorded his experiences from a family vacation, and he published this article in the *New York Times*: “When I was fourteen, I sold an article to the Travel section of the *Times* and got \$60. It kept me in money for a year” (Shenker 4).

In Crichton's autobiographical novel *Travels*, we read that his relationship with his father was one of great significance as well, since his father acted rudely towards his family sometimes, and Crichton was influenced by this fact for a long time (*Travels* 193).

### **2.2.2 Studies at Harvard Medical School**

Because Crichton was discouraged by the grading system at Harvard University, he decided not to study English as a major but instead to combine his love for helping people with the love for science, and thus he wanted to become a physician (*Travels* 4). He began with his medical studies at Harvard Medical School in 1964 and completed them in 1969. In this case, Trembley is talking about the second major influence on Crichton's future career as

a writer. At Harvard Medical School, he could gather all of his opinions on science and physicians, as well as on the ways patients are treated in hospitals, which was later reflected in his work (Trembley 3). Crichton's comment on the behaviour of the doctors makes clear what his opinion was: "How a doctor behaved was at least as important as what he knew" (*Travels* 12). The experience from the medical area was later used as an inspiration for his famous novel, turned into a television series in 1994, called *ER*. Not only that, but Crichton explained what role the medical studies had in his later career as a fiction writer, and what qualities were useful for him: "Medicine is really terrific at teaching you to acquire new skills fast" ("Hollywood" 10).

Michael Crichton's literary attempts started already after his choice not to study English. His first works were written under the pseudonym John Lange – for example his first thriller *Odds On* (1966). It is said that he was able to write approximately 10,000 words per day ("Michael Crichton" 1976, 184). These works were written under various pseudonyms. Under the pseudonym John Lange, he wrote for instance *Scratch One* (1967), *Easy Go* (1968), *Zero Cool* (1969), *The Venom Business* (1969), *Drug of Choice* (1970), *Grave Descend* (1970), *Binary* (1971). Crichton chose pseudonyms, because he did not want his patients to think that he was interested more in their stories for his future books than in their pains and sufferings (Shenker 5). His other novel *A Case of Need* (1968) was published under the pseudonym Jeffery Hudson. One of his novels was completed in co-operation with his brother Douglas (they created their pseudonym as a combination of their first names – Michael Douglas), this work is called *Dealing: Or, The Berkeley-to-Boston Forty-Brick Lost-Bag Blues* (1971). It was created in an interesting way, as Crichton told the interviewer: "I wrote it completely from beginning to end. Now he's rewriting it from beginning to end, and then I'll rewrite it completely. Eventually we'll have a book" (Shenker 6). Out of these works, only *A Case of Need* was republished under Crichton's real name.

At the age of twenty-six, Crichton got a multiple sclerosis diagnose, and that pushed him to an even faster decision to become a full-time writer and thus to use up his activity. Nevertheless, since then, he did not get a single attack of multiple sclerosis anymore (*Travels* 87). At this point, Crichton decided to complete his M.D. and then to leave the medical profession for the one of a writer. This significant decision lead him to a change of attitude towards his patients – he asked them about their feelings about the illnesses and conditions they had, which he used later for creating his first longer work of non-fiction called *Five Patients: A Hospital Explained* (1970), where he showed how important the psychological factors are in dealing with and preventing diseases (Trembley 5). Crichton graduated from medical school in 1969 and was awarded a \$3,000 travel fellowship for his good results, and subsequently he traveled to Europe, where he spent some time teaching anthropology at Cambridge University, since he had also graduated from Harvard University in the same major in 1964 (Shenker 4). When he returned to the United States, he was given a high position at the Salk Institute for biological studies in California (Trembley 6).

### **2.2.3 Making Movies**

Crichton's move to California had another important part in it – he got a chance to make movies, which is seen as the third influence upon his work. His own opinion of films and motivations for creating films are as follows, in his words from an interview from 1969: “If there's something you want to say, no matter how wild, the best way is television” (Shenker 4). He started with observing experienced film-makers at work (for instance the director Robert Wise, who directed the film *The Andromeda Strain* that was based on an eponymous novel by Crichton) until he was able to try to make a film on his own. His reason for starting to direct films on his own was simple – he was not satisfied with the work of the other directors, and that was why he wanted to try that as well: “You write something and you see it made and it isn't what you thought it would be. So you start wanting more and more

control over your work” (“Hollywood” 8). So, in 1972, he directed the television adaptation of his novel *Binary*, followed by *The Great Train Robbery* in 1979 (Trembley 6). Crichton’s commentary of his immediate success in whatever he tried to do shows his true personality and attitude towards success: “I don’t believe in luck. I worked harder than anybody I know – literally, day and night” (Sauter 31). Film-making gave Crichton a new way of writing his fiction masterpieces like *Jurassic Park* – he added a kind of cinematic, visual style, which enabled the readers to imagine Crichton’s scenes almost as if they were played in front of them. Nevertheless, Crichton also experienced some failures concerning his film directing with his films *Looker* (1981), *Runaway* (1984), and *Physical Evidence* (1989). Then, in 1994, Crichton filmed the famous series *ER*, where he used his experience from working in a hospital and analysed the psychological features of the physicians, as well as their skills (Trembley 8).

#### **2.2.4 Traveling**

Nonetheless, Crichton found filming too uncertain and unstable, and so, he started with his other interest, significant for his fiction – traveling. He dedicated his time to traveling so much that he did not publish a single novel between 1976 and 1980 (Trembley 8), which is what Crichton explained: “For three years there were no books, and no films for four years. I read and I traveled. [...] I read about gravitation, dinosaurs, Charles II, Victorian engineering, volcanoes, Antarctica, the American West, Mark Twain, da Vinci, John Singer Sargent. I went to Malaysia and Africa” (Sauter 31). This reading was not only a leisure time activity for Crichton, since he used the majority of his findings and studies in his fiction and non-fiction later. He had various exotic experiences on his travels, he had to keep his head lower than the statue of Buddha when he visited people’s houses for instance, because he was extremely tall (*Travels* 117). One of the important features that influenced his future fiction was that he learned to overcome his fears by traveling, as Sauter remarks: “His travels have forced him to

deal with his fears; a motif that runs through his fiction” (Sauter 33). In his *Travels*, we read that he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro (“My idea of preparation was to quit smoking two days before the climb.’ Halfway up, his shoes were full of blood from the blisters. But he finished the climb” (Sauter 33)), dived with sharks, explored ships in the ocean, hiked through jungles and did many other extraordinary activities. These travels made him realise the differences between the West and the East, as he once said, joking: “Out here we have everything for the body; the ocean, the sex. In the East, they have everything for the head” (Sauter 34), where he means that in Europe people are much more concerned with education and mental subjects than in America for example, where everyone cares mostly for their comfort and wealth. Traveling influenced mainly Crichton’s choice of settings for his novels, as we can see for example in his novels *Sphere* (1987, set mostly on the bottom of the ocean), *Congo* (1980, set in an African rainforest), *Jurassic Park* (1990, set on a remote island) and *Rising Sun* (1992, set in America and Japan).

As for the way *Travels* (his autobiographical novel) was created, Crichton explained that at first, he did not intend on writing his memoirs and travel experiences in a form of a book: “The new book is nonfiction. It’s an autobiographical book and it began as a series of travels pieces. I’ve done a lot of traveling in the last twenty years. Originally, my idea was never to write about it. [... But] it began to seem almost evasive to me that I wasn’t writing about it. So I finally decided that I would” (“Sphere” 40). But once he had written this book, he said in an interview that *Travels* was the very easiest novel he had ever worked on. (Rose 1994, 99)

### **2.2.5 Contact with Psychic Powers**

The fifth influence on Crichton’s life and work, according to Trembley, was his contact with “psychic powers”. With this fact, she means that he visited the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain and wanted to use it in his explorations into the powers of the

mind that can cause diseases and illnesses, as well as affect one's success (Trembley 9). As an example of these spiritual experiences, Crichton always cited his favourite story about his father's spirit. As was stated above, his relationship with his father was rather bad, but it happened to him that he got in contact with his father's spirit once, during some spiritual experiments. He was angry at first at seeing his father, but surprisingly, the spirit of his father embraced him, and "in the instant of that embrace, I saw and felt everything in my relationship with my father, [...], all the love that was there between us, and all the confusion and misunderstanding that had overpowered it. [...] My relationship with my father had been resolved in a flash" (*Travels* 341-342). Crichton himself said that people used to ask him about these experiences, and his words are mentioned in the article by Sauter as well: "So, yes, I have seen visions and heard voices – big, booming voices in my head – and no, I won't tell you what they said because what they said was so banal – 'Brush your teeth every morning;' something as ridiculous as that" (Sauter 32). So he seemed to be making fun of such questions, because he found them irrelevant and difficult to answer, since people around him would have thought that he was insane if he had told them what his visions were like. Nevertheless, this part of his personality was not discussed very much and Crichton himself did not talk about it in the interviews, so we might consider this interest as a rather minor one, in comparison with the other ones.

Michael Crichton also wrote a computer guide for common users, which is called *Electronic Life: How to Think about Computers* (1983). He explained there the work with computers from the very beginning to the most difficult kinds of programming (Trembley 12).

In *Travels* (1988), Crichton tells the story of his life and his career as a writer, as well as all the influences on it, as I have briefly demonstrated in the previous paragraphs.

### **3. Themes and Conflicts in Michael Crichton's Works**

Michael Crichton is the author of numerous novels on various themes. These are linked together with his own life experiences and science which he came to contact with, as was shown in the previous chapter.

An important characteristics of Crichton's works is a certain kind of genre that he should be listed in. By critics, he is considered to be a science-fiction writer, although he once said: "I hate science fiction. I never wanted to be called a science-fiction writer" ("Hollywood" 12). This is true, because, as also Barbara Rose notices in her article about Crichton, "his books have been called science-fiction, but there is more fact in their horrifying details of where advanced technology is taking us than fiction" ("Hollywood" 7). In his novels, he used not only features of science-fiction, but also many of older, classic genres from the past centuries. He admitted that he used older themes to create his "revitalisations" of novels, using the traditional features of literature. This concept of revitalising will be dealt with in the separate chapters on the novels by Michael Crichton. Elizabeth Trembley explores the similarities with the popular genres of the past centuries in more detail.

According to her, the first similarity to these genres that Crichton used in his works is the use of great detail to make a story seem realistic and believable, but still comprehensible to the reader. He reached this perfection by continual studying of the topic he wanted to write about, a long time before he even started writing the first page. Together with images and scientific documents printed in the books as evidence for the arguments, he almost made the readers buy the novels, because they appeared to be very interesting from the first moments (Trembley 27).

The second feature that makes Crichton's novels so exciting and influenced by the literary traditions is the use of short, episodic chapters that concentrate on individual characters or small groups of them, who go through their adventures alone (Trembley 27).

Crichton always describes a short experience of a single character or a group of characters and then, at the most exciting moment, leaves for a different character at a different time or place. This technique makes the readers want to read faster and faster again. This technique is present in many of Crichton's novels, and I will demonstrate it for example in the discussion of *Jurassic Park* or *The Lost World*.

The third typical feature that is common to science-fiction is that characters in the stories seem to be almost invisible or, in other words, not as important as the plot itself. The readers usually remember the disasters that happen throughout the books, but they are hardly able to remember the characters' names (Trembley 27).

What Crichton shared with the tradition of gothic fiction is that he wrote about creatures that are dangerous for people, although they are of human origin – people have created them on their own, without taking the responsibility for their deeds (Trembley 28). This feature will be discussed in greater detail in the concrete chapters on the novels chosen for this thesis.

Another typical feature of Crichton's novels, as I will also discuss later in the thesis, is a certain "playing God" or humans' opinion that they are able to control nature. This fact creates still new disasters in the stories, because humans get in conflict with nature very soon, and that can be seen for instance in the novels like *The Terminal Man* or *Jurassic Park*, as the most obvious examples.

This concept of "playing God" goes closely together with human desire for power and control over others, which is then again a common source of problems and conflicts in the works by Michael Crichton (Trembley 29).

As a result of all these facts, there is always a kind of danger hidden somewhere in the stories that seem surprisingly real and very likely to happen in today's world. This danger can,



and usually does, emerge in moments in the stories, when some of the above mentioned features of human character appear and thus enable the evil to evolve.

It seems then that one of the most significant contributions or characteristics of Crichton's fiction is his combination of traditional genres or forms to create a new novel (or novels, in his case) that will blend the best parts of the traditional forms in favour of a perfect and reality-like story that attracts the readers very quickly.

More than anything else, Crichton is known for being the founder of the genre called "techno-thriller," as stated above. This genre is typical with themes and plots that are usual for thrillers, combined with a very detailed depiction and description of reality and technological development of the current world. This combination makes it difficult to assess the level of the novels on the scale between real vs. unreal, or, in other words, fiction vs. nonfiction.

As a result, there are still discussions whether Crichton wrote fiction or nonfiction. This question seems to be rather wrong. A better question would be which percentage of fiction and nonfiction is used in his novels, since in each of his stories, there are so many technical details and detailed information to the field that Crichton wrote about that it is hard to answer. Nevertheless, the stories are still fiction ones, because they have a plot and include descriptions of feelings and other things that do not admit that the works could be pure nonfiction. As Warga writes in his article that mentions this problem: "Crichton has once again layered nonfiction onto a work of fiction, used the one to illuminate the other" (Warga 22). This fact can be demonstrated on the majority of his novels. Sauter chose *Congo* as an example book to prove that Crichton used a "mix of high adventure [...] and high tech" (Sauter 29), which is basically the same characteristics as the one above, as adventure (or plot in general) might be seen as a representative part of fiction, whereas technologies typically represent the nonfiction part of Crichton's novels. An obvious example of Crichton's usage of nonfiction in his books is the structure of his novels, in which he mostly used a long list of

bibliography used for his detailed study of the scientific field, at the very end of the book, and Crichton was aware that such a case is “certainly an unusual thing to do,” and Swaim’s opinion on the reason for this fact is that “it’s unusual because it makes people think the book is less fiction than it is nonfiction. That’s what nonfiction writers do – they have footnotes and bibliographies and this sort of thing” (“Rising Sun” 43). Nonetheless, Crichton further commented on this feature of his works when he summed up that often fiction novels appear to be more real than certain works of nonfiction (“Rising Sun” 44). With the use of bibliographies, Crichton proved that he had really used a lot of literature to study the scientific sources of information before starting to write his novels on the topic given. To the question how he does his research, Crichton answered in the following way: “When I start to work on a book and work in an area, I am aware of reading and clipping and making notes over a period of years, so that at the time I come to write I don’t have much sense of doing any research at all. I just kind of write it” (“Rising Sun” 50).

In the following part of the thesis, I will discuss and elaborate on the basic themes and characteristics of Crichton’s individual novels to demonstrate the above mentioned features in detail and on concrete examples.

In general, Crichton was always interested in controversial and social topics that were current in his time. We can trace the origins of most of his works in his life, studies at Harvard Medical School and career as a physician. One of Crichton’s first novels concerned with medicine is his *The Terminal Man* (1972). Other topics he covered in his fiction are animal rights in *Congo* (1980), evolution and DNA in *Jurassic Park* (1990), economic relations between Japan and America in *Rising Sun* (1992), sexual harassment and office life in *Disclosure* (1994), airline industry in *Airframe* (1996), teleportation and time traveling in *Timeline* (1999), nanotechnologies in *Prey* (2002), global warming, environment and the influence of politics on science in *State of Fear* (2004), and genetic research and genetic

engineering in *Next* (2006). Crichton also wrote two novels that can be regarded as historical novels – *The Great Train Robbery* (1975) and *Pirate Latitudes* (2009). In his interview with Michael Crichton from 1992, Parker said that “Crichton is fluent in the language of America’s popular nightmares” (Parker 53), which is a very exact characterisation of Crichton’s thematic choice throughout his career. He always studied the topic for a long time before starting to write the first pages of his story, and as a result, he mastered the reality and trustworthiness of his plots which included technical details in every part of the plot. These topics will be elaborated further in this thesis, and I will also concentrate on the comments that Crichton made to the ways he wrote his books. I will concentrate on the novels that Crichton wrote under his real name.

### **3.1 The Andromeda Strain**

For this reason, the first novel that will be mentioned in this thesis is Crichton’s first novel called *The Andromeda Strain*, which was published in 1969. This book was adapted to a film later on as well. This novel was the one whose successful reception among readers helped Crichton decide for a career of a writer instead of one of a physician, although he was in the last year of his studies at Harvard Medical School at the time *The Andromeda Strain* was published (Trembley 31).

Michael Crichton commented on the creation and choice of this theme for a book in the following words: “The story itself was originally suggested by a footnote in George Gaylord Simpson’s scholarly work *The Major Features of Evolution*. Simpson inserted an uncharacteristically lighthearted footnote saying that organisms in the upper atmosphere had never been used by science-fiction writers to make a story” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*).

*The Andromeda Strain* mentions the first of Crichton’s themes in his career as an acknowledged writer of fiction. The novel tries to deal with an unsuccessful space experiment

and the possible negative outcomes and threats of it for the human society. It begins with a spaceship that is sent to the space to gather some extraterrestrial bacteria and carry them to the Earth. These bacteria would be used in production of new biological weapons. The spaceship crashes when it comes to the Earth, and people around are being killed by the bacteria. The scientists try to destroy the material in an underground laboratory, so that as few people as possible are endangered by the bacteria.

One of the significant conflicts in this story is the problem of mankind threatened by the disease that is brought to the Earth in the spaceship. The fact that the disease mentioned is of unknown origin makes this conflict even bigger, because the uncertainty poses new problems all the way through the novel. One thing that the scientists can find out about the bacteria is the way it kills the people around – it kills them with clotting their blood immediately after the contact. The organisms that are so dangerous include no amino acids, as the scientists find out after some time of studying them, and they cannot be destroyed by nuclear power, for example, because in fact, they seem to get energy from reactions like those.

Here, we can see another problem that Crichton writes about – the danger of nuclear power, since there is an atomic bomb in the laboratory, which, in case of explosion, would pose a threat for the whole society on the Earth. So, Crichton also warns against the misuse and negative aspects of modern technologies and powers, which is a theme that we can find in the majority of novels by Crichton.

Crichton proved to have studied all the relevant scientific sources before starting to write the book, since he described the way the disease can be prevented in a very detailed way. One of the scientists in the story, Mark Hall, discovers that it can be done by controlling one's levels of bodily pH. He finds this out after seeing only two persons alive in the town – a small boy who cries all the time and thus, its blood contains too little acid for the bacteria to

survive, and an old man, who drank a special drink during the exposure and as a result, his body contained too much acid for the bacteria. So they find out that the bacteria can live only in limited levels of the pH in human and animal blood.

Trembley notices another conflict in the story, which is rather logical – the conflict between the scientists and time. They do not have enough time to relax for a minute, because they would otherwise lose their chance to destroy the ever evolving organism (Trembley 33).

There is another conflict in the story, apart from the one mentioned above, and that is between the scientists and the US Government. The scientists want the President to use an atomic bomb in Piedmont (the town this all happens in) to destroy the disease, as they do not know that this would in fact help the disease spread even more. Nevertheless, the President, who does not want an international affair going on in the USA, does not do anything. This decision can have two points of view, if we mention them on the polarity between “positive” and “negative”. The decision is positive, because the inaction of the President prevents the strain from growing as the consequence of the contact with nuclear power. Nonetheless, it is also negative, since it gives time for the strain to spread on larger areas. From this point of view, the reader can notice a conflict between the “right” and “wrong” decisions of the government, although on the other hand, no decision appears to be correct in the situation. Trembley also comments on this conflict: “The conflict between the government’s agenda and the well-being of Americans focuses on the danger people are in” (Trembley 36). This fact should warn people against the secret decisions of governments and scientists, who in fact do not care about the well-being of average Americans and people in the world in general. This major theme is present also further in Crichton’s works like *The Terminal Man* (1972) and *Jurassic Park* (1990).

### 3.2 The Terminal Man

After the immediate success of *The Andromeda Strain*, Crichton wrote another novel that shares some of the themes of the previous novel. *The Terminal Man* was written in 1972. In that year, critics were very enthusiastic about this book, they found it “one of the season’s best” (Trembley 47).

Before writing about the plot and basic themes and conflicts in this story, I will quote Crichton’s commentary on the way he was inspired to write this novel: “In the 1970s I saw a patient in a hospital who was being treated with electrodes implanted in the brain, hooked up to a monitoring computer. I thought this treatment was horrific, and I was amazed that the research seemed to be going forward with no public discussion or even knowledge. I decided to write a novel to make such procedures better known” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*). Here, we can see again, how much Crichton was influenced by his work in the hospital.

The story of *The Terminal Man* is set in a hospital most of the time, where doctors implant electrodes into the brain of Harold Benson, who suffers from violent seizures, and the doctors want to find a way to help him stop these seizures with the influence of the electrodes giving impulses to his brain. With his brain connected to the machines, Benson seems to represent an organism that is a combination of a human and machine rather than a pure man, which affects his behaviour in a significant way as well. This is one of (if not the most important) message that Crichton gives to the reader throughout this novel – the man is connected with a machine and thus, he is difficult to control and, talking on a more general level, technologies as such are hardly controllable by humans from a certain point of development.

As concerns the plot of this novel, it “develops primarily from the heritage of classic science fiction [and] adds the flavour of twentieth-century thrillers” (Trembley 47). It is remarkable that Crichton, like in many other of his novels, used classic themes from older

literature and actualised them in his modern stories, as he admitted as well: “All the books I’ve written play with preexisting literary forms” (Trembley 27), since “I think everyone needs limitations in which to work and I find mine within pre-existing structures” (McGilligan 19). So, just as he is supposed to have used *The War of the Worlds* by H.G.Wells to write his *The Andromeda Strain*, he “updated” Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in *The Terminal Man* (Trembley 26). What these novels have in common is that they depict the struggle between man and nature in the sense that people want to make creatures better and stronger than humans. This pattern is present in *The Terminal Man* as well, since the scientists in the Neuropsychiatric Research Unit really aim to create smarter people and do that with connecting their brains with computers, as they do with Harold Benson, who had a car crash and as a result, has his brain affected and gets into seizures of rage and violence, trying to murder people around him. Scientists believe that they can easily manipulate his brain by stimulating the pleasure centres of his brain. Because he is desperate, he agrees to be connected to the computer and thus, to become partly a man and partly a machine. Nonetheless, the scientists soon lose their control over their creation, as it happens in the other classic stories.

From this point of view, we can find a certain “conflict of individual versus individual” in the story, because the scientists want to retain their control over the newly created man-machine (Trembley 48). They do not approach their creations like human beings – they treat them more like animals without any emotions or feelings, which results in a logical reaction of the patients – they become violent again, since they do not like such a kind of living, if this can be called “living” at all. Here, we can see that the doctors wanted to create better humans and get rid of their violent behaviour, but they acted wrong and created the same, if not even worse violence actively on their own.

In the resulting situation, the scientists help neither themselves nor their patients, they make everyone unhappy and dissatisfied. In this sense, Crichton again warns against the misuse and threats of modern technologies and scientific studies and their negative effect on ordinary, average people.

Yet there is another conflict according to Trembley, who writes that “another conflict common to such novels is that of the creating scientist versus other scientists,” where she speaks about the opposition between the staff at the Neuropsychiatric Research Unit and the psychologist Janet Ross, arguing that “she [Janet Ross] embodies the moderation that is the theme of this novel, continually trying to do the right thing both for progress and for humanity” (Trembley 49). In the opposition to Janet, the other doctors only want to pursue their medical careers without caring about the patients.

At the end of the story, we can also find another conflict – the one of Janet Ross and Harold Benson. Although Ross tries hard to help and support Benson as her patient, she cannot resist his violence seizures, initiated by the mechanisms in his brain that has adapted to the amount of electrodes influencing his behaviour. Thus, Benson tries to kill her during one of these seizures, and she has a choice to save either her patient or herself. In the very tense situation at the end of the book, she eventually decides to defend herself and kill Benson. This is the most difficult decision for her, since Benson can be seen as her “child” almost, because she “created” him. Nevertheless, she cannot do anything else than to kill Benson if she wants to survive, which is one of the most important things for all the people in that situation.

Thus, in this novel, Crichton shows again the threats of modern technologies for humanity, and wants to warn people in the world to become more aware of researchers’ work, their successes, but even more, their failures and dangers of such wrong decisions like those in *The Terminal Man*. One of the ways Crichton makes readers believe his statements about science is the use of images and for example “a page of real brain X rays,” as Trembley



quotes Sheppard's words (Trembley 54). The essential problem of science and its negative outcomes is the fact that the majority of scientists are not controlled for errors and so, the mistakes can occur more and more often. The solution is a deeper interest of the public in science and its problems, to make scientists aware of the necessity of their responsibility for their acts and decisions (Trembley 55). It is typical for Michael Crichton that he returned and revitalised themes from older classic novels and also his own works. It is not different with the themes in *The Terminal Man* – Crichton used the theme of necessity of responsibility of scientists further for example in his most popular novel called *Jurassic Park*.

### **3.3 The Great Train Robbery**

Three years after the publication of his *The Terminal Man*, Crichton diverged from the previous themes and topics of his works in a significant way. Until that time, he wrote mostly about technology and science and their threats for mankind. Before he continued in writing these themes again later on, he took an attempt at creating a historical novel as a very different genre from those he wrote earlier. These attempts resulted in 1975 in the successful publication of *The Great Train Robbery*, which is thus not regarded as a science-fiction novel but a piece of adventure historical fiction, since it is based on a real incident.

*The Great Train Robbery* begins with a criminal named Edward Pierce, who wants to steal gold from a train full of gold, which is supposed to be secured very well against thieves and robbers. He works together with a group of people who want to act against the Victorian society and its values. The first parts of the story are concerned with the preparatory works for the robbery, including the finding of the right people to do the jobs needed to get close to the train and its contents, especially to make copies of the four keys they will need to open the safe inside the train. Each of these activities is described in a masterful way by Crichton, so that the reader gets a feeling that Crichton must have taken part in the action or at least lived in the Victorian period. The whole story is written in dialect and slangs, which contributes to

the trustworthiness of the whole novel. Michael Crichton explained his attitude towards creating such a realistic novel in these words: “I sought to create a coherent idea about a time and a world that was internally consistent” (Mc Gilligan 18). While searching for the four keys, Pierce finds out that some of them are the property of highly respectable Victorian people, who seem to be unreachable, because they are hidden behind their masks of morality, so Pierce has to find their weaknesses to get an idea how to make them trust him in order to be able to get the keys as well. These situations can be viewed as examples of first conflicts in this story.

Nonetheless, these are not the last ones that happen to the group of robbers lead by Edward Pierce, since there are many more later in the next sections of the book. These conflicts are caused more or less by chance, but represent ones that are of crucial importance for the success of the robbery. Although he has hard times trying to survive and overcome all of the obstacles, he always succeeds.

In the following part of the novel, Crichton describes the robbery itself in “breathtaking detail”, as also Trembley notices in her book (Trembley 66). The obstacles here are present in the form of the best security technologies of the Victorian time that the robbers have to overcome and break to get the gold they aim for.

After gaining the gold from the train, Pierce has to overcome his biggest conflict, which is his trial and arrest for a robbery. The conflict has two sides – on the one hand, Pierce has the gold, but on the other hand, he cannot enjoy it when he is arrested in a prison, as Trembley remarks, when she writes: “The final part of the novel focuses on Pierce’s arrest and trial, probably the most difficult obstacle he must overcome to achieve his goal. While he has the money well hidden, he obviously cannot enjoy it from jail” (Trembley 67).

From the descriptions above, it seems that Crichton’s major theme of *The Great Train Robbery* might be the Victorian period, its hypocrisy and class distinctions, because Crichton

writes about the ways the upper-class people behave and what they think of themselves, he also criticises the police and the way they appear to almost terrorise the lower classes that are treated badly whether they did something wrong or not (Trembley 69-70). So, the theme of class distinctions and inconsistencies within Victorian society with respect to justice is the most significant of the themes.

### **3.4 Jurassic Park**

After the publication of his other novels *Eaters of the Dead* (1976, not so successful, describing medieval Vikings fighting against cannibalistic mist monsters, and taking the story of *Beowulf* as an inspiration), *Congo* (1980, moving from urban settings to rain forests of Africa, conflicting the American heroes with the wild animals and strange inhuman forces that kill the people while they search for diamonds) and *Sphere* (1987, bringing scientists in contact with a huge spaceship below the surface of the Pacific Ocean, where there is a sphere inside that does not seem to have a specific purpose, and showing the ways the people behave in unknown situations), Crichton took interest in a different theme that had not yet been written about by him so far – he is said to have “revitalised themes from Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau*” (Trembley 27) in his *Jurassic Park*, which was published in 1990. This novel was later turned into a successful movie which added fame to this masterpiece by Crichton. Copies of *Jurassic Park* were supposed to take up about 42 percent of the sold paperbacks by Crichton that were in print by 1990s (Trembley 119). At the same time, Crichton was known as the only living author who had ever published two bestselling novels in just one year – *Jurassic Park* and *Rising Sun* (Checklist 9).

About the creation of his *Jurassic Park*, Crichton once wrote: “Over the years, I’ve come to rely on five or six people who read my drafts; generally they have a range of responds. Not this time. They were all in agreement: they hated *Jurassic Park*” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*). We can see how differently the various versions of the same

book were looked at, before Crichton wrote the last and final version of that story, which became one of the most popular books of our time.

What *Jurassic Park* shares thematically with its supposed pre-existing form in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is the notion of a creator of a monster or more generally a creature that turns out to run out of control of its creator, who does not consider his responsibilities for the safety of humankind in advance and as a result, threatens the whole world (in a more or less wide sense of the word). This is what Crichton said in his words: “I am worried about scientific advances without consideration of their consequences” (Rezek 152).

As concerns a brief description of plot, *Jurassic Park* is concerned with the person of John Hammond, a rich entrepreneur, who begins cloning dinosaurs successfully. He wants to open a wildlife park that would show the live dinosaurs to the public. Nonetheless, there appear some worries about the safety of the system from some of the experts that arrive to the island where the park is to be placed in the future. Throughout the story, these worries prove to have been right, since the experts experience real horrors during their way through the island.

The plot of *Jurassic Park* is constructed by short, episodic chapters that enabled the author to create very exciting episodes that are always finished at the most exciting moments to gain the attention of readers. The story is written from perspectives of each character’s point of view, the characters encounter various experiences on their own, so the reader is excited when there will be another part of the story of a single character, since there are many other episodes described in the meantime, concerning the other characters, making the readers read on and on.

Another part of creating the plot that is typical for *Jurassic Park* according to Trembley is the use of a special structure: “Crichton further produces a gripping plot by carefully constructing cause and effect. His straightforward, almost cinematic presentation

clearly indicates how one mishap or judgment in error leads to another” (Trembley 120). This adds on the fact that everything that happens on the island has a reason and that every wrong decision leads to negative consequences.

As for the basic conflicts in *Jurassic Park*, we can find for example the one between a man and nature that is one of major importance in the story. This conflict is best represented by the fact that the scientists believe that they are able to create dinosaurs and control their behaviour in a way that will prevent them from escaping from the island or reproducing and thus threatening the humankind. Nevertheless, nature does not let itself be ruled by humans and so, the dinosaurs always find their way to overcome the obstacles, since they are living creatures and as such, they are able to evolve and adapt to new conditions. In this sense, the scientists do not succeed in this conflict with nature. Biodrowski’s opinion on the theme of *Jurassic Park* is that Crichton is “portraying the havoc that erupts when scientists meddle in things they were not meant to experiment with,” and further, he says that the book’s theme is “that there are limits to our ability to understand and control the world and that science, whose premise is that we can understand and control everything, is an outdated system that needs to be replaced by a new paradigm” (Biodrowski 59).

Trembley comments on a further conflict: “The second major conflict of *Jurassic Park* involves the individual versus society. This is most prominent when an individual’s self-interest conflicts with consideration for others” (Trembley 121). She means to say that anytime an individual decides to do something without hesitation about the fortunes of the others, it always ends badly, like when Hammond decides to open the park for the public, although the experts are of the opposite opinion – they think that it would be a risk to do so. This decision proves to be one of the most significant ones for the future experiences of the group. Here, we can see that Hammond acted on his own as an individual, not taking into account what the others advised him to do – or (more exactly said) not to do.

On the other hand, whenever an individual decides to take a risk in favour of the group, they seem to succeed. Thus, Crichton shows that it is always more suitable to act in the interests of a larger unit than only one's personal desires. As an example, Trembley chooses a situation in which Alan Grant risks his own life for the safety of the children when he could escape from the dinosaurs, but they would kill the children instead of him. So he does not escape and this proves to be a good decision not only for the children, but also for him and the others in the end (Trembley 121).

In *Jurassic Park*, Crichton opens a new debate on a new topic he has not discussed before in his novels – bioengineering and cloning. He does not only describe the way cloning is done, but he also shows the negative aspects of cloning dinosaurs from their prehistoric DNA and the risks of bringing them to life again in totally new and different conditions than they used to live in. He warns that such experiments might – and to a certain degree already do – affect safety of humans and threaten them, since humans cannot hope to be able to control nature in such a degree that they can make the dinosaurs do and behave in whatever way people would like them to. This basic message is common to other novels from the past centuries as well. In the case of *Jurassic Park*, there are visible thematic correlations with novels like *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley or H.G.Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. The only solution of the dangerous situation in *Jurassic Park* is, according to Crichton and his character Ian Malcolm from the book, to admit that humans cannot and will never be able to control nature in a way that would bring positive results to their experiments instead of those negative presented in the novel. Moreover, Trembley uses the argument that “we have the power to save ourselves, but we choose not to” (Trembley 127). This is obvious for example in the fact that Malcolm warns the other scientists against the outcomes of their experiments all through the novel, but they do not

listen to him and seem to be doing the very opposite of what he tells them. In this sense, they really reject their chance to be rescued, as Trembley says in the previous quotation.

Secondly, Crichton stresses the importance of common people's knowledge and possibility of insight into the work of scientists, because the scientists have a feeling that they can do almost whatever they want, without taking care of other people's interests and needs. He also said once that "just as war is too important to leave to the generals, science is too important to leave to scientists," where he supported this idea (Trembley 128). This is why some scientists might feel frightened by such attempts to control scientific research, because they try to say that letting people take a look at their work would mean the end of development, as they would ruin their experiments (Trembley 128). Nevertheless, in his "Heart Transplants and the Press", as Trembley writes, Crichton hoped that "public involvement in medical research will be greater now than it was, which may turn out to be a very good thing," showing an opposite opinion on this problem than scientists themselves (Trembley 130). This fact is applicable to the participation of readers in the plot of a story, because they are almost as important as the writer himself, as the author admitted: "That's the quality I want to get – total involvement. [...] That's what I mean by having an effect – getting people to participate – and it isn't easy. I have to admit I'm interested in audience manipulation" ("Hollywood" 9).

Crichton's details on dinosaur cloning are surprisingly accurate, which makes the novel even more fascinating, since some experts have stated that real dinosaur cloning could really happen in the future according to Crichton's procedures, and that it would be possible to carry out the methods in reality, as for example Stephen Jay Gould, a naturalist, said that Crichton's *Jurassic Park* is "the best possible scenario for making dinosaurs", which Trembley remarks in her book (Trembley 129). Mark Norrell from the American Museum of Natural History also said more to this topic: "It'll be done very shortly. And that's not really

an issue if it can be done; it's when it will be done", which is a significant quotation of an article called "Could *Jurassic Park* Become a Reality?" that Trembley used in her book as well (Trembley 129). Knopf summarised this fact by defining the style of *Jurassic Park* as "an almost documentary style that leads you to believe that living dinosaurs are a real possibility" (Knopf 435).

*Jurassic Park* has become so popular that it does not exist only in the form of a novel and successful film adaptation, but it is also an inspiration for various souvenirs for the fans of the book. As examples, I may mention the Universal Studios' theme park with life-size dinosaurs, and books that are inspired by *Jurassic Park – The Making of Jurassic Park* by Don Shay and Jody Duncan, or *The Dinosaurs of Jurassic Park* by Wendy Larson, which are concerned with the movie especially, and the way it was directed and made. Another book of the same kind is also *Find Your Way to the Lost World: Jurassic Park* by Lara Rice Bergen that "let readers choose from five different plot endings" (Checklist 48). There are still other objects of interest for children, like small figures and miniatures of the story's heroes and animals, "hats, T-shirts, watches and necklaces, stickers, posters and even key chains," except for computer games (Checklist 49).

The two major themes I have discussed in this chapter on *Jurassic Park* – human attempts to take control over nature ("playing God"), and the necessity of scientists' responsibility for their acts – are common for many of Crichton's novels. I will come back to them in the concrete examples later as well.

### **3.5 Rising Sun and Disclosure**

Before coming back to the theme of cloning dinosaurs in *The Lost World*, Crichton explored some new fields in his next literary works. The first of them was his *Rising Sun* (1992), which is a detective novel that deals with economic concerns of the contemporary world, especially the economic relations between America and Japan. Although he had



already written some detective stories like *A Case of Need* or *The Great Train Robbery*, *Rising Sun* is supposed to be his best detective story and thus a kind of a new genre for him.

The second of the books preceding *The Lost World* was *Disclosure*, published in 1994. This novel features an untraditional story – sexual harassment on the work place, but in this case, the gender roles seem to be swapped. There is a woman that harasses her male employee. So, Crichton presented a new theme in this book, and that is the one of the alterations of genders and their roles in the contemporary world.

### **3.6 The Lost World**

After the above mentioned attempts to move towards detective stories, Crichton did something that had never been seen in his career as a writer so far – he wrote a sequel to his novel *Jurassic Park*, called *The Lost World*. The reason why Crichton had never written a sequel up to that point was that he did not like repeating himself and writing similar stories. He liked trying new things in his life, which was reflected in his “desire to have fresh problems” in his novels (McGilligan 15). Nevertheless, he used to get many letters from his fans, asking him to write a sequel to *Jurassic Park*. (Rose 1995, 102) As a result, he did publish *The Lost World* as a sequel, and this book went into sell five years after finishing *Jurassic Park*, in 1995.

In one of the internet commentaries of Crichton on his own books, he wrote that he wondered why people were so interested in dinosaurs all the time, and he also offered an answer: “Why are people so interested in dinosaurs? Why are we so fascinated by these giant vanished creatures from the past? There are many reasons, but the I believe most compelling is that the dinosaurs confront us – directly and unavoidably – with the reality of extinction” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*). This fact was one of the motivations that made Crichton write a sequel to his famous *Jurassic Park*, together with the letters from his fans. Additionally, there was later another problem of how to call the new novel, but because

Crichton loved stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, and especially his series called *The Lost World*, he was inspired by this title, and used it for his book as well (Rose 1995, 107).

*The Lost World* features the same hero – Ian Malcolm, who is drawn into a new adventure by Richard Levine, a palaeontologist, and they set out to study dead bodies of dinosaur-like creatures on the banks of Costa Rica and to study them in the wild as well. Again, they have to fight with these animals and a competitive bioengineering firm called Biosyn, which wants to steal the know-how of the programme for cloning of dinosaurs.

Critics did not like this novel very much at first. They thought that it was rather a new adaptation of the previous and very successful *Jurassic Park*, since it repeated the majority of the themes present in it (Trembley 160). Crichton reacted on various negative comments of the new sequel in the following words, where he explained his attitude and partly a definition of a sequel, as compared to the previous novel: a sequel is supposed to present “a very difficult structural problem because it has to be the same, but different. And if it’s really the same, then it’s the same, and if it’s really different, then it’s not a sequel” (Rose 1995, 103). Thus, Crichton defended his work, saying that *The Lost World* could not be less similar to *Jurassic Park* than it is, because otherwise, it would be no sequel anymore.

The conflicts presented in this novel are the same as in *Jurassic Park* – scientists fighting against wild animals and dinosaurs or scientists fighting with Biosyn, the firm that wants to steal the dinosaur-cloning programme, or scientists in conflict with nature. Crichton attracts the readers with the same technique as in *Jurassic Park* – he created the story by separating the heroes into smaller groups that experience various adventures on their own, and by describing the (mis)fortunes of each of them, which makes the readers excited about the next chapters at the end of the previous ones.

Nonetheless, there exist still new themes in *The Lost World*, which Trembley notices in her book. In her opinion, Crichton’s theory that extinction of species is caused by

behaviour rather than by environmental influences carries a significant symbolic meaning for the humans – they can prevent their own extinction if they behave so-to-say in concord with nature as the supreme power that rules them, not vice versa (Trembley 169).

In addition, Crichton also seems to warn against the high level of technology usage (like in the majority of his works), but this time he talks about the use of cybernetic technologies like the World Wide Web. He argues that the more we use computers and the internet to be connected with people around us, the closer the world cultures are getting and there is then the danger of cultures becoming too alike, while we, as a species, would need the very opposite, which is diversity. Diversity is thus necessary for survival of a species, which is not true so much about humans according to Crichton, who presents this argument through the eyes of Malcolm, who says that “cyberspace means the end of our species” (*The Lost World* 311).

This message is typical for Michael Crichton’s works (not only *The Lost World*), since he always tries to give a warning to the reading audience, and these warnings concern various aspects of technological development in general. His next book is not an exception to this rule.

### **3.7 Airframe**

While Crichton’s previous two famous novels *Jurassic Park* and *The Lost World* were concerned with dinosaur cloning, and *Rising Sun* and *Disclosure* took a different thematic direction than is common with Crichton’s works, the author came back to his major genre, and that is the “techno-thriller.” He used this genre in one of his further novels called *Airframe*, which was published only a year later than *The Lost World*, in 1996, so we can see how productive Crichton was.

*Airframe* was written and chosen as a possible topic for a next book quite by chance, as it happened more often with Crichton. In short, he told the readers how this story was

chosen: “*Airframe* began with a real incident, which came to my attention in an unexpected way. A friend of mine who works in aerospace called up and said, ‘You’ll never believe what just happened yesterday. [...]’ And he proceeded to tell me a chilling story of an international flight in which several passengers were killed in mid-air, because of what was later called ‘turbulence’” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*). And so, this incident inspired Michael Crichton to writing a similar story on his own in order to explore a new field – aerospace industry and its failures. He described a plane crash and the ways such crashes were solved in America. In this story, he also fulfilled one of his dream topics, since he had always wanted to write something about media and a phenomenon that he called “tabloidization” (Rose 1996, 120).

At the beginning of the story, there is a plane crash of a highly secure airplane that is supposed never to fail in its flights. Nevertheless, it does happen, and there begins a race of the company against the travellers and other firms producing airplanes, because there is a high risk of losing a very important business deal with China, if they found out what happened with their plane. The crash seems to be inexplicable, since the pilot and the passengers give different versions of the story, and so, it becomes obvious that there might have been a technical failure on the plane. Nevertheless, the failure proves to be not on the side of the producer of the airplanes, but on the side of the captain of the flight, since he had allowed his son to take control over the flight, although he had no experience with that kind of a plane. His son was a pilot himself, but did not know the new systems on the plane, so he reacted in a wrong way to a banal and common mistake, which caused the disaster. So, the company is saved, because they are able to prove that the mistake was not in the technologies used by their firm to create the plane, and the business with China is ready to be done.

There is a conflict for example between the members of the company producing the planes, and members of another company that waits for their mistakes in order to be able to overtake the business deal with China instead of them.

Another conflict is between the firm and the media, since the media try to make up stories about how the crash could have happened, and so they make the situation even harder and more complicated for the aerospace firm.

One of the major themes in this novel is airline safety and responsibility for one's decisions, as shown in some of the previous novels by this author. This responsibility may be demonstrated on the fact that the inexperienced pilot should not have taken control over the plane, if he did not know the systems. Even though, he did, and as a result, he threatened many human lives, together with the good reputation of the firm, which, in these terms, seems to be a rather minor problem, but a big one for the economics in the wider sense.

I would say that another theme that is really close to today's people, and especially celebrities and popular figures, is the use of power by the media. They want to get as good stories as possible, and forget the outcomes of their desires to shock the audiences. In this story, they make the situation only more and more difficult, as there occur still new problems because of their finding new and new "truths" about the case, and the solving of the disaster becomes more and more difficult. In this sense, the media are one of the most powerful participants of the conflicts, as they are able to change the course of the story very well.

From the development of the plot, we can also easily draw another theme, which is common for the majority of Crichton's books, concretely the one of failures of people in the relation between them and the machines they created. They appear to be losing their control over their own products and more generally creatures, which seem to behave in their own ways. In this book however, the mistake is a combination of a human's error of decision, and an error in the reaction of the plane's systems to that decision. In this sense, the human-

machine relationship is brought to an even closer contact, as the failure of the systems would never have happened without the mistake of the pilot.

Political power and the power of companies are depicted here very well as well. The conflict between the two companies carries the story towards new troubles, in the same way as the conflict with the media world. The media problem appears to be a kind of a new and significant topic in Crichton's fiction – it is interesting for the reader, because it is a very current affair that brings the readers even closer to the story, which was one of the primary goals of Crichton, as I have shown earlier.

### **3.8 Timeline**

In 1999, Crichton again changed his interest in technical themes for a different one – he took the theme of time traveling for his next book, *Timeline*. The choice of the major theme for his novel might have been influenced by the above mentioned desire of Crichton to re-work the classic themes by older generation writers. In the case of *Timeline*, Crichton apparently used one of the ideas of the author he had used before already, and that is H.G. Wells's *Time Machine* (1895), where we can also find the basic theme of time traveling.

As concerns the little story about how this novel was written, Crichton wrote: “As with many of my books, *Timeline* began with a question I wanted to answer for myself. In this case, the question was very broad: what was it like to live in the Middle Ages?” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*) More concretely, he wanted to write about life in the fourteenth century (Cowan 193). In the plot of the novel, we can see that Crichton answered this question in a great way not only to himself, but also (and mainly) to the reader. And he followed to the same problem in another internet source: “In *Timeline*, I tried to capture the experience of technologists at the turn of every century: they don't know what is coming, but they know it will overturn the past. [...] Time travel was my choice” (*BookBrowse*).

The plot begins with a professor named Edward Johnston, who carries out research in French sites, together with many historians and archaeologists, and his students among them. The professor goes away from the site one day, leaving the other scientists where they are. A few days later, the students find out that the professor used his journey to travel in time, and thus use the technology of quantum technology and teleportation. The students decide to go and try to find him in the past, since he got to France during the year 1357. They are successful in their travel in time, but not so successful in their operation to find the professor, as they are captured by a group of horsemen, who also destroy their only chance to get back to the present – the time machine. After many days of fighting for their lives, the heroes finally manage to get back to the present thanks to the fact that their time machine was repaired in the end, but not all of them do get back. One of them, André, wants to stay in the past with his beloved Lady Claire. So they all get back to the present and later find a grave of André and Lady Claire, where they read an inscription that is a proof of André and Claire's satisfied life in the past.

In this novel, as the most significant theme, Crichton wanted to highlight the significance of history on the one hand, and on the other hand the fact that time traveling would not be able to solve any historical situations and failures, because an action of one single character or group of characters in the past cannot change the course of the whole history of mankind. Moreover, they would make still new and new mistakes themselves and so, mistakes would be repeated after each other, without a chance to improve anything from the past. Also, people in the present can hardly assess the situations that were common in the past, since their lives are very different today than they used to be in the past centuries. As a result, actions which do not look dangerous for today's people can easily seem dangerous for the ones from the history, and they can feel threatened and as a reaction, try to fight the "aliens" in their world, as it also happens in *Timeline*.

Another possible theme that has a source in the previously mentioned theme might be the one of communication, especially communication problems. In *Timeline*, these are represented by the persons from the present, as opposed and conflicted with those from the past. All the way through the novel, these two groups undergo certain misunderstandings, which have their roots in the fact that they have different cultures and use different kinds of language (or at least different varieties of the same language, because there were some differences between the French language of the present and the past) and also they try to be friendly towards each other, but the older generation of the French do not understand some features of today's behaviour, and thus, these hints become sources of troubles.

Again, Crichton used so many details in the description of medieval France that the reader gets a feeling as if Crichton had been to that place and time in reality, not only in the book. Crichton also described how he worked with these details, and how he created the atmosphere of the story: "I would be searching for specific details that were often very hard to obtain. How did they clean their armour? What did they have for breakfast? [...]" (Cowan 193). With these descriptions and accurate studies of the French history, Michael Crichton answered his question which he posed for himself at the beginning of writing this novel, not only well, but in a masterful way that is common to the nonfiction characteristics of his books.

### **3.9 Prey**

Three years after the publication of his *Timeline*, in 2002, Michael Crichton changed his topic again, and started writing a novel on a completely new one, which corresponds to his trend towards non-repeating of his themes during his career. This novel, called *Prey*, is one of the most typical examples of Crichton's genre of the techno-thriller, showing one of the highest amount of technological information and details of all his works ever written, since this novel is concerned with nanotechnologies and the outcomes of their usage in today's



world. The theme of this novel was well explained in the short but exact words in an interview, when the interviewer said that “in *Prey*, Crichton spins out a chilling worst-case scenario for nanotechnology” (Marshall 196). To the change of topic, there is an interesting commentary in one of the conversations with Michael Crichton: “In his latest book, *Prey*, Crichton moves from telling stories of giant lizards to tiny robots” (Cowan 191).

On his official website, Michael Crichton explained, why he had chosen to write on this specific topic of scientific research: “In the case of *Prey*, I was interested in knowing where three trends might be going – distributed programming, biotechnology, and nanotechnology” (*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*). So, like in case of *Timeline*, Crichton’s primary motivation towards writing a new novel was basically to answer a scientific question that interested him.

In this story, there are two major characters – Jack Forman and his wife Julia. Jack becomes a house-husband after losing his job as a programmer in a firm, and Julia is the one who earns money for the family (they have small children) by working as an employee of a nanotechnology firm called Xymos. Julia starts to alienate from her husband, and tells him all the time that her firm is about to create a new product very soon and that is why she spends whole days, and sometimes even nights, in the laboratory in Nevada. After Julia comes to have a car accident which she survives, Jack is offered a job at Xymos as well, and he starts taking a tour through the laboratory in the Nevada desert. During one of them, he finds out that the nanoparticles, together with some other dangerous material, have escaped into the desert, since the safety systems have failed for a while. The nanoparticles start evolving very fast, and they become autonomous, since the programme they were created with was based on the models of natural behaviour of animals, like swarming, predator-prey relations, and other features that the nano-swarm soon learns to use and thus poses a great threat for the humankind. It is also dangerous, because the swarm is able to change its behaviour and adapt

to new conditions, and in this sense, it gradually becomes rather like a living organism. The new features of the organisms are described in a way that makes the reader believe that Crichton was a scientist who took active part in the creation of these swarms, since he had studied this field for a long time before he began building this story.

As the team attempts to catch the swarm somehow, some of them are killed by it. After many dangerous attempts to destroy the swarm, the team (or more accurately Jack with the help of Mae) manages to destroy it together with the laboratory, to prevent it from containing still new and new nano-swarms.

From this short overview of this novel's plot, the reader can easily find out the major conflicts in the story. Apart from those between the characters throughout solving the dangerous situations, there is a conflict that is common to the majority of Crichton's books, or at least techno-thrillers – individual (humans) vs. nature, in a slightly different sense than in the previous books. While in the previous ones, nature was represented as the natural force that all of us imagine under the term, in this novel, nature is presented as the power lying behind the ability of the swarm to evolve, adapt and reproduce, which are some of the very essential characteristics of living creatures, necessary to survive. Humans try to fight against this power all through the novel, since this power is what allowed the nanoparticles to become “alive”. It also seems that the concept of evolution is changed in this novel, as compared to the other ones – evolution in this novel is rather non-biological (Cowan 191). The swarm shows also another feature that creatures in Crichton's previous books proved to have as well – the ability to defend themselves in the conflicts with others – in this case, the team. A certain change of the outcome of these fights is that while in the earlier books nature did not let people win over her, in this story, the team manages to reach their goal. Nonetheless, the novel shows how dangerous it is to be “playing God” in the sense of creating new organisms that then adopt characteristics that were not expected by the scientists to emerge. So, again,

Crichton demonstrated his gift for presenting the threats of modern science for the people in the whole world, and also warning against the negative aspects of irresponsible acts of scientists who only want to pursue their careers without taking into account the outcomes. These negative outcomes are what Crichton meant (among other things) in one of the first sentences of *Prey* which says that “things never turn out the way you think they will” (*Prey* 4), which appears to be a central thesis of the story and Crichton’s attitude towards science as well.

We can also find that the above mentioned conflict (or theme as well) is closely connected with another important fact which was discussed already with earlier novels by Crichton, and that is the one of loss of control of the creator over his creation (or creature), as was compared to the classical example of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, as also the author of one of many interviews with Michael Crichton wrote and published on a website: “We read *Prey* as a *Frankenstein* for our times” (*BookBrowse*). This “syndrome” can be (and certainly was) applied to this novel as well, since I have demonstrated that the scientists in *Prey* assembled the nanoparticle-swarm and in a relatively short time lost their influence on it, although they were the ones who should have been in charge of their new product.

There is yet another theme, and although it does not seem to be the major or most important one, it is still of high significance – family models, or breakdown of traditional models of family. This theme is visible on the family status of the major character of Jack Forman – he is identified as a house-husband without a job, waiting for his wife every day to come from work and doing all the things necessary for a good running of a family life. So, Crichton seems to have portrayed a typical American family life, where one of the couple has a very good job, while the other one takes care of the children at home. We might also say that Julia does not care so much about her “real” family – she cares more about her “family” at her workplace, that is her colleagues and products to be finished soon. Even though she

tries to give as much time and attention to this kind of family, she does not succeed in keeping her control over her “children”, which would be represented by the machines and products that she develops with the other colleagues in *Prey* – and her real children as well, so she does not seem to succeed in any of these families in the end. Moreover, together with this problem, Michael Crichton also described another problem that goes together with it – a certain change of gender roles in today’s world. This is the case of Julia taking on the man’s role as a provider of money for the family, while Jack represents the “mother” for their children. This is another characteristic feature of (not only) American family model in today’s world.

As we can see, Crichton was not only a great writer of technically detailed techno-thrillers, but he was also able to depict the current problems in the everyday life of the individual heroes.

### **3.10 State of Fear**

After this great and successful attempt to write a novel that would deal with a very technically difficult theme of nanotechnologies and the misuse of them by the scientists, Michael Crichton decided to pursue another current topic that was being discussed on an everyday basis in the media and scientific fields as well – global warming as a phenomenon of today, and its being (or - more exactly - not being) a true problem that should make us aware of our behaviour towards nature. This basic topic was written in a form of a very recently placed and thematically interesting novel called *State of Fear*. This book was published in 2004 and became bestseller almost immediately. Through the course of the novel, Michael Crichton used a high number of scientific data, graphs and images to support his ideas and opinions on global warming. Moreover, he also wrote two appendices on this topic, accompanied by a twenty-page list of bibliography used by him during his usual studies of the topic that he wrote about. Nonetheless, technological information is not the only significant part of the novel. As is typical with Crichton’s books, he combined two features in

*State of Fear* as well, as he “skilfully and seamlessly intertwines the plot with information on global warming” (Deming 253). One of his basic theses on global warming, proved by the data used, is that there is no phenomenon like global warming. On the contrary, there seems to be something opposite to a warming – “global cooling”, or how to call it, since the data show that in the big cities which would be expected to be warmed the most because of industrial factories and so forth, there is rather this “cooling.” This is an important aspect of the novel also according to Deming, who wrote that the author proceeded against “the ‘consensus’ on the dangers of global warming” (Deming 253). This is a very surprising fact, and that is what Crichton wanted to do – to make readers amazed. Crichton was confused by the fact that scientists are interested only in the periods of “warmings”, and not the opposite process as well. So, he began to study this problem, and that motivated him towards writing the new novel on this theme (Anderson 199).

The plot of the novel deals with a group of eco-terrorists who are ready to do almost anything to reach their goals, including murders. The novel presents a huge debate of the current phenomenon of global warming and its trustworthiness as a real problem of today’s world. The eco-terrorists create situations that are dangerous for the environment and people in order to have a reason to further develop their shocking and depressing messages of the global warming phenomenon, although in the reality, they do not seem to be any serious threats of the global warming, if there exists something like global warming – which is one of the major themes or questions that Crichton poses in this novel. The environmentalists appear to have only one interest – to make people afraid of the so-called global warming, so that they would accept still more and more precautions aimed at saving our planet from this threatening situation. In fact, they only want to earn money from these precautions and that is why they also do not want people to know that there exists something like the above mentioned “cooling” process, since if the people found out about it, the environmentalists would lose

their income from the precautions against global warming. Thus, this problem creates a certain circular form that never ends.

The development of the plot leaves no doubt about the major themes explored by Crichton. The first of them is the fear as such, created by the attempt of the environmentalists to make people frightened by the supposedly growing danger of global warming. The author thus explores the power of fear and the ways people react to it in cases of crisis, although many of such are not real, and shows that people behave differently than normally in such situations – they appear to be like animals flocking together and doing the same things, responding to the “threats” in a way that is exactly what the terrorists want.

Another significant theme of the novel is for example a certain “politicization” of science – this term was used by Deming in his article (Deming 247). It means that science is no longer concerned with the good of people in the world, and it is becoming more and more politics-like in the sense that all the actions done by scientists are primarily aimed at a huge amount of money earned or competition between the firms working in similar fields. In short, we can say that science is interested mostly in success at every cost – even death, as in the case of *State of Fear* for instance.

As a consequence of the previous theme of *State of Fear*, the reader might as well be able to identify the resulting problem, which is a certain trend towards money having great influence on the morality and values of today’s generations of (not only) scientists – this problem appears to be of a greater significance for a wider spectrum of the public. In the plot of the novel being mentioned, this fact is proved in the behaviour of the environmentalists – they do not hesitate to do anything (in the literal meaning of that word) to pursue and reach their goal, and earn as much money as possible. Their morality is deteriorated by their desire for money, as is shown in their murderous acts in the story. Crichton himself said that his *State of Fear* was a book “about how our societies function or are arranged” (Anderson 204).

Thus, we can see that Crichton again used a technical or scientific theme to explore even more than that – the underlying truths about how human psyche works in dangerous and frightening situations, how people let themselves be affected by the power of such things as money and pseudo-authorities, and what today’s society looks like and how it works.

### **3.11 Next, Pirate Latitudes, Micro**

In the latest three of his novels, Michael Crichton discussed some new themes again, but he also used one that he had already studied before in some of his books like *Jurassic Park*, especially genetic engineering and cloning – in the case of the first novel mentioned, *Next* (2006), he altered the problem of genetic engineering in dealing with the phenomenon of creating a kind of genetic mixture of humans and animals, the animals then acquiring some features of people, and vice versa. He shows how dangerous such experiments can be and how far they could go.

In *Pirate Latitudes* (2009), Crichton came back to writing in his previous tradition of historical novels – he described the period of pirate voyages and the spirit of that age in a masterful way.

The very last of Michael Crichton’s novels, *Micro* (2011), was finished after his death by another current writer, Richard Preston. Together, they created a fantastic novel that mentions the theme of technology versus nature, using microorganisms as sources of danger and threat for humankind, as it is typical for the majority of Michael Crichton’s literary career. With this book, Crichton let the readers symbolically know that he wrote great novels full of technological detail and breathtaking plots until the last moments of his life as one of the best writers of today’s world.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to concentrate on the themes and conflicts in the work of Michael Crichton, who was a significant American writer and so called “Father of the techno-thriller”.

I used Crichton’s novels and secondary literature as well, and I proceeded from the experiences that he went through during his life, and showed that they were reflected in the majority of his works. Further, I discussed Crichton’s literary beginnings, his family life interesting with his having five wives, and I mentioned the major literary awards that he was awarded during his career. I have remarked that Crichton had various hobbies and occupations, and this fact was reflected in his works very well, since this width of his interests was reflected in the width of his themes.

In the next chapter I discussed the major influences on Crichton’s fiction, and I discovered five of them – his childhood and undergraduate experience, his experience as a student of Harvard Medical School, his opportunity to turn his novels into movies, traveling, and his contact with psychic powers. All of these influences were more or less significant for Crichton’s development as a writer, as I have demonstrated.

The next chapter was concerned with the major goal of my thesis, and that was the themes in the fiction by Michael Crichton. I wrote about Crichton’s “revitalisations” of classic genres and themes, and I showed that the genre of techno-thriller combined the features of fiction with those of nonfiction.

Then I proceeded to Crichton’s choice of themes and conflicts in concrete books written under his own real name. He wrote in his genre of techno-thriller, where he warned against the threats of modern technologies, as being possibly misused by the scientists who created them, and shows how dangerous it can be to give scientists as much power as they like, like for instance in his novels *The Andromeda Strain* and *The Terminal Man*, where there



is also another theme - the man-machine beings created by the desire of doctors and scientists to create creatures better than humans, and the negative consequences of the irresponsible acts of them, posing a threat for the humankind. Then I proved that Crichton did not only write techno-thrillers – he also wrote historical novels like *The Great Train Robbery*, *Timeline*, or *Pirate Latitudes*. Another, and the most significant and famous of all his themes, is cloning dinosaurs and “playing God” in *Jurassic Park* and its sequel *The Lost World*. Then, Crichton wrote some detective novels like *Rising Sun* and *Disclosure*. In *Airframe*, Michael Crichton showed the theme of airline industry and the dangers of mistakes in this field, and also the power of media. In *Prey*, Crichton explored the theme of nanotechnologies and the threats they pose to humankind when they get out of control of their creators. Subsequently, Michael Crichton studied a “hot” theme called “global warming”, and questioned the relevance and trustworthiness of the phenomenon and a certain “politicization” of science in his novel *State of Fear*. Towards the end of his life, Michael Crichton wrote about genetic engineering in his *Next*, where he talked about the dangers of breeding genetic mixtures of animals and humans. The last novel that was published, called *Micro*, was finished after the death of Michael Crichton by a famous writer named Richard Preston.

Thus, in this thesis I provided an analysis of the themes and conflicts in Michael Crichton’s novels, and I demonstrated the importance of his life experience, as being a great source of his themes. I have proved that Crichton is a writer who is worth reading for today’s readers, since he wrote on recent themes and warned against the dangers of modern technologies in the hands of irresponsible scientists. Except for these techno-thrillers, Crichton wrote on a wide range of themes that are still interesting for the readers, because he was able to describe the problems in great detail as well. Because he represented a combination of the most significant characteristics of a successful author, Michael Crichton is read worldwide until today.

## 5. Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo soustředit se na témata a konflikty v díle Michaela Crichtona, který byl významným americkým spisovatelem a takzvaným “Otcem techno-thrilleru”.

Použil jsem romány a také sekundární literaturu a zmínil jsem se o zkušenostech, kterými Michael Crichton v životě prošel, dále o jeho literárních začátcích, rodinném životě poznamenaném skutečností, že Crichton měl pět žen, poté o literárních oceněních, která mu byla udělena. Poznamenal jsem, že Crichton měl mnoho koníčků a zájmů a tato skutečnost se velmi dobře odrazila v jeho dílech, jelikož šíře jeho zájmů se odrazila v šíři jeho témat.

V další kapitole jsem zkoumal hlavní vlivy na Crichtonovy romány a došel k pěti základním - jeho zkušenosti z dětství a doby před nástupem na vysokou školu, zkušenosti jako student Harvardské medicíny, příležitost natočit filmová zpracování vlastních románů, cestování a zkušenosti se silami psychiky. Všechny tyto vlivy byly více či méně významné pro Crichtonův vývoj jako spisovatel, jak jsem demonstroval.

Další kapitola se týkala hlavního cíle mé práce, a tím jsou témata v románech Michaela Crichtona. Rozebíral jsem Crichtonovy „aktualizace“ klasických žánrů a témat a ukázal jsem, že žánr zvaný techno-thriller kombinoval znaky fikce se znaky děl, která se do kategorie fikce neřadí.

Poté jsem postoupil ke Crichtonově výběru témat a konfliktů v konkrétních knihách napsaných pod jeho skutečným jménem. Psal ve svém žánru zvaném techno-thriller, v němž varoval proti hrozbám moderních technologií v rukou nezodpovědných vědců, jako například v románech *Kmen Andromeda* a *Člověk na konci*, kde zpracoval také téma stvoření složených z kombinace člověka a stroje, vytvořených touhou doktorů a vědců stvořit stvoření lepší než lidé, a negativní následky jejich nezodpovědných činů, které představují hrozbu pro lidstvo. Poté jsem dokázal, že Crichton nepsal pouze techno-thrillery – psal také historické romány jako *Velká vlaková loupež*, *Proud času*, nebo *Pirátská odysea*. Dalším a zároveň

nejvýznamnějším a nejslavnějším z jeho témat je klonování dinosaurů a „hraní si na Boha“ v románu *Jurský park* a jeho pokračování *Ztracený svět*. Poté Crichton napsal také detektivní romány jako například *Vycházející slunce* a *Skandální odhalení*. V románu *Let číslo TPA 545* poukázal Crichton na téma leteckého průmyslu a nebezpečí chyb v tomto oboru, a také popsal moc médií. V románu *Kořist* Crichton zpracoval téma nanotechnologií a hrozby, kterou představují pro lidstvo, když se vymknou kontrole svých tvůrců. Následně Michael Crichton studoval „žhavé“ téma zvané „globální oteplování“ a kladl si otázku, zda je tento fenomén důvěryhodný, spolu s otázkou „politizace“ vědy v románu *Říše strachu*. Ke konci života Michael Crichton psal o genetickém inženýrství v románu *Příští*, kde hovořil o nebezpečích vytváření genetických kombinací zvířat a lidí. Poslední vydaný román, nazvaný v originálu *Micro* (do češtiny zatím nepřeložen), byl dokončen po smrti Michaela Crichtona slavným spisovatelem Richardem Prestonem.

V této práci jsem tedy provedl analýzu témat a konfliktů v románech Michaela Crichtona a demonstroval jsem význam jeho životních zkušeností jako bohatého zdroje témat. Dokázal jsem, že Crichton byl spisovatelem, jehož knihy stojí za přečtení, neboť psal o současných tématech a varoval proti nebezpečím moderních technologií v rukou nezodpovědných vědců. Kromě techno-thrillerů psal Michael Crichton o široké škále témat, která jsou pro čtenáře stále zajímavá, protože byl také schopen popsat problémy do velkých detailů. Protože reprezentoval kombinaci nejdůležitějších vlastností úspěšného autora, je Michael Crichton dodnes celosvětově čteným spisovatelem.

## 6. Anotace

- *Autor:* Jan David
- *Název fakulty a katedry:* Filozofická fakulta, Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
- *Název práce:* Témata a konflikty v románech Michaela Crichtona
- *Vedoucí práce:* PhDr. Libor Práger
- *Počet znaků:* 99 055
- *Počet příloh:* 0
- *Počet titulů použité literatury:* 43
- *Klíčová slova:* Michael Crichton, témata, konflikty, vlivy, život, význam
- *Popis:* Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo analyzovat témata a konflikty v románech Michaela Crichtona v souvislosti s jeho životem a osobností jako hlavními vlivy na jeho tvorbu. V první části jsem zmínil Crichtonův životopis jako zdroj inspirace pro jeho romány, spolu s dalšími vlivy. Ve druhé části práce jsem zkoumal jednotlivá témata konkrétních románů Michaela Crichtona a dokázal, že byl velmi významným autorem, který má důležitou roli v současné literatuře.

## 7. Abstract

- *Author:* Jan David
- *Faculty and Department:* Philosophical Faculty, Department of English and American Studies
- *Title:* Themes and Conflicts in Michael Crichton's Novels
- *Supervisor:* PhDr. Libor Práger
- *Number of Characters:* 99 055
- *Number of Appendices:* 0
- *Number of References:* 43
- *Keywords:* Michael Crichton, themes, conflicts, influences, life, significance
- *Description:* The aim of this bachelor thesis was to analyse the themes and conflicts in Michael Crichton's novels, as interconnected with his life and personality as major influences on his works. In the first part, I provided Crichton's biography as the source of inspiration for his fiction, together with other influences on it. In the second part of the thesis, I discussed the individual themes of concrete novels by Michael Crichton, and proved that he was a very significant author who has an important role in contemporary literature.

## 8. Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

- Crichton, Michael. *Airframe*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.
- . *The Andromeda Strain*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1983.
- . *Congo*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
- . *Disclosure*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.
- . *Eaters of the Dead*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.
- . *The Great Train Robbery*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.
- . *Jurassic Park*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
- . *The Lost World*. London: Arrow Books, 1997.
- . *Next*. London: Harper, 2007.
- . *Pirate Latitudes*. London: HarperCollins, 2009.
- . *Prey*. London: HarperCollins, 2006.
- . *Rising Sun*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
- . *Sphere*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.
- . *State of Fear*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.
- . *The Terminal Man*. London: Arrow Books, 1994.
- . *Timeline*. London: Century, 1999.
- . *Travels*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.
- Crichton, Michael, and Richard Preston. *Micro*. London: Harper, 2012.

### Secondary Sources:

- Anderson, Beth. "Interview with Michael Crichton." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*.  
Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 199-206.

- Biodrowski, Steve. "Jurassic Park: Michael Crichton on Adapting His Novel to the Screen." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 59-61.
- BookBrowse*. 6 July 2012. <[http://www.bookbrowse.com/author\\_interviews/full/index.cfm/author\\_number/333/michael-crichton](http://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/333/michael-crichton)>.
- CheckerBee Publishing. *Michael Crichton: A Reader's Checklist and Reference Guide*. CheckerBee Publishing, 1999.
- "Chronology." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. xiii-xv.
- Cowan, James. "The Next Step in the Evolution of Crichton's Fiction." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 191-194.
- Deming, David. "Global Warming, the Politicization of Science, and Michael Crichton's *State of Fear*." *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 19.2 (2005): 247-256.
- Golla, Robert. "Introduction." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. ix-xi.
- Knopf, Alfred A. "Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton." *PALAIOS* 6.4 (1991): 435. [*JSTOR*.  
Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 19 June 2012  
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3514968>>.]
- Marshall, John. "Author Crichton Ponders Fear, Real and Imagined." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 195-198.
- McGilligan, Patrick. "Ready When You Are, Dr. Crichton." *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 14-21.
- "Michael Crichton." *Current Biography* (yearbook). 1976: 100-103.

“Michael Crichton.” *Current Biography*. November 1993: 10-14.

*Michael Crichton: The Official Site*. 5 July 2012. <<http://www.michaelcrichton.com>>.

Rezek, John, and David Sheff. “Playboy Interview: Michael Crichton.” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 142-164.

Rose, Barbara. “Hollywood Gets a New Man.” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 7-13.

Rose, Charlie. “An Interview with Michael Crichton (1994).” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 76-101.

Rose, Charlie. “An Interview with Michael Crichton (1995).” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 102-118.

Rose, Charlie. “An Interview with Michael Crichton (1996).” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 119-141.

Sauter, Eric. “A Tall Storyteller.” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 27-34.

Shenker, Israel. “Michael Crichton (Rhymes with Frighten).” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 3-6.

Swaim, Don. “Rising Sun.” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 43-52.

Swaim, Don. “Sphere.” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 35-42.

Trembley, A. Elizabeth. *Michael Crichton: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Warga, Wayne. “Fact, Fiction Intertwined by Crichton.” *Conversations with Michael Crichton*. Ed. Robert Golla. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. 22-26.