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Modes of Suspense in John Fowles’s Postmodern Prose
Fiction”

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Table of Contents

1	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	3
2	INTRODUCTION	4
3	THE THREE TEXTS ANALYZED	6
3.1	“The Enigma”	7
3.2	“Poor Koko”	8
3.3	<i>The French Lieutenant’s Woman</i>	9
4	POSTMODERNISM	11
4.1	Introduction to the concept of postmodernism	11
4.2	Postmodern features in contemporary literature	13
5	SUSPENSE	16
5.1	Theoretical approaches to suspense	16
5.2	A model for analyzing suspense	20
5.2.1	Genre expectations	20
5.2.1.1	Detective fiction	21
5.2.1.2	Thrillers	22
5.2.1.3	Romantic fiction	23
5.2.2	Suspense on the story level	23
5.2.2.1	Open questions	23
5.2.2.2	Significance of the open questions	24
5.2.2.3	Limited amount of answers	25
5.2.2.4	Equal probability of outcomes	26
5.2.2.5	Character sympathy	26
5.2.3	Suspense on the discourse level	29
5.2.3.1	Curiosity discourse structure	31
5.2.3.2	Suspense discourse structure	32
5.2.3.3	Combination of the discourse structures	33
5.2.4	Linguistic devices generating suspense	34
5.3	Suspense in postmodern texts	36

6	ANALYSIS OF SUSPENSE IN FOWLES'S TEXTS	41
6.1	Suspense in "The Enigma"	41
6.1.1	Genre expectations	41
6.1.2	Suspense on the story level	41
6.1.3	Suspense on the discourse level	46
6.1.4	Linguistic devices generating suspense	48
6.2	Suspense in "Poor Koko"	50
6.2.1	Genre expectations	50
6.2.2	Suspense on the story level	50
6.2.3	Suspense on the discourse level	54
6.2.3.1	Thriller part: suspense discourse structure	55
6.2.3.2	Detective part: curiosity discourse structure	56
6.2.4	Linguistic devices generating suspense	58
6.3	Suspense in <i>The French Lieutenant's Woman</i>	60
6.3.1	Genre expectations	60
6.3.2	Suspense on the macro level	60
6.3.2.1	Suspense on the story level	60
6.3.2.2	Suspense on the discourse level	70
6.3.2.3	Linguistic devices generating suspense	76
6.3.3	Suspense on the micro level	79
7	THE INFLUENCE OF POSTMODERN FEATURES ON SUSPENSE	82
7.1	"The Enigma"	82
7.1.1	Metafictional devices	82
7.2	"Poor Koko"	84
7.2.1	Parody of popular suspense genres	84
7.3	<i>The French Lieutenant's Woman</i>	86
7.3.1	Metafictional devices	86
8	CONCLUSION	89
9	BIBLIOGRAPHY	92
9.1	Primary Sources	92
9.2	Secondary Sources	92
10	APPENDIX	96
10.1	English Abstract	96
10.2	Deutsche Zusammenfassung	97
10.3	Lebenslauf	99

1 List of abbreviations

Table 1 shows the list of abbreviations which will be used in the thesis.

Table 1 List of abbreviations

<i>EN</i>	“The Enigma”
<i>FLW</i>	<i>The French Lieutenant’s Woman</i>
<i>PK</i>	“Poor Koko”

2 Introduction

According to Mikos (37) “[t]he expectation of experiencing excitement or suspense motivates the reception of films and television programs, and the promise of such forms of experience is one of their utility values”. The experience of suspense is also vital for literary texts since it keeps the readers interested and encourages them to read on. The majority of readers love to read suspenseful texts such as detective stories, thrillers or mystery stories.

The very phenomenon of suspense, however, is not easily graspable or describable. Several scientific fields including psychology and literary studies examine this area from different perspectives. There is general agreement, though, that suspense is generated through uncertainty, more specifically through two kinds of uncertainty namely *predictions*, which are related to future events and the “*understanding* [sic] of ongoing events, which may require the discovery of facts and conditions concealed from us by the author” (Cupchik 189). This often induces “the general affects of excitement and apprehension, and the specific emotions of hope and fear” (Cupchik 194). It is thus obvious that suspense definitely triggers emotions.

In literary studies it is mainly analyzed in how far and under what circumstances suspense is generated in literary texts. There are hardly any literary works which do not contain some suspenseful elements, though Bonheim (1) draws attention to the fact that short stories have been compared to photographs and hence in contrast to novels can do without suspense. Symons (165) disagrees here when assuming that not only may the short story be better suited (at least for detective fiction) but there also exists “a short period of suspense”. In addition to short stories, postmodern texts are also often not considered as suspenseful by literary scholars (e.g. Wenzel, Butler or Voigts-Virchow).

This thesis aims at developing a model for analyzing suspense in literary texts, which is then applied to the investigation of suspense in postmodern texts in particular. Three postmodern texts by the British author John Fowles are analyzed with regard their suspensefulness and the influence of their postmodern features on suspense. Here Fowles’s highly acclaimed novel *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* and two short stories, namely “The Enigma” and “Poor Koko” are investigated. All the three literary texts under examination contain postmodern features and two of them are short stories, which makes it even more interesting to analyze whether they can nevertheless generate suspense.

Considering the structure of the thesis, firstly an introduction to the three texts is given in chapter 3. Here their most important characteristics as well as a synopsis of each narrative are provided. Secondly, the concept of postmodernism is introduced in chapter 4, commencing with the philosophical aspects of this movement and then concentrating on the features prevalent in postmodern literature. Thirdly, the other theoretical field of interest, namely suspense, is depicted thoroughly in chapter 5. More specifically, there is an introduction to the theoretical aspects of this field of interest, illustrating the main research concerns of this area. Afterwards the suspense model which is used for analyzing suspense in the three literary texts is presented. Here the four levels of analysis, namely “genre expectations”, “suspense on the story level”, “suspense on the discourse level” and “linguistic devices generating suspense” are described in great detail. The suspense chapter is concluded with a combination of the two theoretical fields of this thesis, namely postmodernism and suspense. Here the research question of this thesis which pertains to the possibility of suspense in postmodern texts is introduced. Chapter 6 then presents the analyses of suspense for each of the three literary works by Fowles. This aims at determining their suspensefulness with regard to the four levels of analysis. Here first insights into the research concern of this thesis can be provided as it is shown whether these postmodern texts nevertheless have some suspenseful aspects. Chapter 7 tries to provide further answers to the research question since it investigates the influence of selected postmodern features on suspense. Here it will be examined in how far the self-conscious characteristics of the three texts (negatively) affect suspense. This shall lead to a comparative conclusion in chapter 8 in which the outcomes of the analyses are conflated in order to provide answers to the research question.

3 The three texts analyzed

In this thesis three of Fowles's texts will be analyzed with regard to suspense. Two of them are part of the short story collection *The Ebony Tower*, which was published in 1974. *The Ebony Tower* is unique insofar as it is the only collection of short stories published by Fowles (Broich 182). According to Eriksson (151) "*The Ebony Tower* is a collection of four short stories grouped around a translation of a medieval novella". It contains short works "amplify[ing] ideas prominent in Fowles's other works" (Martínez 124)¹, namely "matters of love and sex, the functions of art and the artist, the uses and abuses of language, the demands of freedom and the responsibilities of free choice" (Olshen 92). The two short stories which will be examined here are "The Enigma" and "Poor Koko".

The third text is a novel called *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, which was published in 1969. It is regarded as one of Fowles's commercially most successful books (Loveday 48). "Since its appearance in 1969 it has received a string of favourable academic reviews" (Loveday 48) and has also been adapted into a critically acclaimed film.

These texts have been chosen because they all contain some postmodern features and are thus adequate for an analysis of the influence of postmodern features on suspense. On the one hand all the three texts contain main thematic concerns of Fowles's fiction, namely firstly the principal existential concern (i.e. existential freedom) (McSweeney 105), secondly the individual's relation to society (McSweeney 107) and mankind's importance of imagination. Thus, all of his fictional texts are concerned with arts and aesthetics (McSweeney 109). This also explains why two of the three texts, namely "The Enigma" and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, contain metafictional elements drawing attention to their fictionality. Also "Poor Koko" self-consciously examines the possibility of objectivity when writing texts. On the other hand the texts also display formal similarities: "What each fiction [...] shares is a curiosity about the technical and ethical potentialities of what have traditionally been regarded as 'low' sub-genres of fiction" (Conradi 16). More specifically, "The Enigma" utilizes the detective genre "Poor Koko" the thriller and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* exploits "the historical romance and sensation novel" (Conradi 16). One can further agree with Conradi (16f.) that "[i]n each, the interest of the fiction lies in the consequences of disconfirming the expectations raised by the genre". These similar thematic as well as formal concerns make a comparative investigation of suspense in Fowles's postmodern fiction feasible.

¹ Martínez' article "Astarte's Game: Variations in John Fowles's "The Enigma"" constitutes an interesting analysis on Fowles's thematic concerns in his oeuvre in general and in "The Enigma" in particular.

3.1 “The Enigma”

The short story “The Enigma” centers on the mysterious disappearance of John Marcus Fielding, “a public man, a highly successful, very wealthy London executive and Tory M.P” (Martínez 126). Although “The Enigma” starts out as a typical detective story, a mystery plot, it eventually converts into a metafictional discussion about literary genres, imaginative power and existential freedom (McSweeney 114). In “The Enigma” as in other narratives by Fowles such as *Daniel Martin* a supposed crime initiates a love relationship between the main characters (in this case between Isobel Dodgson and Michael Jennings) (Eriksson 158).

Generally speaking, the structure of the text can be described as consisting of three parts: **First**, there is an omniscient narrator providing statistical data of suicides and disappearances (from a sociological perspective) (Martínez 128). All in all, it is an objective account of the investigations pursued by Fielding’s family and the police in relation to Fielding’s disappearance and can therefore be defined as a police report or news story (Martínez 128). **Secondly**, there is a shift in the narrative perspective from a neutral omniscient viewpoint to Michal Jennings point of view. Jennings is the detective of the story and “becomes responsible for tracing Fielding only when no one in particular wants to find him any longer” (Martínez 128). This part mostly consists of Jennings’s “interrogations” of family members and acquaintances, which is intertwined with his thoughts about them. At this point of the story Martínez (129) argues that “the repeated questioning that invariably leads nowhere tends to intensify the reader’s feeling that the story is making no progress at all” (Martínez 129). **The third part** of the story describes Jennings’s interview with Isobel, where the only solution to the mystery is offered, namely that Fielding walked out of the story because he felt “like this minor character in a bad book” (*EN* 234), which means that he might have committed suicide. According to Conradi (29) Fielding is “the most publicly determined of all Fowles’s characters” and by leaving the plot “defies both social and literary convention”. However, at this point the focus of the story shifts from Fielding’s disappearance to “the mystery of love” (Martínez 130) because Isobel and Jennings start a love affair, which is according to Martínez (130) “a far from frequent ingredient in detective stories”.

3.2 “Poor Koko”

“Poor Koko” is also a short story which is part of *The Ebony Tower* and it resembles “The Enigma” “in its generic affinities with low-brow literary forms” (McSweeney 116). In this case predominantly the thriller is utilized. In this thesis it will also be argued that the detective genre is used as well. Furthermore, similar thematic concerns as in “The Enigma” are evoked since the aesthetics of literature and the solving of an “enigma” (PK 178) are in the center of attention. The overall concern of the story, however, is related to “the problem of knowing what has happened in the past, as well as the problem of correctly representing it to others” (Pollheide 126).

In general this first-person-narration consists of two parts: The **first part** depicts the narrator’s “ordeal” (PK 145) and thus constitutes the thriller-part of the story. The narrator is an elderly puny and myopic literary scholar who retreats to his friends’ (Maurice and Jane) “cottage in North Dorset” (PK 148) to finish his “lifetime’s ambition – a definitive biography and critical account of Thomas Love Peacock” (PK 147) in peace and quiet, which he was unable to find in his noisy London apartment. However, already in his first night there the narrator is surprised by a young thief, who he characterizes as “semi-illiterate” (PK 150) and classifies as belonging to “that baffling [...] new world of the classless British young” (PK 156). The burglar is as startled as the narrator but soon initiates “an apparently rational discussion which at first creates the impression that the central character might be spared brutality” (Pollheide 126). Though, before the young man leaves the house, he performs a startling and apparently unmotivated action: “he carefully incinerates every scrap of the Peacock manuscript and every volume of the narrator’s heavily annotated edition of that author’s works” (McSweeney 116). The **second part** of the short story describes the narrator’s analysis of the incident a year later. Here the detective-part commences since the narrator acts as a detective when trying to “list” (PK 179) several motifs and following “clues” (PK 180) in order to find an explanation for the thief’s deed. He finally arrives at “a tentative conclusion” (PK 181), namely that the problem was rooted in “improper father-son attitudes” (Huffaker 125) with regard to the “magic power” (PK 183) of language, “a possession of a cultural wealth that had not been made properly available” (Conradi 85f.) to the “son” (i.e the thief and his generation), who in turn takes revenge on his “father”. The narrator’s not very convincing interpretation of the problem is illustrated by the Japanese word *Koko* in the title referring to “correct filial behaviour, the proper attitude of son to father” (PK 184). The resolution to the mystery is, however, as elusive in “Poor Koko” as in

“The Enigma” (Foster 102) since the narrator’s meditation on the incident “fails to elicit any tidy conclusion” (Conradi 85).

3.3 *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*

This novel is a combination of a historical novel and a self-conscious fictional text. It is set in the years from 1867 to 1869 and thus displays a Victorian setting and apparently a Victorian plot (Loveday 48).

In this novel the protagonist and English gentlemen Charles Smithson has to find his way “through the contrast between a “realistic” woman and a mysterious muse-enchantress” (Foster 11). While the former is his rather shallow and conventional fiancée Ernestina Freeman, the latter is the strange and mysterious social outcast Sarah Woodruff. At the beginning of the novel Charles is a conventional Victorian planning to marry the equally conventional Ernestina. This changes when he meets Sarah or, as the inhabitants of Lyme Regis, call her, the “French Lieutenant’s Woman” or the “French Lieutenant’s Whore”. These appellations allude to the supposed affair Sarah has had with a French naval officer who jilted her. Charles and Sarah have some clandestine encounters in the Undercliff, a coastal landscape “between Lyme Regis and Axmouth” (*FLW* 66) in which “a fascination develops which turns to love” (Loveday 48). Eventually Charles has to choose between Ernestina and Sarah: “These two women [...] represent as well as produce the dilemma Charles must struggle with: Will he remain a creature of his own time or move into the future?” (Foster 77). Finally, Charles advises Sarah to leave Lyme Regis and go to Exeter. He himself, having been disinherited by his uncle, who surprisingly decides to marry a woman young enough to bear him a son, leaves for London to tell Ernestina’s father about his future prospects. On the way back he has to stop at Exeter and must decide whether to spend the night there – and possibly meet Sarah – or return to Lyme – and thus to Ernestina – immediately. From then on three endings to the story are offered. In the first ending, which is also called the “false ending” (Baumgartner 58), he decides in favor of his fiancée and has to endure “a quotidian existence with Ernestina” (Tarbox 61). In the next chapter, however, the narrator states that after “having brought this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending” (*FLW* 342) all of what he narrated “did not happen quite in the way you may have been led to believe” (*FLW* 342). This ending is thus dismissed as a daydream by Charles on his way to Exeter, where he actually spends a night, meets Sarah and has intercourse with her. There Charles realizes that she has actually been a virgin and that she has also lied about her affair with the French Lieutenant. He leaves her angrily but then proposes to her through a letter. This letter shall be delivered

by Sam, Charles's valet. However, due to personal reasons Sam does not follow his master's instructions. Charles is convinced that Sarah has accepted his proposal and rushes to Ernestina to break off his engagement. When he returns to Exeter, he finds out that not only did Sarah not receive his letter but that she has also left for London. Charles unsuccessfully searches for her and only finds her two years later. For their reencounter also two different endings are offered: In the first Sarah reveals their mutual daughter, Lalage, and the story ends in a happy manner. Then the narrator once again steps in as a character of the novel²: "The chief reason for his appearance is to wind his watch back fifteen minutes, thereby allowing the scene between Sarah and Charles to play itself out again to a different conclusion" (Foster 87). In this ending Sarah rejects Charles and he finds himself alone, though with "an atom of faith in himself" (*FLW* 470).

² The narrator also appears as a character in chapter 55 when he shares a train compartment with Charles and scrutinizes him in order to decide how to end the story.

4 Postmodernism

4.1 Introduction to the concept of postmodernism

The term *postmodernism* has been used since the 1980s as a reference to contemporary arts (Barry 81). The prefix *post* in the term *postmodernism* indicates its “contradictory dependence on and independence from that which temporally preceded it and which literally made it possible. Postmodernism’s relation to modernism is, therefore, typically contradictory” (Hutcheon 18). It is a movement following the period of modernism “yet different from it, having its own distinctive preoccupations and stylistic choices” (Bradbury & Bigsby 10). Thus, among literary critics there have been great discussions in how far these two movements differ. As it is not easy to discern the differences between modernism and postmodernism and Barry (83) suggests not viewing them as “two successive stages in the history of arts, but [as] two opposed moods or attitudes”. They both give great prominence in depicting the fragmentation of life; however, they do so by adopting different attitudes. While modernism displays a certain feeling of regret for the lost faith in a “whole world”, postmodernism celebrates and welcomes fragmentation (Barry 83f). Another important difference concerns the attitude towards the so called popular art. For modernists a clear distinction between high and popular art is of great importance while postmodernists reject this distinction and on the contrary believe in “excess, in gaudiness, and in ‘bad taste’ mixtures of qualities” (Barry 84).

Hutcheon (4) also does not consider postmodernism a new paradigm due to its contradictory features and its working within the systems it aims to subvert. Thus, Hutcheon (3) sees postmodernism as a “contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges”. An important source for contradiction in postmodernist art is the critical revisiting of the past³, which is rather ironic and most certainly not nostalgic (Hutcheon 4). Some argue that postmodernism has developed as a response to the uniformization of mass culture in order to challenge though not rejecting it. As a result the relationship between postmodernism and the contemporary dominant, liberal humanist culture is a contradictory one. Rather than denying humanist culture and its desire for universals such as “stable aesthetic and moral values” (Hutcheon 6), postmodernism contests it from within. Furthermore, according to postmodern beliefs the humanist separation between art and life is no longer valid and this is illustrated in postmodern art: “Postmodernist

³ Thus, for instance the (Victorian) past is ironically revisited in one of the texts analyzed in this thesis, namely *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*.

contradictory art still installs that order, but it then uses it to demystify our everyday processes of structuring chaos, of imparting or assigning meaning (Hutcheon 7). Thereby humanistic principles such as “value”, “order” or “identity” are both asserted and at the same time deliberately undermined (Hutcheon 13). As a result everyday illusions of our lives are challenged without providing a solution, though. However, Hutcheon (8) assumes that “the knowledge derived from such inquiry may be the only possible condition of change”. Therefore, Hutcheon (4) concludes that although postmodernism cannot be characterized as a new paradigm, it can rather be defined as “the site of the struggle of the emergence of something new”.

Influential postmodern theorists are, among others, **Jean-François Lyotard** and **Baudrillard**. **Lyotard** is concerned with the so called *metanarratives* or *super-narratives*, which provide a “would-be authoritative ‘overarching’, ‘totalising’ explanation of things – like Christianity, Marxism, or the myth of scientific process” (Barry 86). The two main narratives Lyotard finds problematic “are those of the progressive emancipation of humanity [...] and that of the triumph of science” (Butler 13). They aim to offer reassurance of explanation or legitimize cultural practices (Butler 13) but according to Lyotard they are only illusions “fostered in order to smother difference, opposition, and plurality” (Barry 86). Consequently, Lyotard defines postmodernism as being skeptical of metanarratives (Barry 86f.). Thus, postmodernists adopt a critical stance towards “the claims of any kind of overall, totalizing explanation” (Butler 15) which results in postmodernists considering for instance historical or scientific writings as fictional.

Jean Baudrillard, another important postmodernist theorist, proclaims the “‘loss of the real’, which is the view that in contemporary life the pervasive influence of images from film, TV, and advertising has led to a loss of the distinction between real and imagined” (Barry 87). The crucial aspect of his theory concerns the sign, which conceals an absence, namely that the reality it represents is no longer there, “that beyond the play of surfaces there is nothing else” (Barry 90). These signs are mere simulacra, which in a process Baudrillard calls ‘hyperrealization’ substitute real things (Butler 114). A good illustration for this is the representation of masculinity or femininity in advertisements: “these also are copies or representations for which no original exists – no actual people are quite like these, though people might strive to become like them” (Barry 90).

It follows that postmodernist theories tend to be based on a relativist concept, which is “the view that truth itself is always relative to the differing standpoints and predisposing intellectual frameworks of the judging subject” (Butler 16). Thus, they are not interested in empirical methods used in the sciences and rather tend “to believe in ‘stories’ rather than in testable theories” (Butler 28), which also explains why the philosophical and political ideas of postmodernist theories are quite readily applied in the arts (Butler 29).

4.2 Postmodern features in contemporary literature

Generally speaking, it seems that postmodernist ideas have “led to a sustained and skeptical relativist critique of the claims of mimesis or realism in the arts” (Butler 69), which resulted in the deliberate creation of all kinds of confusion with regard to the relation between fact and fiction. The literary work of postmodernists can consequently be described as

deliberately less unified, less obviously ‘masterful’, more playful [...] more concerned with the processes of our understanding than with the pleasures of artistic finish or unity [...], and certainly more resistant to a certain interpretation, than much of the art that had preceded it. (Butler 5)

More specifically, critics concentrate on some of the following features inherent to literary works of the twentieth century:

In postmodern writing it is typical that certain **borders are crossed**. This is what Barry (91) calls the “‘disappearance of the real’” which is seen in the shifting of postmodern identities for example when genres are mixed (the thriller, the detective story, the historical novel, etc.). Furthermore, borders between literary fiction and literary theory are also merged (Hutcheon 10).

Another postmodern feature is the foregrounding of **intertextual elements** “such as parody, pastiche, and allusion” (Barry 91). So texts no longer refer to an external reality but to other texts. These techniques illustrate the postmodern belief that every text contains intertextual elements “because all texts are seen as perpetually referring to other ones” (Butler 32). Hutcheon (11) argues that “[p]arody is a perfect postmodern form [...] for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies”. It also forces the reader to question “the idea of origin or originality” (Hutcheon 11) and hence undermines it. This is also apparent in Fowles’s fiction since he parodies popular genres such as the detective story, the thriller (“as in *The Enigma*” and “*Poor Koko*”) or the Victorian novel (as in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*).

Postmodernist literature also challenges the distinction between **high and popular culture** and hence some texts “work as hybrid blends of the two” (Barry 91). Postmodernist art does not only overcome the gap between high and popular art, there is even an attraction to popular forms like detective stories or western stories in postmodernist texts. A paradox lies in the fact that some of those texts are both bestsellers and at the same time objects of literary criticism. Hutcheon (20) argues that these texts

paradoxically use and abuse the conventions of both popular and élite literature, and do so in such a way that they can actually use the invasive culture industry to challenge its own commodification processes from within.

Moreover, narrative techniques foregrounding “the element of ‘narcissism’” (Barry 91) are applied, which means that literary texts self-consciously “focus on and debate their own ends and processes, and thereby ‘de-naturalise’ their content” (Barry 91). Thus, a large amount of postmodern texts contain **metafictional elements**. In general, metafictional texts are based on the opposition between a fictional reality constructed in the text and “the laying bare of that illusion” (Waugh 6). At this point Waugh’s (2) definition of the term *metafiction* is worth mentioning:

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.

Although metafiction has always existed to a certain extent, it is particularly prominent in contemporary fiction since it reflects the insecurity of postmodernism and its “dissatisfaction with, and breakdown of, traditions values” (Waugh 6). Therefore, it can be regarded as a response to the contemporary pessimistic view of not being able to discern one true history and reality. The metafictional technique is applied to convey this “sense of crisis, alienation and oppression in contemporary society” (Waugh 11).

Thus, writers like John Fowles rather apply metafictional devices in order to raise the readers’ awareness for how meaning and values of the fictional as well as the real world are constructed (Waugh 34). However, there are two modes of contemporary metafiction: There is one “weaker” strand that does accept the substantiality of a real world and a “stronger” one who does not believe that there is “an escape from the prisonhouse of language” (Waugh 53). Fowles’s texts can be related to the first sort as they belong to “those texts that manifest the

symptoms of formal and ontological insecurity but allow their deconstructions to be finally recontextualized [...] and given a total interpretation” (Waugh 53). It will be interesting to see if this “weaker” form of metafiction also “allows” a certain amount of suspense in Fowles’s postmodern texts.

5 Suspense

5.1 Theoretical approaches to suspense

The academic field concerned with the study of suspense in literature is a rather new one as suspense studies “have emerged only in the last two decades, and largely among film specialists” (Beecher 257). The relatively newness of this field of study can be explained by the fact that suspense is a very complex phenomenon and it is therefore rather hard to describe it (Wenzel 181). There are various reasons for its complexity and elusiveness. These will be briefly outlined in this chapter in order to give an overview of the various research concerns in this field of study.

Firstly, there are various definitions to describe the phenomenon of suspense. However, many researchers in the field of suspense seem to agree on the idea that readers are in a state of suspense when they experience a feeling of anticipation or uncertainty. Thus, for instance *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing* defines suspense as a “state of mental uncertainty accompanied by expectation, apprehension, or anxiety” (Herbert 437). Although there exist other definitions of suspense⁴, it will suffice for this thesis to relate suspense to a state of anticipation as this is also a good starting point for investigating suspense in postmodern texts (see chapter 5.3). In this respect Koch (282) for instance claims that suspense is best described with the term *expectation*: “A case of incongruity is presented to the mind in a simultaneous or *paradigmatic* [sic] fashion”. Furthermore, Tan and Diteweg (149) similarly assume that the “notion of suspense is inextricably bound up with the concept of expectation”. Also Wulff (16) views the experience of suspense as resulting “from the extrapolation of possible events from a given situation” and thus as “the result, or concomitant, of the anticipating activity”. Carroll (71) regards a feeling of uncertainty as necessary for suspense. When there is no longer a state of uncertainty, suspense evaporates (Carroll 72). Suspense is thus “not a response to the outcome; it pertains to the moments leading up to the outcome, when the outcome is uncertain” (Carroll 74). Cupchik (193) seems to agree here when stating that “suspense builds gradually over time in accordance with the author’s manipulation of information and, hence, of uncertainty”.

⁴ Junkerjürgen (25ff.) provides a comprehensive overview of the different depictions of suspense in literary studies.

This feeling of anticipation or uncertainty, however, requires a resolution at some point (Fill 71). Here Suerbaum (24) suggests that suspense in general “demands” a solution. Therefore, it is clear that if the reader is not made aware of the fact that there will be a solution to the mystery, there will not be any suspense (Voigts-Virchow 136). Brewer (116) even insists that outcome resolution is a vital component of a “successful suspense text”.

The agreement among critics that suspense requires a feeling of uncertainty or anticipation is, however, complicated by the fact that there are nevertheless “works that can produce a complete state of suspense after multiple readings” (Beecher 258). There is an extensive discussion among researchers dealing with this paradoxical phenomenon. Carroll (71) for instance assumes that “[i]t is an incontrovertible fact that people can consume the same suspense fiction again and again with no loss of affect”. This phenomenon is called the paradox of suspense or “*anomalous suspense* [sic]” (Gerrig 100) and there have been various attempts to explain it. Thus, there are hypotheses suggesting a shift of motivation when re-reading a text or – quite on the contrary – there is also the assumption that there is no change in the reader’s affective state due to character identification (Brewer 120)⁵. Empirical studies (e.g. Brewer 124), however, contradict these hypotheses. Beecher (258) also asserts that although these theories are quite ingenious, they are not entirely convincing.

However, there is a hypothesis concerning “recidivist readers” which seems to be reasonable and hence worth mentioning here. Carroll (89) states that when re-reading suspenseful texts one is induced in a psychological state of “self-deception, denial or disavowal”. This means that so called “recidivist readers” focus on the information available “in the story up to and for the duration of the interlude in which suspense dominates” (Carroll 90) rather than use the knowledge of the outcome they have already gained from earlier encounters with the story. Gerrig (101) similarly assumes that there are “inherent properties of cognitive architecture conspir[ing] to make suspense a prominent emotion”. Anomalous suspense then entails that when processing suspense fiction (i.e. sufficiently compelling narratives) readers “do not forcibly remove themselves from an unfolding narrative to determine whether they have prior knowledge of the outcome” (Gerrig 103). Essential for this rather paradoxical situation is that the reader has enjoyed the narrative so much that he or she decides to forget the outcome of the story in the process of re-reading (Prieto-Pablos 110). Although this hypothesis appears to be plausible, further research needs to be done in order to prove it. However, it is obvious that

⁵ For a more detailed account of the various theories concerning the paradox of suspense see Brewer (119-123).

the phenomenon of paradoxical suspense illustrates the complexity and elusiveness of suspense.

Turning to the analysis of suspense in literature, one needs to differentiate between tension and suspense. The differences between these two phenomena are not easily discernible which is made obvious by the fact that in some languages this notional distinction does not even exist. In German for instance the term '*Spannung*' encompasses both phenomena. However, it is nevertheless of importance to make a distinction between them: Whereas tension is static and emerges from oppositions (e.g. in poems), suspense is dynamic and develops in the course of a literary text. Hence tension occurs to a certain extent in every literary text while suspense arises only if certain preconditions are met (Wenzel 181). To further illustrate the differences between tension and suspense one should also consider the reader's way of dealing with them: While with suspense the reader forms hypotheses regarding outcomes, when relieving tension various strategies are needed in "bringing about matching, disambiguation, spotting and balancing" (Koch 294f.) to name just a few devices applied for tension-filled sequences. However, the distinction between tension and suspense does not seem to be as clear-cut since some critics (e.g. Prieto-Pablos 100f. or Fill) researching in this field use the two terms interchangeably. Furthermore, when investigating suspense in literary texts one has to be aware of the distinction between suspense and interest. Although interest is an integral part of suspense, the same cannot be said vice versa (Bonheim 5). Thus, increased interest can be regarded as one emotional response to suspense. For interest to be high the outcome event must be of a certain value and the event must be felt to be near (Tan & Diteweg 152). However, readers do not automatically feel suspense if they are interested in a story. In contrast to interest suspense "tends to involve a single event" (Bonheim 5).

Furthermore, suspense in literary texts is not merely generated by the narrative itself but is also created because of certain features relating to the field of psychology (Wenzel 181). This is due to the fact that suspense depends not only on the literary text itself and the respective features it contains in order to generate suspense but also on the readers. Gerrig (93) depicts the interconnection between readers and narrative characteristics in the following: "Suspense will arise when readers possessing some particular range of cognitive processes interact with a particular range of narrative features". These narrative features promote certain types of thoughts in the reader's mind (Gerrig 93). Also Mikos (37) believes that suspense is developed through textual stimuli as well as readers' "information processing processes".

Preito-Pablos (102) mentions gap-filling hypotheses as one example for a common reader response to a suspenseful narrative. Beecher (276) agrees here in defining suspense as “the alignment between narrative circumstances and the mental reading of those circumstances in conjunction with arousal thresholds”.

Considering this psychological aspect of suspense in more detail it becomes clear that suspense is intertwined with emotions, which seem to be a vital component in the development of suspense (Mikos 37). Carroll (74) agrees here by defining suspense as “an emotional response to narrative fictions”. Some critics even refer to suspense as an emotion (e.g. Carroll 74f., Gerrig 93) – hence, not only information processes are included when reading a suspenseful text but “[i]t involves a complex network of the spectator’s cognitive and emotional activities that might have been stimulated by various textual characteristics” (Mikos 37). Cupchik (195) suggests that to be in a state of suspense the encompassing “experience of apprehension (a form of excitement) is all important”. This excitement can be triggered for instance by uncertainty regarding an unsatisfactory outcome for a sympathetic character (Cupchik 195) – further emotions involved in the reception process are typically negative ones such as fear and apprehension (Tan & Diteweg 152). Brewer (107) also mentions the association of suspense to “negative affective states such as apprehension or anxiety” but asserts that one must also consider the “affectively positive aspects of suspense in fiction” (Brewer 109). Thus, one of the most common emotions felt in connection with suspense is fear, though in this case it is a “pleasurable flirtation with fear” (Mikos 37) which is directed at the story’s outcome. This fear is connected with hope regarding the story’s outcome (Mikos 40).

All in all, this selective overview provided insights into some research interests in the study of suspense in literature. It has shown that suspense is first of all a phenomenon which cannot be easily described. Moreover, the not yet fully explainable paradox of “anomalous suspense” seems to contradict the generally accepted notion of suspense as inducing a feeling of uncertainty and anticipation. Considering the analysis of suspense in literary texts, on the one hand a distinction of suspense from tension and interest is vital. On the other hand it is also crucial to bear in mind that suspense not only depends on textual features but is also based on readers’ reception of a text. Thus, suspense is not only investigated in literary studies but also in the field of psychology.

These aspects have all been taken into consideration for the development of a model to analyze suspense in literary texts. The following chapters will describe this model, which will then be used when examining the three texts by John Fowles.

5.2 A model for analyzing suspense

This model is primarily based on a text-oriented method of analyzing suspense as this thesis is solely concerned with the analysis of texts and does not consider readers' receptions of Fowles's books. However, as depicted above, suspense does not only relate to certain features in literary texts but is also "an activity of the audience" (Vorderer; Wulff & Friedrichsen viii). Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach between literature studies and psychology is recommendable when analyzing suspense (Wuss 51). Consequently this model does indeed take the reception process (especially in the field of reader engagement in the fictive world) into account. Hence in the analyses below certain tentative conclusions with regard to the reception are made, when feasible.

Generally speaking, this model focuses on four levels of analysis. Firstly, the **genres** of the three texts and the expectations they raise with regard to suspense will be examined. Furthermore, **story** and **discourse** level of literary texts will be taken into consideration. Lastly, an analysis of **linguistic devices** generating suspense is also part of this model.

5.2.1 Genre expectations

Genres can be regarded as conventions, narrative patterns and formulas (Mikos 41). More specifically, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (105) defines the term 'genre' as "a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common [...] conventions as will prevent readers [...] from mistaking it for another kind".

According to Mikos (41) genres thus

serve to simplify communication within the framework of the communicative process by creating a sense of behavioral security, simultaneously optimizing the result of comprehension and interpretation.

It follows from this that genres facilitate an understanding of texts and can thus be regarded as "forms of cultural praxis" (Mikos 41) organizing the broad range of texts and meanings circulating in a society. Hence, the use of certain genre conventions on the one hand guarantees comprehension and on other hand raises certain expectations that the reader anticipates to be satisfied (Mikos 42). Also Wuss (57) assumes that what he calls "stereotype-based narrative structures" induce "[v]arious strong anticipations in the form of hypotheses about the occurrence of future events" (Wuss 57). From this, one can draw the conclusion that there are some genres which "promise" an experience of suspense.

It is thus of interest whether the genres of the texts examined in this thesis (i.e. the detective genre, the thriller and the romance novel) raise expectations with regard to suspense. Among literary critics (e.g. Mikos 42, Wuss 51) there exists agreement in grouping detective stories as well as thrillers under the heading of “suspense genres” (Mikos 42). These texts facilitate a so called “*controlled thrilling experience* [sic]” (Mikos 42) and readers thus expect to experience emotions such as anxiety, fear or shock in the reception process. Mikos (45) claims that readers are disappointed in those texts “when these experiences are not present”. In the following the suspensefulness of each of the three genres will be examined in greater detail.

5.2.1.1 *Detective fiction*

When it comes to suspense and genres the detective genre seems to be inextricably connected with the notion of suspense. Thus, in research literature dealing with the phenomenon of suspense, detective fiction is often merely mentioned in connection with suspense (e.g. Koch 287). Furthermore, some critics clearly link this genre to suspense. Mikos (42) for instance asserts that detective stories “promise an experience of excitement and suspense in the form of thrill” (Mikos 42). Nusser (21) even argues that creating suspense is the foremost intention in detective fiction. Considering Edgar Allan Poe, the “founding father” of the detective story, and his successors Bonheim (1) similarly assumes that “suspense tends to be a vital element of structure and intended effect”, which is already suggested in the term *whodunit*. He further presumes that “the detective story is essentially a sequence of suspense and final resolution” (Bonheim 2). Hence suspense seems to be essential in detective stories, which “tends to involve the whole work, and takes the form of repeated assaults on the reader” (Bonheim 5).

In detective fiction suspense is generally perceived as being “dependent upon building the reader’s puzzlement and attendant expectations of surprise in discovery of an explanation for the crime” (Herbert 437). Thus, suspense in this genre is often related to curiosity (cf. curiosity discourse structure). However, Nusser (32) asserts that detective stories also often contain suspense which is targeted towards a future outcome (cf. suspense discourse structure). Thus, when for instance “amateur detectives are used, some suspense may lie in the question of whether or not they are as capable as the pros” (Herbert 437). Koch (312f.) quite similarly presumes that a detective novel is perceived as suspenseful if certain conditions are met: There should be emphatic concern for either one party which “should not be of too vacillating a nature” (Koch 313). Furthermore, he claims that petty crimes such as theft or

embezzlement are not as efficient as manslaughter or plain murder. Lastly foregrounding repetitions such as the “repetitive use of threatening behavior” (Koch 313) heighten suspense as they “serve to make improbability decrease and to give a well-defined picture of the paradigm of suspense” (Koch 313).

Regarding detective fiction written in the postmodernist mode it has been argued that the detective genre “has been an obvious target for leading postmodernists” (Voigts-Virchow 134) as seen in the form of the anti-detective novel. The postmodernist detective mode seems to have an influence on suspense; it is even suggested that “the essential category of suspense is subverted” (Voigts-Virchow 134) by this kind of fiction. Schulz-Buschhaus (347) follows a totally different line of argumentation when proposing that in post-avant-garde crime novels⁶ suspense is an essential ingredient. He assumes that suspense in these texts functions as a form of attraction against the “dryness” of “high literature”. Thus, post-avant-garde authors implement suspense in the form of curiosity in their texts (Schulz-Buschhaus 347). An in-depth analysis of the texts will reveal if genre expectations with regard to suspense can nevertheless be met in postmodern detective fiction.

5.2.1.2 Thrillers

Comparable to detective stories, the thriller is also generally regarded as a suspenseful genre. Bonheim (4) for instance defines the thriller as a genre that “focus[es] on suspense”. Furthermore, the thriller is also considered as a subgenre of the suspense novel, i.e. a genre whose very term alludes to suspense. Texts belonging to this genre “often [concern] an innocent drawn into a threatening situation” (Reid 437). More specifically “[s]uspense novels generally follow the fate of an innocent, male or female, and are set primarily, but not exclusively, in [...] private spaces” (Reid 438). Furthermore, according to Reilly and Bloom (460) protagonists in thrillers find themselves in a “suspenseful struggle against a conspiracy”.

Suspense in thrillers is – in contradistinction to detective fiction – typically not oriented towards the past but towards the future (cf. suspense discourse structure) (Nusser 32). The reader normally feels empathy for a protagonist in a peril situation and anxiously anticipates the outcome (in the future) (Nusser 55).

⁶ Schulz-Buschhaus (353) uses the term *post-avantgarde* as an umbrella term for several literary concepts with postmodernism being grouped among them.

Concerning postmodern thrillers, which playfully destabilize genre conventions (Schildcrout 45) similar assumptions as with postmodern detective stories have been made with regard to suspense (e.g. Voigts-Virchow 135). Here also the in-depth analysis of “Poor Koko” will provide further insights into this matter.

5.2.1.3 Romantic fiction

As *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is essentially a romantic plot, an examination of the romance genre and its ability to raise expectations with regard to suspense seems appropriate here. Generally speaking, romantic fiction is definitely not regarded as a typical suspenseful genre. Thus, for instance Beecher (274) asserts that “[o]nly a pale form of suspense can be resurrected over the uncertain plight of the lovers and their formulaic deliverance into happiness at the end”.

However, there seems to be the subgenre of romantic suspense initiated by Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (Reid 438). In her works elements such as “haunted landscapes, obsessional personalities, and sexual tensions” (Sullivan 126) seem to contribute to suspense. Thus, one can define romantic suspense as depicting a love story which is simultaneously driven by a threat of danger (St Claire). Hence romantic suspense incorporates suspenseful themes such as life-threatening situations or dangerous criminals alongside romantic elements (Sheehan).

It follows from this that romantic plots as such raise a moderate degree of suspense with regard to an uncertain situation of lovers. However, if they belong to the subgenre of romantic suspense, it can be assumed that genre-expectations with regard to suspense are higher.

5.2.2 Suspense on the story level

Suspense on the story level is concerned with how far the story as such (i.e. topic, content) can create suspense. There are several features generating suspense on the story level:

5.2.2.1 Open questions

Firstly, according to Wenzel suspense on the story level is preliminary generated by open questions (or initiating events) resulting from the text (Wenzel 182). Koch (287) assumes that “[t]he informational bases for questions are genre-expectations plus the individual segments of the particular text”. Hence genre-expectations as depicted above can serve as basis for these open questions. Furthermore, the open questions can be aimed at the general content of the text (macro suspense) or at certain sequences of the text (micro suspense) (Wenzel 182).

The open questions produce a certain uncertainty with regard to events in a narrative. The uncertainty of specific events is often said to be vital for creating suspense (Beecher 263). These open questions may pertain to whether or not a desirable outcome will occur (yes/no-questions) as well as to the way this outcome might be brought about (how-questions) (Prieto-Pablos 108).

5.2.2.2 Significance of the open questions

Carroll mentions another important prerequisite for generating suspense when stating that the “emotion of suspense takes as its object the moments leading up to the outcome about which we are uncertain. [...] As long as the question is vital, and the outcome is uncertain, we are in a state of suspense” (Carroll 74). Here it becomes clear that the text should not only produce open questions but the reader also has to find these questions important and consequently has to care for the outcome (Wenzel 183). Brewer also (115) asserts that in order to generate suspense “the initiating event has to lead to a significant outcome”.

There can be different strategies applied for the reader to perceive the open questions important. Some critics (e.g. Beecher 266, Wuss 54 or Brewer 109) stress the fact that the reader should be involved in the story. In relation to this the notion of “reader participation” is important. Thus, readers participate for instance by “constructing the fictive “world,” [sic] and keeping track of characters and their intentions” (Beecher 266). According to Beecher (266) there would be no “sense of story” without this kind of participation. Considering the textual elements triggering such a participation Coleridge’s notion of “willing suspension of disbelief” is crucial here so that the reader can get absorbed in the fictional events displayed by the story (Brewer 109). To achieve this state of “willing suspension of disbelief” Brewer suggests “some degree of detail in the description of the events and characters of the fictional world” as a “necessary condition for involvement in a fictional world” (Brewer 109). This results in what he calls the “basic notion of involvement” (Brewer 109).

Additionally Carroll (76) assumes that “the reader must [...] be encouraged to form some preferences about the alternative outcomes”. He claims that morality plays an important role here as this proves to be a general basis for interest. Normally, then, the readers would prefer the morally right solution and in most suspense fiction this option is presented to the reader at some point as the more unlikely one in order to heighten suspense (Carroll 77).

Wenzel (184) and Koch (297ff.) propose another interesting approach to how readers can view the open questions important. They assume that the open questions are regarded as suspenseful when certain universal drives are activated. These drives are connected with physical experiences and survival instincts (Wenzel 184). This is in accordance with Beecher's definition of suspense as "the emotional component of survival-related provisional thinking" (Beecher 263). More specifically, three drives can be discerned as vital for survival and hence crucial for generating suspense: There is *Crimen*, which is connected with attack and escape, *Fructus*, which is related to ingestion and well-being (Koch 297) and *Sexus*, which has to do with reproduction (Wenzel 184). Each of these drives offers a range of suspenseful literary themes. Hence *Crimen* would be connected with topics such as violence, danger, murder, etc., *Fructus* would be activated in texts concerned with child abduction or generation conflicts and *Sexus* would be related to themes such as love, romance, incest or forbidden love. If any of these drives are activated the reader will feel suspense or even thrill, a very intense physical experience of suspense (Wenzel 184).

The degree of suspense increases when there is a transgression between these drives, for instance between *Crimen* and *Fructus* or *Fructus* and *Sexus*, both of which apply for example to Ödipus who kills his father (*Crimen* and *Fructus*) and sleeps with his mother (*Fructus* and *Sexus*) (Wenzel 184). However, studies have shown that the narration of incidents connected with *Crimen* generate more suspense than *Fructus* and *Sexus* (Wenzel 185 or Gerrig 98ff.). Koch (298) similarly asserts that suspense is the highest when *Crimen* is activated. Thus, one can reasonably infer that transgressions in connection with *Crimen* create a high degree of suspense.

All in all, it seems that the significance of open questions can be achieved through a variety of strategies. There certainly needs to be a degree of detail when depicting the fictive world for the reader to participate or enter the "willing suspension of disbelief". Furthermore, in some texts, reader engagement is based on a judgment of the morality of different outcomes. In addition to this the activation of universal drives seems to be significant for creating suspense.

5.2.2.3 Limited amount of answers

Furthermore, scholars dealing with the topic of suspense in literary texts and films agree on the fact that the amount of possible answers to the open questions should be limited in order to create suspense. Tan and Ditlewieg (153) for instance claim that there should be limited kinds of resolution which promise a final resolution. Koch (311) agrees here by stating that

the main working condition of suspenseful fiction is the “limitation of focus and *economy* [sic]”. It even seems that the most suspenseful texts offer only two possible solutions to the open questions, namely success or failure (Wenzel 183). Junkerjürgen (34f.) provides an explanation for this when stating that a limited amount of possible answers ensures a high degree of transparency of and thus provides more information about the open questions.

5.2.2.4 *Equal probability of outcomes*

As yet another criterion for suspense Wenzel proposes the equal probability of the possible outcomes as long as there is no preference for one of the possibilities caused by feeling empathy towards a character (Wenzel 183). Koch (291) illustrates the necessity of the equal probability of outcomes with a simple example from everyday experience: A spectator watching a boxing bout from a neutral vantage point experiences suspense when “the chances of the contestants are even” (Koch 291). However, one can assume that “[i]f a neutral recipient of suspense becomes biased in favour of *one* [sic] of the two contestants [...], suspense becomes more critical” (Koch 291). Thus the suspense experienced when watching a boxing match heightens if spectators “resolve to side with one or the other party” (Koch 291).

The same is true when reading literary texts: At the beginning of a text it is important that the probabilities of the outcomes are equal as the reader is still neutral at this stage. However, as soon as there is a feeling of empathy for a certain character, the equal probability of outcomes is not important anymore since the reader prefers the possibility in favor of the character he or she feels empathy for (Wenzel 183). Here the outcome that is the desirable one but is also least likely to happen seems to be the most suspenseful one. To put it in other words, suspense occurs when the undesirable alternative appears to be the likely one, while the desirable option is the one hoped for (Prieto-Pablos 106). Hence if the favored character is in difficulties and it is not likely that the solution will be beneficial for this figure, the reader will be in a state of suspense (Wenzel 183). This last point already points to yet another criterion for suspense on the story level, namely character sympathy.

5.2.2.5 *Character sympathy*

In order to favor one possible solution the reader has to be concerned about a character (Brewer 113). For the reader to feel emotions for characters (comparable to those the reader would feel for nonfictional characters in similar situations) there must be some “potential for a significant outcome for a character”, so “the reader must be concerned about the character in order for the reader to feel suspense for the character” (Brewer 116). Junkerjürgen (62)

affirms this by stating that empirical studies have shown that the capacity of characters to elicit emphatic reactions on the readers' side is crucial in building up suspense.

Although the concept of identification with the respective character is still popular (Zillmann 213), it is obvious that such an identification is not possible due to the fact that "what readers know and what characters know and feel is rarely synonymous" (Beecher 260). Brewer (109) confirms this by stating that "the reader's affective state is frequently quite different from that of the character". Character empathy, however, which includes having "feelings of "well-wishing" for persons in dire situations without completely blending our own beliefs, desires, and assessments with theirs" (Beecher 260) is an empirically substantiated concept (Zillmann 214). Feeling empathy for characters thus entails evaluating their circumstances and feeling concern over their prospects (Beecher 268). Here an increase of suspense appears to be achieved by providing the readers with knowledge that the characters do not have. In suspense fiction this knowledge concerns potential difficulties the characters are not aware of (Brewer 113f.).

For the analysis of suspense in literary texts it is consequently of interest how a certain text achieves a feeling of empathy on the reader's side. Here Koch (292) simply suggests that readers tend to prefer the weaker party for egotistic reasons. As already mentioned above suspense heightens if the favored outcome is rather unlikely. Hence Koch assumes that recipients of suspenseful fiction merely choose the weaker character for the sake of suspense (Koch 292).

Other critics believe that character empathy is connected with the issue of morality. Beecher (269) for instance claims that initially the goals of certain characters must be understood by the reader in order to empathize with a character. Accordingly the readers are able to judge in how far these characters "deserve" rewards or should be feared for when in danger (Beecher 269). Comparable to the suggestion of favoring the more moral outcome in order to perceive the open questions important, Carroll (79f.) similarly assumes that morality is also essential for empathizing with a character. He claims that protagonists, i.e. characters the reader should feel empathy for, do at least possess some virtues. If there are antagonists or opponents in the story these are normally presented as less virtuous (Carroll 79). Zillmann (209) agrees here by suggesting that for the reader to empathize with protagonists "their admirable attributes and their virtuous behavior" needs to be displayed. He further assumes that "[t]he analogous

creation of unfavorable dispositions toward antagonists or antagonistic conditions is equally essential” (Zillman 209). However, in this respect it is also important to take into account that “the audience’s moral responses are frequently shaped by fiction itself” (Carroll 79), which explains why readers can also empathize with characters who do not behave morally correct (e.g. criminals). This phenomenon can be referred to as the “suspension of values”, which is temporary in the sense that “it lasts only for as long as we watch a film or read a novel” (Prieto-Pablos 105).

It follows from these remarks on character sympathy that there should be protagonists who show some virtues and antagonists threatening their welfare (Zillmann 220). Zillmann (218) even assumes that these two components are indispensable “[f]or the effective creation of the experience of suspense”. The idea of empathizing with characters due to reasons of morality, however, is based on the assumptions that there are clear positive as well as obvious negative characters. When the characters are more complex, this distinction is not always discernible, though (Junkerjürgen 39).

Thus, in addition to judging fictional characters on the basis of morality, other devices have to be used as well when analyzing characters’ potential for suspense. Wenzel (186) for instance suggests that a detailed description of persons and situations is needed for the reader to engage in the text and with the characters and thus eventually perceiving the text as suspenseful. Smith (76) quite similarly proposes that it is the fiction itself which provides the material for responding to fictional characters. More specifically he concerns himself with the different “levels of engagement” with fictional characters which constitute the “structure of sympathy” (Smith 5). There are three levels of engagement, namely recognition, alignment, and allegiance (Smith 73). Each of these “describes a level of narrative structure which relates to character” (Smith 82). **Recognition** refers to the mere process of constructing characters (Smith 75) thus pertains to “the perception of a set of textual elements” (Smith 82). **Alignment** concerns the way a narrative gives access to characters’ thoughts and feelings. Here the narrative can restrict itself to actions and thoughts of one or more characters (Smith 83). **Allegiance** pertains to the way a narrative attempts to channel the reader’s sympathies for or against a character (Smith 6). Smith (84) argues here that allegiance depends on the “moral evaluation of characters” by the reader. It follows from this that whereas recognition and alignment require the reader only to understand that respective traits and mental states designate a character, the level of allegiance goes further “by evaluating and responding

emotionally to the traits and emotions of the character” (Smith 85). Here “reliable access to the character’s state of mind” (Smith 84) as well as an understanding of the context constituting the character’s actions is needed so that the character can be evaluated on a moral basis.

Although Smith also bases emphatic responses eventually on moral considerations, he proposes a more detailed description of how the narrative and its textual elements are involved in this process. The distinction between different levels of engagement, which essentially distinguish between a mere recognition, an understanding or an involvement with a character “enable us to describe and explain our variegated responses to character in a more subtle and discriminating way” (Smith 106). It is thus very useful when it comes to analyzing suspense. More specifically, it provides a theoretical model for analyzing characters’ likelihood to generate suspense. Thus, it seems clear that here a mere recognition of characters does not suffice. Allegiance with a character, however, is certainly able to create suspense. It remains questionable if the level of alignment is also sufficient to induce a state of suspense. The analyses of Fowles’s texts will try to provide answers to this issue.

To sum up, the analysis of suspense on the story level will consider the following levels: The open questions the texts raise and their respective significance. Furthermore, it will be investigated if the answers to these questions are limited as this heightens suspense. Moreover, the analyses will examine the equal probabilities of the outcomes at the beginning of the texts. Lastly, there will be a focus on the characters of the texts and in how far they can create suspense through eliciting empathic responses.

5.2.3 Suspense on the discourse level

Suspense on the discourse level is concerned with how the narrative discourse is constructed in order to create suspense. According to Wenzel the discourse level is even more important than the story level in building up suspense (Wenzel 186).

Suspense is said to be one of the three rhetorical devices in fiction which “contribute to the readers’ appreciation of a discourse as a story” (Tan & Diteweg 150). The other two are mystery and surprise. The latter one is generally not perceived as generating suspense and should consequently be clearly differentiated from suspense (Tan & Diteweg 150). With mystery or the related curiosity discourse structure a distinction is not always obvious, which is also the reason why there is no agreement in this field of study of whether it is another form

of suspense or distinctive from it. It is clear, however, that the curiosity discourse structure is different from the suspense one insofar as that it is oriented towards the past while in the latter the attention is targeted towards the future (Wenzel 187). While in mystery structures the discourse gives enough information to make the reader curious about past events, in the suspense discourse the reader is interested in an outcome in the future (Brewer 112f.). Cupchik depicts this distinction similarly by describing suspense and curiosity as inducing two distinct kinds of uncertainty. There are *predictions*, which are concerned about future events and the “*understanding* [sic] of ongoing events, which may require the discovery of facts and conditions concealed from us by the author” (Cupchik 189). Normally texts concerned with predictions have been regarded as suspenseful. The understanding of ongoing events, however, has been defined by some as curiosity (Cupchik 190). Carroll (75f.) agrees here in defining mystery as another form of narrative uncertainty to be differentiated from suspense. He substantiates his argument by alluding to the different possibilities of outcomes. Whereas in mystery there is an unlimited number of possibilities regarding the outcome, with suspense there are only two, which are either positive or negative for the protagonist. The prototypical genre applying the curiosity discourse structure is often said to be the detective story. Here the amount of possible outcomes is indeed rather high as there can be as many solutions as there are suspects (Wenzel 187f.). As already mentioned above, a limited amount of possible outcomes does indeed heighten suspense on the story level. In addition to this the relationship between the answers to the outcome is different as well. In mystery fiction the possible solutions need not be related to each other whereas in suspense they have to be, namely in a binary relation (positive or negative) (Carroll 76).

Although there are clearly differences between the curiosity discourse and the suspense discourse structure, they essentially follow similar patterns. Briefly depicting the two suspense schemata, one can say that in the curiosity discourse structure “curiosity is produced by including a crucial event early in the event structure. In a text with curiosity structure [...] the discourse contains enough information about the earlier events to let the reader know that the information has been omitted from the discourse” (Brewer 112). This causes curiosity which is resolved later in the story (Brewer 112). In the suspense discourse structure there is also an initiating event introducing the conflict, which is resolved after a long retarding phase (Wenzel 188). Hence one can claim that both structures introduce problem-solving situations containing three elements, namely “an unwelcome (conlict-loaden [sic]) initial situation, a desired final situation and a barrier that in a given situation prevents the transformation from

initial to final situation” (Wuss 54f.). Moreover, both structures try to achieve some kind of expectation on the reader’s side. This expectation is targeted towards “what is to be presented, be it events localized in fictional time earlier or later than the moment of fictional time represented at a given moment” (Tan & Ditzeweg 153).

Considering the similar structure patterns and the kind of expectations they induce, one can definitely follow Wenzel (187f.) who treats them both as suspense schemata. Beecher (255) agrees here in stating that these different plot types merely “affect the ethos of suspense”. Thus, the quality of suspense and the emotions connected with them might be different but suspense can nevertheless be created by both.

5.2.3.1 Curiosity discourse structure

As already mentioned the curiosity discourse structure is oriented towards the past and is typically used in detective stories. It deals with the gradual detection of a mystery and the suspense created by this structure is therefore also called *analytical suspense* (Wenzel 189). As illustrated in Table 2, it consists of five stages:

Table 2 Curiosity discourse structure

Phase	Explanation
1) Introduction of the riddle	Presentation of the problem
2) Horror, surprise and bewilderment	Main character experiences these emotions
3) Analytical phase	Hypotheses, possible solutions, red herrings
4) Blocking phase	Barriers to the solution
5) Solution	Resolution of the problem

Table 2 shows an overview of the various stages in the curiosity discourse structure, which are depicted in greater detail in the following: In the first phase the **riddle** is introduced: Here a problem (normally a mystery, a crime) is presented, typically perceived from the perspective of a certain character of the story. This initial situation can be introduced either suddenly (e.g. the discovery of a corpse) or gradually (the riddle is slowly established) (Wenzel 189). Then, there is a phase of **horror, surprise and bewilderment**: Here the main character shows these emotions in response to the mysteriousness of the problem. This heightens suspense since the reader should already be engaged in the story and interested in its characters (Wenzel 189). Afterwards there is an **analytical phase**, which consists of hypotheses concerning the riddle as well as red herrings and misdirections (Wenzel 189f.).

Here Nusser (34) asserts that suspense is heightened through red herrings or false hypotheses. Afterwards there is a **blocking phase**: There, barriers with regard to the riddle are introduced and the insolubleness of the problem is suggested. These barriers are complemented by more or less explicit references to the solution of the problem in order to heighten suspense. According to Wenzel (190) barriers put up immediately before the solution create a very high degree of suspense. Finally, stories adhering to the curiosity discourse structure typically end with a **solution**: Often this solution is partly introduced and then interrupted or first part of the solution is given followed by the complete disclosure (Wenzel 190).

5.2.3.2 *Suspense discourse structure*

As opposed to the curiosity discourse structure, the suspense discourse structure is oriented towards the future and is characterized by the interplay between fear and hope (Wenzel 190). This discourse structure is applied in many narrative texts and is said to induce interest for reading these texts (Wenzel 190). Furthermore, this pattern seems to be constitutive of genres such as thrillers or Gothic fiction. There it can be found in sequences depicting the characters in great danger (Wenzel 191). Like the curiosity discourse structure, the suspense discourse structure also consists of five phases shown in Table 3:

Table 3 Suspense discourse structure

Phase	Explanation
1) Initiating event	Presentation of a dangerous situation
2) Reader's empathy	Reader gets emotionally involved in the story
3) Changing fortunes	Interplay between fear and hope
4) Retarding phase	Deferring the outcome of the story
5) Outcome	Depicting the resolution of the crisis

As illustrated in Table 3 the suspense discourse structure commences with the introduction of an **initiating event**: Initially textual elements (foreshadowing, cataphoric references), certain requisites (e.g. weapons) or a specific description of the environment (often in Gothic novels) are hinting at this initiating event (Wenzel 191). The initiating event itself proves essentially to be some kind of dangerous or precarious situation (Wenzel 191). In the second phase the reader should get emotionally engaged in the story. At this stage the reader ideally feels **empathy for the characters** who are somehow involved in the conflict or even in danger. Typically this suspenseful sequence is depicted with vocabulary denoting strong emotions and is delineated from the perspective of a main character (Wenzel 191f.). After getting the reader

emotionally involved with a character there is a phase of **changing fortunes**. Wenzel (192) regards this as the pivotal stage in the suspense discourse structure. Here the reader is repeatedly confronted with the binary solutions to the crisis, which should ideally result in an emotional interplay between fear and hope (for the character the reader feels empathy for). This could be achieved in duel scenes for instance where protagonist and antagonist interchangeably get the upper hand (Wenzel 192). Suspense usually arises when characters liked by the reader are under duress and their “futures are perilous and uncertain” (Beecher 256). Afterwards there is a **retarding phase** deferring the outcome of the story. Here various strategies can be applied: For example cliffhangers interrupting the narration at suspenseful point are a popular device (Wenzel 192). It is empirically proven that these blanks in the narrative interrupting the connection between two textual segments heighten suspense and readers tend to read these passages more quickly until the blank is filled (Cupchik 191). Moreover, elements related with the limitation of time (e.g. bombs) retard the outcome while at the same time promise that there will eventually be one. This is quite similar to the blocking phase in the curiosity discourse structure where on the one hand the insolubleness of the mystery is pronounced while on the other hand there are hints to the solution (Wenzel 192). The suspense discourse structure typically ends with a description of the **outcome** of the problematic situation. In opposition to the curiosity discourse structure a gradual resolution of the problem is not suitable here as there are typically only two alternatives. However, in this suspense schema a so called “last minute crisis” can be introduced in order to heighten suspense (Wenzel 192).

5.2.3.3 Combination of the discourse structures

The detailed descriptions of the two suspense schemata clearly illustrate that despite their differences both structures display the same progress of suspense: Firstly, suspense is triggered (phase 1) and then intensified (phase 2). In phase 3 there is an interplay of different emotions followed by a procrastination of suspense (phase 4). Eventually the problem is resolved in a suspenseful manner (phase 5) (Wenzel 188).

This similarity and also the flexibility of the suspense schemata themselves explain why in some texts they are combined. Thus, in many texts there is more than one arc of suspense which might be similar or not. For instance in classical detective stories, such as those written by Agatha Christie, the curiosity discourse structure is dominant while in the hard-boiled mode curiosity and suspense elements are extensively mixed (Wenzel 193).

Thus, in the analyses of Fowles's texts on the discourse level it will be investigated what suspense structures prevail in the narrative discourses or if there is a combination of discourse structures. Furthermore, it will be of interest in how far these suspense structures are adhered to.

5.2.4 Linguistic devices generating suspense

It has already been hinted above that in order to create suspense certain linguistic devices are also crucial. Fill (73) for instance states that language can on the one hand aid in withholding information and thus raising anticipation (cf. discourse structures). On the other hand, suspense is also generated through certain language forms themselves and consequently it is worthwhile to consider the language use in texts when analyzing suspense. Thus, besides analyzing genre expectations as well as story and discourse level of the texts, the linguistic level will be the fourth level of analysis⁷.

Firstly, suspense can already be created by the **title** of a literary text. Thus, titles with interrogative clauses (e.g. *Is that a Gun in your Pocket?* by Rachel Abramowitz), prepositional phrases (e.g. *From the Corner of his Eye* by Dean R. Knootz) or titles containing words related to mystery or danger in general (e.g. *Blood Crazy* by Simon Clark) all raise expectations concerning suspense (Fill 73).

Secondly, the **lexical-semantic level** in a text should also be considered in the analysis. Hence, the use of certain vocabulary also induces a state of suspense. Fill (75) for instance suggests that using words from the semantic fields of *crime*, *mystery* and *horror* can result in the reader feeling suspense. Furthermore, regarding vocabulary related to the emotional state of suspense the study conducted by Storm and Storm (811) suggests a number of negatively connotated terms related to anxiety and fear. Among these are *afraid*, *frightened*, *scared*, *aghast* and *horror*, which are all vocabulary typical for suspense texts⁸. In general, these semantic fields can be related to *Crimen*, the drive which is above depicted as generating the highest degree of suspense.

Thirdly, there are also certain devices on the **syntactic level** which generate suspense. Here for instance the use of interrogative clauses (e.g. "Guess what happened?") or ergative clauses

⁷ This level of analysis will be especially important when examining the micro level of suspense in the texts.

⁸ In general the study was concerned with different emotions and their related vocabulary. For this thesis vocabulary related to anxiety and fear is essential and it is thus interesting to scrutinize the literary texts with regard to this type of vocabulary.

(e.g. the window broke) where the agent is omitted can contribute to heighten suspense (Fill 75). Furthermore, elliptic sentences are more suspenseful than complete ones since they are open and therefore convey a sense of uncertainty (Fill 41).

Lastly, on the **textual level** of literary texts one can also find many devices for creating suspense. Here for instance cataphoric or as Wulff (2) calls them “advance references” are one means to heighten suspense. Wulff (3) provides the following definition for this linguistic phenomenon:

In the linguistic study of cataphora, it is said that advance references are cohesive relationships of one sign to a subsequent one. Cohesion results there, above all, from coreference: such as when a preform stands in front of the coreferring expression.

Wulff (2) even proposes that these “advance references” which essentially are “references to future developments in the plot” (Wulff 2) are mainly responsible for triggering suspense: “cataphoric advance references are a central means of developing a field of anticipation” (Wulff 3). In this respect Fill (49) mentions the so called “referentless pronoun” whose referent is mentioned only later in the text as one example for a cataphoric reference generating suspense. Here the “advance reference takes place in a still undefined information process and is targeting a specific element in the text” (Wulff 3). Wulff (7) further argues that a suspenseful scene must not necessarily be fully developed; it is merely crucial to provide the readers with a picture of the situation and hint at possible dangers or complications. Thus, advance references relate to “the forthcoming text, regardless of whether the reference comes about or not” (Wulff 15).

In addition to the “referentless pronoun” there are other cataphoric as well as anaphoric references which interrupt the narrative flow and thus heighten suspense. Among these are devices such as cliffhangers, digressions, flashbacks or flashforwards (Fill 81). Cliffhangers for instance interrupt the narrative at an especially suspenseful moment and mark the ends of particular sequences (Jurga 472). On the one hand cliffhangers serve to raise anticipations with regard to new information (Jurga 483). Thus, they aid in suspending the outcome of a story. On the other hand they aim at reader engagement and maintaining reader interest (Jurga 474). Suspense is here created through a feeling of curiosity and an eagerness to know about future developments in the story (Fill 50).

All in all, in this thesis literary texts are analyzed on four levels, namely the genre, the story, the discourse and the linguistic level. Here it is important to keep in mind that suspense can be generated in response to whole narratives or certain sequences of a narrative, which may or may not be suspenseful as a whole (Carroll 74). Therefore, in addition to the “macro suspense and resolution structure” (Brewer 116) there can also be suspense structures on the micro level. This means that in narratives also “a number of “mini” suspense and resolution episodes” (Brewer 116) can be included. Hence in the analyses suspense on the macro as well as the micro level will be investigated.

However, before these analyses are presented the research concern of this thesis, which pertains to suspense in postmodern texts, will be described.

5.3 Suspense in postmodern texts

Scholars analyzing suspense in texts typically concentrate on suspense texts which are usually classified as belonging to popular literature. Thus, the range of “data” (i.e. literary texts) which are examined and form the basis for suspense theories is limited in kind and variation (Iwata 4).

According to Vorderer (236) prototypical suspense texts “are marked by a lack of variation, innovation, and ambiguity and do not demand that the readers be accomplished in actively generating meaning”. The characters in these texts are rather flat and stereotyped and as a result are perceived by the reader as either good or bad. This nonambiguity results in the reader being able to definitely feel empathy (cf. suspense on the story level) for the morally “good” characters.

However, there are also other types of texts with more complex characters where evaluation on the basis of morality is not that straightforward. There have been several distinctions made between these two sorts of fictional texts. Regarding the cognitive side of reading, a differentiation on the basis of how challenging a text is can be made. Here a prototypical suspense text emphasizes assimilative cognitive processes while more challenging texts demand accommodative cognitive processes (Vorderer 237). Regarding the cognitive effort needed when processing a text, it has been consequently assumed that suspense is “a phenomenon linked to undemanding texts” (Vorderer 237). Bonheim (3) seems to agree with Vorderer in declaring that “suspense-loaded fiction is still one of the most popular genres but not in the sense of élitist literature”. He also states that suspenseful novels are sometimes

regarded as “novel[s] of mere entertainment” (Bonheim 4). Furthermore, Wenzel (193) claims that texts belonging to the so-called high literature concentrate on other levels in the narrative such as character characterization or description of the surroundings, which do not seem of importance in suspense fiction. Wenzel (193) concludes that this different focus results in a less suspenseful narrative.

Regarding postmodern texts it seems clear that due to their disruptive and self-referential aesthetics and open endings they cannot be classified as typical “undemanding” suspense texts. However, as depicted above, postmodern texts are often seen as a merger between the so called “popular” and the more complex (or elitist) fiction. Therefore it is of interest whether suspense can nevertheless be created in postmodern texts.

Most scholars concerned in this field of interest believe that postmodern texts are not suspenseful. Wenzel (183) for instance argues that readers of postmodern texts generally perceive them as being boring instead of suspenseful. Butler agrees here in arguing that the “contradiction-filled anti-narrative method” (Butler 7) in postmodern texts is “not so much interested in individual character, or coherent narrative suspense and interest” (Butler 7). In addition to this regarding postmodern anti-detective stories Voigts-Virchow (138) speaks of a “reduced anticipatory value” due to postmodern aesthetics. In the postmodern short story “Title” by John Barth it is even explicitly stated that “we’re done, you and I. Suspense.” and later: “Goodbye suspense goodbye” (Barth 113).

However, some critics assume that also more “complex” texts can generate suspense. Vorderer (236) for instance states that polyvalent texts although having been labeled the exact opposite of suspense texts may also generate suspense. Other critics agree and claim that suspense is indeed possible in postmodern texts. It is merely treated differently in postmodern than in typical suspense texts, though. With regard to the issue of suspense in postmodern texts Stratmann proposes an interesting argumentation especially concentrating on the importance of closure when creating suspense. He believes that postmodernism cynically and playfully flirts with suspense (Stratmann 180). This is linked to the dilemma of postmodern authors, who on the one hand condemn readers who anticipate narrative closure but on the other hand are nevertheless not willing to refrain from creating the suspenseful state of anticipation (Stratmann 176). This paradox can be related to “the double coding of

‘both having the cake and eating it’” (Voigts-Virschaw 135) which results from the use of postmodernist devices such as parody and pastiche.

In order to describe this playful relation Stratmann (179) proposes a **narrator-narratee contract** between authors and readers of suspenseful texts. In this contract authors of suspenseful texts are supposed to provide a certain plot-structure in order to create suspense⁹. This structure must include an **initiating event** (a mystery, crime, etc.) and a **small amount of solutions** (Stratmann 177). According to Stratmann, though, one of the most important factors in creating suspense is that the initiating event must be prone to a decision or a mystery in order to create suspense (Stratmann 178). Furthermore, there should be a **retarding phase** between the introduction of the mystery and its solution to heighten the suspense (Stratmann 178). In addition to this the author has to provide the reader with a **solution** to the mystery. Hence the reader relies on the existence of a solution. The reader’s duty (as declared in the “contract”) is to perform the “willing suspension of disbelief” and thus has to suspend all disruptive knowledge which would otherwise break the suspense (Stratmann 179).

Comparable to Stratmann’s narrator-narratee contract Prieto-Pablos (103) mentions the reader’s emotional or affective commitment to the author as he or she is the one providing the “resolution to the suspensive situation, therefore the one on whom we depend for the relief of our uncertainty and tension”. Therefore readers trust the author in giving them the solution at the right time. When the solution is still suspended, however, readers assume that he or she “will provide the sufficient amount of clues to allow us to produce our own hypotheses” (Prieto-Pablos 103). The affective relation with the author intensifies when readers’ expectations are met (Prieto-Pablos 103).

One can see that both the concept of affective commitment to the author and the narrator-narratee contract are based on the assumption that the author satisfies the expectation of the reader at some point in the narrative. However, such a commitment or contract provides the basis for a typical contradictory postmodern situation: it is both appealing and appalling for postmodernism. On the one hand, the retarding phase is in accordance with the poststructuralist/postmodernist perception of language as not being able to produce meaning

⁹ It follows from this that Stratmann mainly bases his argumentation on suspense on the discourse structure of texts. The initiating event-retarding-solution structure of suspense texts is described in greater detail in chapter 5.2.3.

but an endless amount of signs referring to each other (Zapf 200) so that “meaning is constantly being transferred from one signifier to another” (Stratmann 181). On the other hand, the adherence to the promise of dissolving the mystery apparently seems appalling to postmodernists since it can be regarded as a justification for the constant shifting of meaning (Stratmann 179). Therefore, the solution to the mystery is often left out in postmodern texts resulting in a change of the function of suspense. There seems to be no goal (i.e. solution) for suspense to be achieved and therefore it becomes a mere flirtation, a game (Stratmann 180).

In this respect the characteristic feature of postmodernist literature of connecting high (in this case: deconstructing the notion of suspense) and popular (generating suspense) literature becomes yet again apparent since postmodern authors can apply typical suspense strategies to high literature (Stratmann 184). Hence popular suspense genres such as the thriller or the detective genres are deconstructed intertextually in the postmodernist mode while at the same time there is a participation “in its lure and attraction” (Voigts-Virchow 135). In these texts suspense can nevertheless be generated without a solution as long as the reader gets the feeling that the mystery will somehow be solved and the order reinstalled (Stratmann 181)¹⁰. However, if “it were clear from the start that there will be no satisfactory closure [...] then there would not be any suspense” (Voigts-Virchow 136). Voigts-Virchow (138) also stresses the fact that even if readers’ expectations might not be fulfilled suspense can only be generated “based on the implication that one day closure is at least feasible”.

All in all it can be said that suspense seems to be possible indeed in postmodern fiction as long as the text manages to create certain anticipation for closure in the reader’s mind. Therefore, the same tactics to generate suspense such as a long retarding phase or cliffhangers can be applied – without providing a solution, though. However, as soon as the readers will become familiar with the postmodern strategy of adhering to and yet undermining the rules of suspense the latter will no longer be achieved and as a result Stratmann (184) assumes that this postmodern creative strategy will wear off.

It is now possible to elucidate the research concerns of this thesis. Here, three postmodern texts by John Fowles are analyzed with regard to their suspensefulness. Thus, this study not

¹⁰ Stratmann mentions *The Unconsoled* by Kazuo Ishiguro as an example for a suspenseful postmodern text. This novel involves a long retarding phase without a solution. In order to create suspense strategies such as cliffhangers are used (Stratmann 181f).

only adds to a more varied research of suspense in literature (i.e. analyzing a different kind of “data” as previous research) but also further examines the possibility of suspense in postmodern texts. Thus, it will be of interest in how far some postmodern features of the texts have an influence on their suspensefulness.

6 Analysis of suspense in Fowles's texts

6.1 Suspense in "The Enigma"

6.1.1 Genre expectations

At first sight "The Enigma" appears to be a typical detective as there is a mystery, a detective and the use of genre-typical vocabulary. As depicted above in greater detail the genre of detective fiction is generally presumed to be a suspenseful one. Therefore, this short story certainly raises some expectations concerning suspense simply due to its apparent belonging to the detective genre. More specifically, one expects an explanation of a past event, i.e. the detection of the mystery of Fielding's disappearance, and therefore the suspense in this story is presumably targeted towards the past. However, it shall now be examined thoroughly if the genre expectations raised by the short story can be met on the other levels of analysis as well.

6.1.2 Suspense on the story level

Open questions and their significance

There is certainly a **mystery**, an open question or initiating event on the macro level, namely the disappearance of John Marcus Fielding¹¹. However, it is discussable, if this question is also **vital** for the reader and if there really is "**reader participation**" and thus an entering in the state of "**willing suspension of disbelief**".

There certainly is a detailed description of the mystery and the persons involved in it. Thus, Fielding's activities up to the point he disappeared are reported in great detail, even the exact time of his very step up to his disappearance is given. The same can be said about his family members and acquaintances who try to find him. Hence expressions such as "[a]t 2.30 on the afternoon of Friday, July 13th, 1973" (EN 187), "[a]n hour later" (EN 189) or "[s]ome ten minutes later" (EN 190) are used. However, despite the fact that all these events are accounted in great detail, this is done in a rather neutral and newspaper-like manner. In the beginning there is a somewhat scientific exposition explaining the mysteriousness of Fielding's disappearance with statistical data. This is followed by an objective account of Mrs Fielding's and the police's attempts of finding Fielding. The comparison of the first part of "The Enigma" – which would be the vital part in immersing the reader in the story – to a newspaper article is even alluded to at the end: "But no *news story* can survive an absence of fresh developments" [emphasis added] (EN 197).

¹¹ Hence the open question would be: "Where is John Marcus Fielding?"

Turning now to significance of the open questions achieved through the activation of the **three drives**, one can say that all three of them are somehow addressed: *Crimen* seems to be connected with Fielding's disappearance mainly in the first part of the story when the possibility of a political kidnapping is mentioned (EN 191). *Fructus* is essentially important in connection with Peter Fielding and the complicated relationship between him and his father. Jennings describes him as "the person he had marked down as theoretically a key witness – not least since he also sounded an enemy, though where a friend was to be expected" (EN 206). At least at the beginning it is clear that Peter is Jennings's prime suspect. So he believes in the existence of some kind of crime due to family problems. This would then be a transgression between *Crimen* and *Fructus*. Moreover, the third drive, i.e. *Sexus*, remains important throughout the whole story. In connection to Fielding's case it is mentioned as one of the likeliest possibilities for his disappearance. Not only Mrs Fielding but also Fielding's acquaintances, the police and also Jennings suspect some kind of sexually related scandal: "One had to suppose something very clandestine, right out of their class and normal world – some Cockney dolly-bird, heaven knows who" (EN 192). *Sexus*, however, is also crucial in the last part of the story, i.e. Jennings's interview with Isobel. At this point of the story, though, it is less connected with Fielding and the initiating event but with Jennings and Isobel, as the third part of the story can be defined as a description of two lovers getting to know each other.

Regarding the open questions raised by the short story and their significance one can conclude that although there is an initiating event, i.e. an open question, it remains questionable if the objective style of writing at the beginning of the short story does really invite the readers to engage in the story. Furthermore, "The Enigma" certainly breaks the reader's state of "willing suspension of disbelief" at some point of the story when the metafictional comments are introduced. Concerning the activation of the three universal drives, it can be said that despite the fact that all three drives are addressed and even transgressed it is debatable whether they are able to generate suspense. This is due to the way they are interwoven with the mystery, i.e. the open question which should create suspense: Although the drives are activated in relation to possible solutions to Fielding's disappearance, they are not salient enough as there are so many possible solutions to the mystery (see below). Furthermore, *Sexus* is most prominently activated in a context which does not even pertain to the mystery at all. Therefore, one cannot be sure if the activation of the drives really adds to the suspense of the story.

Limited amount of answers

As depicted above, for the (significant) open questions there should be a **limited amount of possible answers** to heighten the suspense. However, “The Enigma” definitely fails to satisfy this criterion since there are no clues whatsoever as to the whereabouts of Fielding and as a result there is a high amount of possible outcomes and suspects (thus also violating Stratmann’s criterion of a limited amount of possible solutions in postmodern texts). This is best illustrated by Jennings’s list of possibilities, which even reaches the number of twenty (EN 198ff.).

Equal possible outcomes

The short story’s open question also only partially fulfills the prerequisite of providing **equal possible outcomes** at the beginning. Although the police remain neutral and do not prefer any possibility, friends and family members clearly suspect a scandal, as illustrated in the following quotations: “By now Mrs Fielding had started once more to suspect some purely private scandal was looming over the tranquil horizon of her life. [...] [S]he now saw a dinner for two in Paris” (EN 191); “The agent [Drummond] had already drawn his own conclusions. He too suspected some scandal, and was secretly shocked [...] Mrs Fielding seemed to him still an attractive women [...]” (EN 192). Mrs Fielding appears to be so convinced that some kind of clandestine romance is the reason for her husband’s disappearance that she is not really interested in further inquiries into that matter: “Somewhere inside herself and the privacies of her life, Mrs Fielding decided that she did not want any more inquiries made that night” (EN 192).

Character sympathy

It is of further interest whether the reader becomes concerned about any character in the story, so if there is **character sympathy**, another vital criterion for creating suspense. Regarding “The Enigma” as a typical detective story, it would be logical to be concerned about either Marcus Fielding, his anxious wife and family members or the detective, who might need to solve the case in order to boost his career.

The character traits of the protagonists of the short story are indeed depicted in great detail thus achieving Brewer’s (109) basic notion of reader involvement. Hence regarding the different levels of engagement, the level of **recognition** is clearly fulfilled for all the characters. Fielding for instance is described at the very beginning of the text “as a model of his kind: the successful City man who is also a country land-owner and (in all but name) village squire” (EN 187). In the course of the story Fielding is thoroughly characterized from

different perspectives (i.e. various persons) without ever appearing in the story, though. There are also descriptions about the other characters, such as Mrs Fielding who is portrayed as “essentially a practical and efficient woman” (*EN* 190). The introduction of Michael Jennings, the main protagonist of the second and third part of the story, even occupies nearly a full page, where facts of his social status as well as his working methods are depicted. Isobel Dodgson appears as a typical female “Fowlesian” protagonist: creative, different, “someone alive” (*EN* 217). She helps Jennings embracing the mystery instead of solving it and is therefore, like other female characters in Fowles’s texts, “the stimulus of mystery” and “the agent of social transformation” (McSweeney 108).

However, in addition to a detailed description of the characters the reader must also be able to feel some kind of emotion for the characters and hence must be concerned about them to consider the story suspenseful. Thus, recognition does not suffice and the deeper levels of engagement, i.e. **alignment** and **allegiance** are needed. When reading the short story it becomes clear that the only two characters readers may sympathize with are Jennings and Isobel. Those appear as the only (morally) likeable and approachable characters, so the readers might be able to be concerned about them and thus feel suspense. This has to do with the fact that the other characters are described in a rather neutral manner¹². Although the reader gets quite a clear picture of how the characters are integrated and behave in the social system, one is unable to discern their real thoughts and feelings since due to “shackles of class” (McSweeney 108) they seem to be bound to hide them in order to “keep up appearances” (*EN* 210).

However, as the story is told from Jennings’s perspective from the second part onwards, the reader is able to comprehend his thoughts and feelings. Also Isobel’s mind seems to be approachable for the reader since she does not “beat about the bush, say[s] what [she] actually think[s] and know[s]” (*EN* 219). So she talks to Jennings in a straightforward manner which allows the reader to get to know her thoughts and feelings. Hence regarding the levels of engagement an **alignment** as well as an **allegiance** with both Jennings and Isobel seems possible since they are depicted as sympathetic and morally good.

¹² Also Jennings initial description (*EN* 197f.) proves to be rather objective and distanced since it is mainly focused on his social class and his working methods. However, as the second and third parts of the story are depicted from his perspective, the reader gets an insight into his thoughts and feelings, which may evoke sympathy on the reader’s side.

From this analysis it becomes clear that Jennings and Isobel are the only characters with the potential to be cared about by the reader. It is now of great importance to delineate in how far they are related to the initiating event and in how far a significant outcome for them is probable. A significant outcome in **Jennings's** case could be solving the case under great pressure from above (e.g. his boss or the Fieldings) in order to further his career. However, when Jennings takes over the case, nobody wants the mystery solved anymore: "He was not really expected to discover anything, only to suggest that avenues were still being busily explored" (EN 197f.). He nevertheless tries really hard to find a solution until he meets Isobel and learns to accept the mystery: "And in some strange way the case had died during that last half-hour; it was not so much that he accepted her theory, but that like everyone else [...] he now saw that it didn't really matter" (EN 237). As far as **Isobel** is concerned she seems to be the only character the readers might be concerned about as well as having something to do with the initiating event. There is a possibility that she might have been involved in Fielding's disappearance as it is not clear what she did two hours after leaving work the day Fielding disappeared. There is a realistic chance that she met with Fielding and helped him in some way or other: "The writer *could* [sic] have made them meet. He'd have to make it a kind of spur-of-the-moment thing" (EN 230). Therefore, there indeed seems to be some potential in the character of Isobel to generate suspense, which cannot be satisfied though, as there is no definite solution to the mystery.

Regarding the conditions for generating suspense on the story level in "The Enigma" it becomes clear that some of them are fulfilled while others are not abided by. Thus, there is an open question, though its significance is questionable. Furthermore, there is definitely not a limited amount of possible solutions to the mystery and the criterion of equal probabilities of outcomes at the beginning is also not adhered to. Hence the story seems to be in accordance with Wenzel's assumption that although postmodern texts indeed raise open questions, they do not provide a clear and limited amount of possible answers. Wenzel also argues that this is the main reason why postmodern texts are often regarded as boring rather than suspenseful (Wenzel 183). However, with regard to character sympathy there is indeed one character in the story, i.e. Isobel Dodgson, who seems to be able to create suspense.

6.1.3 Suspense on the discourse level

The analysis of suspense on the story level has made obvious that “The Enigma” lacks certain aspects for being considered a suspenseful story. The analysis below will show if the same can be said about the discourse level.

As “The Enigma” is a variation of the detective story and therefore at least partially conforms to the rules of the detective genre and the **curiosity discourse structure** is typically characteristic for detective stories (Wenzel 189), the short story will be analyzed with regard to this suspense structure. Since “The Enigma” also only partially follows the genre conventions of detective fiction, one could expect that the same can be assumed concerning the curiosity discourse structure. An analysis of the story with regard to the curiosity discourse structure will reveal if this hypothesis can indeed be substantiated.

“The Enigma” clearly fulfills the first phase, namely the **introduction of the riddle**. The title as well as the quotation from Tao Te Ching already make it clear that the story is about a mystery. The quotation draws on the nature of enigmas and argues that they appear mysterious at first but then gradually an explanation can be found as they “slowly become limpid” (EN 185). This might even suggest that also the mystery in “The Enigma” can be solved and consequently a certain feeling of anticipation on the reader’s side might arise. Then the riddle is presented in more detail, though not from a character’s perspective but in an objective, newspaper-like manner, which is also hinted at by the text itself (EN 197). The subsequent phase of the curiosity discourse structure, the phase of **horror, surprise or bewilderment** is clearly left out. There are no surprises, only lengthy descriptions of the investigations conducted and how all the trails eventually lead to nowhere. Moreover, as the first part of the story is written from an omniscient point of view and in a rather neutral and objective manner, the protagonists consequently do not display any emotions, which would be crucial (according to Wenzel 189) for this phase. However, the following phase, namely the **analytical** one is clearly adhered to. In this phase the narrative perspective shifts from a heterodiegetic narrator to a third person narration with Sergeant Michael Jennings as the narrator. This shift is clearly indicated by a paragraph as well as through the following self-referential remark (referring to the report-like style of the first part): “But no news story can survive an absence of fresh developments” (EN 197). In the analytical phase Jennings interviews Fielding’s family members and acquaintances, forms various hypotheses (EN 198ff.) and follows red herrings. One of them is the West Indian secretary who might have run away with Fielding (EN 204). However, it soon turns out that she has eloped with a singer

and “[i]t was strictly black to black” (EN 204). Another red herring is suspecting Peter Fielding to have a connection with the disappearance. Mrs Fielding, though, immediately makes it clear that this is not a possibility and even explicitly refers to it as merely a red herring: “I do think this is the most terrible red herring, sergeant” (EN 215). The analytical phase can also be regarded as overlapping with the **blocking phase** since it is made obvious from the beginning of the phase that Jennings is not supposed to find a solution to the mystery as it is already defined as insoluble when he takes over the case. This is indicated in the following quotation: “The sergeant was fully aware of the situation: he was to make noises like a large squad. He was not really expected to discover anything, only to suggest that avenues were still being busily explored” (EN 197f.). Moreover, the majority of Jennings’s “witnesses” are not very forthcoming and do not really want the mystery solved for fear of a public scandal. Thus, for instance Jennings notices the following about Miss Parson’s behavior:

Just for a moment the sergeant sensed a blandness, an impermeability in Miss Parsons, which was perhaps merely a realization that she would have done anything for Fielding – including the telling [...] of endless lies. (EN 203)

Also Fielding’s wife – despite the fact that she makes sure that the investigations continue – does “[a]nything to keep reality at bay” (EN 208) and thus settles “for ignorance rather than revelation” (EN 215) and consequently does not tell Jennings what she really thinks.

Furthermore, it is questionable if the last part of the story (i.e. Jennings’s interview with Isobel) really provides a **solution** to the mystery. After a thorough analysis of Fielding’s personality and an introduction of some metaphorical self-referential theories, Jennings and Isobel come to the conclusion that Fielding most probably committed suicide in order to free himself from social constraints (EN 231ff.). Although there are still some uncertainties about Isobel’s whereabouts on the day of Fielding’s disappearance, Jennings nevertheless concludes that a solution is not needed:

And in some strange way the case had died during that last half-hour; it was not so much that he accepted her theory, but that like everyone else [...] he now saw it didn’t really matter. (EN 237)

Thus, the “solution” offered by the story is clearly not a definite one. If it is to be treated as a solution, though, it can even be considered as suspenseful with regard to the narrative structure. As already mentioned, Wenzel (190) argues that in order to heighten suspense solutions are often only partially introduced or interrupted. This narrative strategy is applied in “The Enigma” since Isobel first drops a hint that she has a theory about Fielding’s disappearance: “I’m holding out on you. There’s something I should have told you before.

The police” (EN 223). The detailed presentation of her hypothesis, however, is interrupted by a lengthy description of Jennings’s thoughts about her as “[h]er ‘theory’ must wait till they had their tea” (EN 228).

With regard to the analysis of suspense on the discourse level of “The Enigma” there is indeed some potential of creating suspense. Drawing on Wuss’ elements of a problem-solving situation, the short story indeed contains a conflict-laden initial situation, i.e. Fielding’s disappearance. This initial event clearly has potential for creating suspense. Furthermore, there is definitely a barrier, a blocking phase, between the initial situation and its resolution. The desired final situation, i.e. the solution, though, seems to be missing, as there is no definite solution to the story and the story ends with two people starting a love affair. Instead there seems to be a focus on the blocking phase bringing us back to Stratmann’s assumptions about suspense in postmodern texts, who also mentions the long retarding phase without providing a solution as being characteristic for postmodern texts. As the analytical phase overlaps with the blocking phase, “The Enigma” fails to offer the reader certainty of an eventual resolution, though. Moreover, no strategies to heighten suspense, such as cliffhangers are applied.

6.1.4 Linguistic devices generating suspense

Considering the fourth level of analysis, namely the linguistic one, one can definitely say that the **title** of the short story creates suspense as the word *enigma* alludes to a riddle, a mystery. Furthermore, on the **lexical-semantic level** there is the use of genre-typical vocabulary relating to the semantic field of *mystery*, such as “clue” (EN 193), “evidence” (EN 193) or “red herring” (EN 215), which raises anticipations of an equally genre-typical unfolding of the story. However, only one word, namely “panic” (EN 189) associated with negative emotions could be detected in the story. Furthermore, on the **syntactic** no devices generating suspense could be found. On the **textual level**, however, one cataphoric advance reference could be detected. Thus, Isobel alludes to a “private theory” (EN 228) of hers, which is explained only later in the text, though.

However, on the whole, the examination of the linguistic level revealed that rather than generating suspense the creation of suspense is deliberately counteracted through choice of vocabulary. Thus, when analyzing the narratively suspenseful part of the solution, it becomes clear that in this case suspense generated on the discourse level is broken through the use of certain vocabulary. More specifically, Isobel makes it clear from the very beginning of the

interview that – despite the fact that she has a hypothesis – she does not know more about Fielding’s disappearance than the other characters by constantly using words, mainly adjectives, refuting her theory. An investigation of such a vocabulary usage revealed a rather extensive collection: “just the *tiniest* whiff” [emphasis added] (EN 222), “*tiny* thing” [emphasis added] (EN 222), “It’s very *minor*” [emphasis added] (EN 223), “There was one other *tiny* thing” [emphasis added] (EN 225), “I’m talking about *tiny*, very *faint* impressions. [...] They may not mean anything” [emphasis added] (EN 226), “It’s all so *tenuous*. I don’t even know why I’m bothering to tell you” [emphasis added] (EN 226f.).

It is obvious that adjectives like *tiny* or *tenuous* lessen the possibility of Isobel’s hypotheses. Also Isobel’s final theory is described as “very *wild*” and “very *literary*” [emphasis added] (EN 228), which is definitely not aimed at raising readers’ anticipations regarding a definite outcome. On the contrary, they are induced to expect a rather complex theory but by no means a solution. Hence one can conclude that although the somewhat “solution” of the mystery is introduced in a suspenseful way with regard to its narrative structure, the vocabulary used clearly refutes the definiteness of this solution.

On the whole, the analysis of suspense in “The Enigma” has revealed that the genre as well as the discourse level of the story generate some suspense while the story level and especially the linguistic level do not really add to the suspense. This overall rather low amount of suspense will be investigated in chapter 6.1. in relation to some of the short story’s postmodern characteristics.

6.2 Suspense in “Poor Koko”

6.2.1 Genre expectations

“Poor Koko” can be considered as using both thriller and detective genre conventions. The affinity to both genres is (ironically) alluded to in the first sentence: “Certain melodramatic situations derived from the *detective story* and the *thriller* [...]” [emphasis added] (PK 145). The dangerousness of the situation the narrator finds himself in is depicted at the beginning of the story and thus evokes a typical thriller-like situation. In the second part of the story the disappearance of the thief and the subsequent release of the narrator initiate the detective part of the story. Comparable to “The Enigma” there is a mystery, i.e. the identity and motives of the thief, and a “detective”, i.e. the narrator trying to solve the mystery of the young man’s incomprehensible behavior.

As depicted above both thrillers and detective stories are regarded as suspenseful genres. Therefore, one can assume that due to the fact that “Poor Koko” uses genre conventions from both genres a certain amount of suspense is anticipated by the reader. More specifically, in the thriller-part one would expect an orientation of suspense towards the future, while in the detective-part of the story it can be assumed that the suspense is targeted towards the past. In the following it shall be examined if these expectations regarding the suspensefulness of the story can be met on the other levels of analysis as well.

6.2.2 Suspense on the story level

Open questions

The **thriller part** of the story raises several open questions on the macro as well as the micro level. Thus, the open question on the **macro-level** pertains to the uncertainty of whether the narrator will survive the encounter with the thief unharmed. There are also several open questions on the **micro-level**: At the beginning of the story the narrator mentions a “deeply distressing experience that is the subject of this narrative” (PK 145) and that in the night of his “ordeal” he was awoken and “lay as much in a state of incredulity as of fear” (PK 145). Hence the following questions arise: What is this extraordinary experience and what does the narrator fear? These questions, however, are only answered after a digression on the “vital” experiences one should have in life (PK 146). After gaining certainty that “Holly Cottage was being ‘done’” (PK 149) anticipation arises with regard to when the narrator will be detected by the thief. When they finally meet the concentration is mainly on the macro-level-question and thus focuses on the unscathed survival of the narrator.

In the **detective story-part** of “Poor Koko” it is explicitly stated which open questions are concentrated on:

What haunts me most can be put as two questions. Why did it happen? Why did it happen to me? In essence: What was it in me that drove that young demon to behave as he did? (PK 177).

Thus, the second part focuses on the enigma of the thief’s incomprehensible behavior as the narrator tries to find reasons for it. Hence comparable to “The Enigma” this part is concerned with one main “how-question”.

Significance of open questions

Regarding the significance of the open questions in the **thriller part**, it can be claimed that due to the detailed description of the situation and the thoughts and feelings of the narrator, the reader is certain to enter the state of “willing suspension of disbelief” and become immersed in the story. There are detailed depictions of the narrator’s anxious state such as “[f]rom vaguely alarmed I very swiftly became exceedingly frightened” (PK 146). Furthermore, there are vivid descriptions of the outward events such as in the following: “But then there came from below a light chink, or clink, as if something metallic had accidentally touched an edge of glass or china” (PK 146). This kind of narration certainly induces the reader to be concerned about the open questions and anticipate the outcome. However, regarding the **detective part** of this story the mystery is referred to as “an unsolved minor crime” (PK 177) at the beginning of this part. Therefore, no further investigations are conducted by professionals anymore and it is thus questionable if the “detective work” of the narrator – which merely consists of reflecting on the incident and forming hypotheses – is deemed as significant and consequently does really evoke suspense.

Considering the activation of the three drives, the prevalent drive in “Poor Koko” is certainly *Crimen* as the short story describes a crime, namely a burglary and the destruction of (at least for the narrator) valuable goods. The activation of this drive as such creates suspense which is even heightened by the transgression of another drive, namely *Fructus*. Thus, it very soon becomes clear that the story does not merely depict a crime but is also concerned about the conflict between different generations. This is heavily implied by the text itself: “I had realized by then that I was dealing with someone who belonged to that baffling (to *my generation*) new world of the classless British young” [emphasis added] (PK 156). The allusion to the *Fructus* drive becomes even stronger when the young men calls the narrator “dad” (PK 165) and when the meaning of “Koko”, the Japanese word used in the title, is explained at the end of the story: “It is a Japanese word and means correct *filial* behavior, the

proper attitude of *son to father*” [emphasis added] (PK 184). In this respect there can be seen a transgression of the two drives, in that the “son” commits a crime against his “father” since the latter has failed to pass on the “magic power” of language (PK 183).

To sum up, the open questions raised in the thriller part of “Poor Koko” can definitely be regarded as significant due to a detailed and lively first-person-narration. Furthermore, the activation and even transgression of *Crimen* and *Fructus* further add to the suspensefulness of the open questions. However, with regard to the detective part of the story it is uncertain whether the open question is rendered significant by the readers due to the declaration of the insolubleness of the mystery.

Limited amount of answers

Having asserted that the open questions in the short story evoke some sense of suspense, it is now important to consider the amount of possible answers for these questions. Regarding the **thriller part** of “Poor Koko” the overall open question on the macro-level (i.e. Will the narrator survive the experience unscathed?) is a yes/no-question and hence allows only two possible solutions, namely a happy or a bad outcome for the narrator. As mentioned above these binary answers are typically the most suspenseful ones. The open questions on the micro-level are how-questions and therefore offer a wider range of possible answers. However, also here the amount of answers is rather limited as for instance for the open question at the beginning pertaining to the nature of the “distressing experience”, it is clear that it is about some kind of crime. This can be inferred because the narrator describes his anxious state of mind and mentions other crimes such as “murder” before elaborating on the present one (PK 146).

Turning to the **detective part** of “Poor Koko”, which deals with another how-question, it is obvious that here the amount of answers is limited as well. More specifically, the narrator comes up with three different possible answers to the enigma: The thief could have either incarnated his books for personal reasons, due to “quasi-political” (PK 179) motives or because of the inequality of the two persons in their access to language. The latter is finally favored by the narrator and given as the solution to the mystery.

Thus, it can be assumed that the overall low and sometimes even very limited amount of answers to the open questions heightens the suspense.

Equal possible outcomes

Considering the criterion of equal possible outcomes at the beginning of a story before some kind of character sympathy is formed, it is obvious that in the **thriller part** this criterion is not adhered to. This can be explained by the physical weakness of the narrator who is not only myopic but of a “puny stature and a total lack of ‘muscle’” (PK 151). Hence the narrator does not take any action (i.e. makes noises for instance) against the – at this point – unknown other party. Drawing on Koch’s (291) boxing bout example, one can say that the narrator is definitely presented as the weaker contestant than the unknown other one. From the yet neutral viewpoint of the reader these uneven chances of “winning the match” lead to a decrease in the amount of suspense.

However, with regard to the **detective part** of the short story there are indeed equal possible outcomes at the beginning. This is so because each possible solution to the mystery is presented in a neutral manner before the “tentative conclusion” (PK 181) is given. Although the equality of the possible outcomes might heighten the suspense, it is questionable if the open question as such is significant enough for the reader and even provides a basis for an increase of suspense.

Character sympathy

Considering the crucial criterion of character sympathy it is clear that in “Poor Koko” the two main characters, namely the narrator and the thief lend themselves for an analysis. Assuming an egotistic reader as suggested by Koch (292), empathy would be targeted towards the weaker party, i.e. the physically weak narrator. Also with regard to the thriller-like situation at the beginning, it seems to be clear that emphatic concern might be felt for the narrator as he is in a dangerous situation and possibly soon to be threatened by a so called “menacing character” taking on “the particulars and traits of the antagonist” (Reilly 288) by threatening the safe world of the narrator. Furthermore, regarding the levels of engagement the text certainly induces a feeling of **allegiance** with the narrator. This can be assumed firstly because the story is narrated from his point of view and secondly because the direness of his situation is repeatedly remarked on: “[t]he predicament grew intolerable” (PK 150), “my dilemma [...] remained painful” (PK 151) or “I could not in any case find adequate words to describe what I suffered” (PK 171). As this is a subjective account of a crime depicted from the viewpoint of the victim, it would be natural to assume the reader’s sympathies being channeled in favor of the narrator of this story.

However, it soon becomes clear that the narrator is not reliable. On the one hand he too rashly judges the young man by calling him a “semi-illiterate” (PK 150) and making fun of his outer appearance and his “mental and linguistic quirks” (PK 162). On the other hand the narrator himself admits that his writing is not objective by stating that a former work of his was not “quite the model of objective and erudite analysis it pretended to be” (PK 147) and eventually he confesses the following:

[...] I cannot be sure that I have reproduced the events of that night with total accuracy. I have tried my best, but may have exaggerated, especially in the attempts to transcribe my persecutor’s dialogue. (PK 177)

Furthermore, despite the fact that concerning the levels of engagement, the character of the thief merely reaches the stage of **recognition** since no access to his thoughts and feelings is given whatsoever, it is obvious that he is not a totally vile person. This can be inferred because he does not use violence against the narrator, cares about his well-being when tying him up and makes sure that he is being rescued by the police.

Considering the criterion of character sympathy one can conclude that although the level of allegiance with the narrator is reached, it is clear that he is not reliable and thus not thoroughly morally good to be fully concerned about him. Moreover, the “antagonist” of the story is also not behaving as suspected in a thriller by being not nearly as menacing as one would expect. Thus, although empathic concern for the narrator might be felt, the suspense is reduced due to his “not-as-virtuous” personality and the thief’s “not-as-bad” behavior.

The analysis of suspense on the story level in “Poor Koko” has revealed that in general most of the criteria for a suspenseful story are fulfilled. There are significant open questions with limited amounts of answers. Furthermore, the criterion of equal probabilities of outcomes is at least adhered to in the detective part of the story. Regarding character sympathy the reader is able to form an allegiance with the narrator and thus emphatic concern for him can be felt. However, the atypical behavior of the characters in this thriller-like situation reduces suspense. Moreover, it is questionable whether the detective-part of the story can create suspense as the open question does not seem significant enough. An analysis of the other levels will try to provide more insight into this matter.

6.2.3 Suspense on the discourse level

As already mentioned “Poor Koko” consists of a thriller and a detective-story part. Hence the two parts follow two different suspense discourse structures, with the first targeted towards the future (i.e. suspense discourse structure) and the second oriented towards the past (i.e.

curiosity discourse structure). In the following these two parts will be analyzed separately according to the respective discourse structure.

6.2.3.1 Thriller part: suspense discourse structure

In “Poor Koko” the first phase of the suspense discourse structure is clearly adhered to. There is an **initiating event**, i.e. the narrator’s realization that there is a burglar in the house. This initiating event is presented in a suspenseful manner: There are foreshadowing, cataphoric references alluding to a dangerous situation which are only explained later in the text, though. The narrator states that he has awoken and lies frightened in the bed without revealing the reason for his anxiety, though. As soon as the initiating event is presented the narrator’s predicament is elaborated on and it becomes clear that it indeed concerns a dangerous situation as typical for the suspense discourse structure. Thus, the fact is stressed that the narrator is a “powerless older man” (PK 178) unable to defend himself and what is more the house itself is presented as remote and isolated, reducing the narrator’s chances of getting help: “But it was not simply that I was *alone*. The cottage was *alone*” [emphasis added] (PK 148). This depiction of the dire situation in which the narrator finds himself in clearly evokes some **empathy** for him, thus adhering to the second stage of the discourse structure. As typical for this stage vocabulary such as “exceedingly frightened” (PK 146) or “abrupt access of panic”, which denotes strong emotions, is used (as will be elaborated on when analyzing the linguistic level of suspense). Moreover, the situation is depicted from the viewpoint of the character in danger, which not only heightens the concern for him but also leads to an increase of suspense. Further adding to the suspense is the phase of **changing fortunes**, which according to Eriksson (154) is a vital constituent of the whole thriller part. More specifically, Eriksson (154) claims that one typical characteristic of the thriller is “to continually evoke hopes of a successful release from the grip of suspense, only to frustrate such hopes in an oscillating narrative movement”. An especial suspenseful occurrence of these changing fortunes occurs just before the narrator and the thief actually meet: The narrator expects to be detected by the thief any moment when surprisingly he hears him leave the house: “It seemed that against all expectation my unwelcome visitor had decided that he had got enough” (PK 151). However, as Eriksson (154) aptly remarks, “the suspense heightens again when he notices from the upstairs window that the lights in the house are still on”. Afterwards the narrator is “not kept in suspense long” (PK 152) and finally encounters the burglar.

It can be claimed that suspense reaches a peak at this point of the story due to the anticipation of the imminent meeting. Afterwards suspense gradually drops with the realization that the

young man does not intend to harm the narrator physically but rather likes to talk about social issues, politics and books. This is even explicitly stated in the text: “He [the burglar] made no threatening gesture, there was no obvious menace in his voice, he simply stood watching me” (PK 160). Thus, it can be assumed that the actual encounter between the narrator and the young man constitutes the **retarding phase** of the thriller part. Here the thief tries to initiate a discussion about his political motives for stealing and conveys his interest in art. Hence the attention is shifted from the dangerousness of the situation until there is another “oscillating narrative movement” when the thief tells the narrator that he has to tie him up and the narrator’s “briefly lulled fears sprang back to life” (PK 162). When the young man is finished with this venture hope can be regained as the narrator is sure that “[n]o violence could take place now” (PK 169). However, the narrator is wrong about that and before the **outcome** of the story (i.e. the rescue of the narrator) is presented, the young man incinerates the narrator’s work, which could be defined as a “last minute crisis” aimed at heightening suspense. The horribleness of this crisis is foreshadowed by the narrator when he states that: “I am going to state what followed as baldly as possible. I could not in any case find adequate words to describe what I suffered” (PK 171). The narrator even tries to take action when attempting to free himself and crying for help. Now the narrator is again frightened of the young man: “Whatever confidence I had invested in the young man had been completely lost in those final minutes” (PK 174). He not only fears that the thief might use violence against him but also does not trust him in informing the police for his rescue. The suspense is only relieved when a policemen comes and rescues him.

It can be concluded that the thriller-part of “Poor Koko” clearly adheres to the suspense discourse structure. Although suspense is definitely reduced by the young man’s apparent rational behavior, it is created again through the insertion of the last minute crisis. It is clear, however, that a less sensible behavior of the thief in the retarding phase would have produced a greater amount of suspense.

6.2.3.2 Detective part: curiosity discourse structure

Considering the detective part of “Poor Koko” the first phase of the curiosity discourse structure, namely the **introduction of the riddle** constitutes the, what was above referred to as the last minute crisis of the thriller part, namely the inexplicable incineration of the narrator’s work. As common for this discourse structure the riddle is depicted from the viewpoint of a character of the story. This phase overlaps with the phase of **horror, surprise and bewilderment** as these emotions are expressed by the narrator when he watches the

young man destroy his works. This is followed by a short **analytical phase** when the police investigates the case and examines one suspect, namely Maurice and Jane's son Richard, more thoroughly. His commune is raided "but nothing more incriminating was found than the inevitable cannabis" (*PK* 176) and in general "nothing resulted from this line of investigation" (*PK* 176). Thus, one can assume that this lead is a red herring. Afterwards there is a **blocking phase** as the insolubleness of the mystery is suggested and the crime is declared as "unresolved" by the police and consequently not further investigated. At this point the narrator himself takes over the role of the detective and starts his investigation. In the following **analytical phase** the narrator – comparable to Jennings in "The Enigma" – draws up a list of hypotheses (cf. *PK* 179) and follows semiotic (i.e. the cocked thumb) as well as linguistic (i.e. the language use of the thief) clues (cf. *PK* 180f.). One can then assume a not further exemplified **blocking phase** as the "detective" only "sees the light" after some months when watching television. Then he believes to have understood the meaning behind the thief's gesture of the cocked thumb, which leads him to his tentative conclusion. The **solution** for which he has only "very little evidence" (*PK* 181) is presented in a straightforward manner as there are no further interruptions or procrastinations.

From the analysis of the discourse structure of the detective part it becomes clear although all the phases are adhered to there is a main focus on the analytic phase. Here the narrator more or less elaborates his hypothesis without having any "real" evidence, though. Thus, this part appears to be more like one of the narrator's pseudo-scientific argumentative texts rather than a reliable and objective investigation of a crime.

6.2.4 Linguistic devices generating suspense

Turning to the linguistic level of analysis, one can assume that the **title** of the short story raises some kind of suspense. Here “Koko” is incomprehensible at first and thus rather evokes tension than suspense. However, it is clear that it concerns a living being with the adjective “poor” possibly aimed at eliciting compassion for this unknown creature as it might find itself in a dangerous situation.

Also with regard to the **lexical-semantic** level of “Poor Koko” there is a large amount of suspenseful vocabulary. It contains words from the semantic field of *crime*, i.e. “murder” (PK 146) or “Holly Cottage was being ‘done’” (PK 149). Furthermore, there is an abundance of vocabulary from the semantic field of *horror*, such as “panic” (PK 152), “terror” (PK 152), “fictional horrors” [emphasis added] (PK 155) or “fear and exasperation” (PK 162). Moreover, the text also contains vocabulary referring to the state of anxiety or fear since the narrator’s mental state is depicted in great detail. Thus, for instance words and phrases such as “alarmed” (PK 146) or “exceedingly frightened” (PK 146) are used.

Furthermore, also on the **syntactic level** suspenseful linguistic devices are used. Thus, before the narrator and the burglar meet, he vividly describes the sounds being made by an anonymous agent: “But then there came from below a light chink, or clink, as if something metallic had accidentally touched an edge of glass or china” (PK 146) or “There came a scrape, as of a chair being moved aside” (PK 149). Here the omission of the agent creates suspense as anticipation arises who the intruder is.

Finally, as already hinted above, the text also creates suspense on the **textual level** as it contains cataphoric advance references. More specifically three references alluding to a future event in the plot could be detected in the short story. The first one is the reference to “the melodramatic situation” and “that night of my ordeal” (PK 145) at the beginning of “Poor Koko”. Here anticipation is raised with regard to the nature of this event, which is only resolved later in the text when the narrator remarks that he undergoes “another of those ‘vital’ experiences: knowing one was not alone in a house where one believed one was” (PK 146). Another cataphoric advance reference occurs at the end of the thriller part when the narrator announces that the young man did something so terrible before leaving the house that he “could not in any case find adequate words to describe” (PK 171) his sufferings. Here the curiosity is immediately satisfied by an account of the incineration. The third advance reference is in the detective part of the story. It refers to the interpretation of the cocked

thumb, a gesture the young man made before leaving. The narrator announces that after some time he “saw the light” (PK 180), i.e. understood the meaning of this gesture. However, he then procrastinates his explanation by talking about his hobby of watching association football on television, which further heightens suspense.

Regarding the linguistic level of analysis it can be seen that a high amount of devices are applied in order to generate suspense. It should be noted, however, that the majority of these suspenseful linguistic devices are used in the thriller part, not in the detective part of “Poor Koko”, thus further adding to the impression that primarily only the first part can be regarded as suspenseful.

Generally speaking, the analysis of suspense in “Poor Koko” has shown that this short story seems to be suspenseful on all levels of analysis. Not only do genre expectations promise suspense but also almost all criteria for generating suspense are fulfilled on the story level and there is also an adherence to the suspense discourse structure (at least for the thriller part). Especially the abundance of suspenseful linguistic devices and the transgression of *Crimen* and *Fructus* can be assumed to heighten suspense. However, certain limitations of suspense can be found with regard to character sympathy and the detective part as a whole cannot really be regarded as suspenseful. In section 7.2 it will be analyzed if this destruction of suspense can be related to the postmodern features of the text.

6.3 Suspense in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

6.3.1 Genre expectations

The French Lieutenant's Woman essentially belongs to the genre of romantic fiction as it soon becomes clear that it is a story about a love triangle, more specifically about a man having to choose between two women. As mentioned above romance fiction in general is not considered as a typical suspense genre and therefore less suspense can be expected than in thriller or detective stories. This novel also does not seem to belong to the more suspenseful subgenre of romantic suspense since on the whole the characters in the story are not depicted in dangerous situations. An expectation would be chapter 24 where Sarah has been dismissed by Mrs Poulteney and cannot be found anywhere. However, in general there is no delineation of life threatening situations in the novel to warrant an allocation to this suspenseful subgenre.

Thus – in opposition to the other two texts under examination – on the basis of genre expectations *The French Lieutenant's Woman* does not promise a high amount of suspense. Suspense here seems to be primarily oriented towards a happy outcome for a likeable couple, i.e. targeted towards the future.

An analysis of the macro and micro level of the novel will try to provide further insight into this matter. Here the analysis of the macro level will examine whether *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as such can be regarded as suspenseful. On the micro level there will be an in-depth analysis of one exemplary suspenseful chapter.

6.3.2 Suspense on the macro level

6.3.2.1 Suspense on the story level

Open questions

On the macro level basically three open questions can be discerned. Two of them concern Charles and his love story with the two women in his life, Ernestina and Sarah. At the beginning an open question pertains to which women he will choose: The conventional Ernestina or the strange and mysterious Sarah? When definitely breaking off his engagement with the former this open question is answered and – regarding the romantic quest in the book – there is a focus on another open question, namely: Will Charles find Sarah and will they reunite? This question is at the center of attention from chapter 54 onwards where Charles realizes that Sarah has left Exeter without leaving a forwarding address. He resolves to search for her and “if he searched for the rest of his life, he would find her” (FLW 405).

While these open questions pertain to the love story in the novel, another open question is concerned about the detection of a character's personality. This open question is actually stated in the novel itself: "Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?" (FLW 94). Sarah is a mystery for both Charles and the reader, a fact which has also been noted by literary critics: Thus, Foster (69) for instance asserts that "Sarah Woodruff remains always out of reach, distant, unknowable, the least fully realized character in the novel" and Conradi (70) also agrees by claiming that "Sarah is a subjectivity wholly unknowable". In the course of the novel Charles and the reader are concerned with solving the mystery of Sarah and it even seems that "it is precisely this mystery that drives the novel, that brings to life other characters and pushes them to action" (Foster 69).

One can conclude that on the macro level there are two yes/no-questions concerned with the romantic quest of the story. There is another how-question, which is of interest throughout the whole text as it is related to a major character of the story.

Significance of open questions

Turning to the significance of these open questions, it can be said that due to the detailed depiction of the setting and the characters the reader is surely able to enter the state of "**willing suspension of disbelief**". Imitating the omniscient narration typical for Victorian novels, the omniscient narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* "feels free to intrude himself into the story he is telling, to address the reader directly, and to make comparisons between then [novel is set in 1867] and now [1967, the time it was written]" (McSweeney 138). For instance, at the beginning of the first chapter the landscape of Lyme Regis is depicted in copious detail. Here the changes that have taken place since the 19th century are remarked on:

I exaggerate? Perhaps, but I can be put to the test, for the Cobb has changed very little since the year of which I write; though the town of Lyme has, and the test is not fair if you look backwards towards land. (FLW 4)

The reader is also provided with a high amount of background information on the Victorian age. For example, in chapter 16 there is a description of a typical Victorian evening introduced by the narrator's ironic lament: "Those gaslit hours that had to be filled, and without benefit of cinema or television" (FLW 113). The narrator also elaborates on "duty" as one of the key concepts in the Victorian age (e.g. FLW 30) which is also regarded as the "bone of contention between the two centuries" (FLW 48). Furthermore, a whole chapter (i.e. chapter 35) is dedicated to the description of the Victorians' attitude towards sex. In addition to this there are comments on politicians of this time, such as William Ewart Gladstone and

Benjamin Disraeli (e.g. *FLW* 103f.) as well as contemporary scientists such as Charles Darwin and Charles Lyell (e.g. *FLW* 161f.) and novelists such as Thomas Hardy (*FLW* 273ff.). Baumgartner (42) quite aptly concludes that this “additional information makes this period more accessible and comprehensible for a modern reader, even though the Victorian age is a historical period from the distant past”. Moreover, comparable to nineteenth-century omniscient narrators who “align themselves more usually in cosy complicity with their gentle readers than with their characters” (Conradi 63) the narrator in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* tries to establish a relationship with the readers. On the one hand this is achieved through the use of the personal pronoun “we” as in: “Well, we laugh” [emphasis added] (*FLW* 48)¹³. On the other hand it is attained by constantly comparing the Victorian and the “contemporary” age. These contrasts between the two ages induce reader involvement since they help readers to a deeper understanding of their present situation (McSweeney 139). However, as *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is a parody of the illusionist Victorian novel there is a breaking of the illusion through various metafictional comments, most notoriously in chapter 13 which constitutes a detailed commentary on the creation of a novel. The effects of these metafictional devices on suspense will be dealt with in section 7.3 of this thesis. For now it is suffice to note that there are various strategies applied to create an illusion, which are aimed at immersing the reader in the story, who in turn deems the open questions as significant.

The activation of two **universal drives** further adds to the significance of the open questions. Here the *Sexus* drive is definitely the prevalent one. This is due to the fact that the main themes of this novel are love, romance and forbidden love. There are several love scenes in the book, concerning Charles and Ernestina, Charles and Sarah as well as Sam and Mary, the servants whose love story runs parallel to Charles’s and Sarah’s. As a detailed analysis of the latter two would go beyond the scope of this thesis, there will be a focus on Charles’s “love issues”.

More specifically, **Charles’s and Ernestina’s romance** is depicted as rather superficial and conventional as illustrated by their first intimate contact after their engagement:

Their hands met, and he drew her to him. They did not kiss. They could not.
[...] And so they kissed, with lips as *chastely asexual* as children’s.
[emphasis added] (*FLW* 83)

¹³ In this case “we” laugh about the outfit Charles wears for his expedition to the Cobb to find tests (*FLW* 47f.).

A further illustration of Charles and Ernestina's conventional love, which is mainly driven by duty rather than passion or real love, is the scene of their first disagreement:

Once there she [Ernestina] had seen to it that she was left alone with Charles; and no sooner had the door shut on her aunt's back than she burst into tears [...] and threw herself into his arms. It was the first disagreement that had ever darkened their love, and it horrified her [...]. When he had *dutifully* patted he back and dried her eyes, she said as much. Charles stole a kiss on each wet eyelid as a revenge, and forthwith forgave her. [emphasis added] (FLW 105)

Moreover, it is also hinted that their love is only pretended and not real as is even remarked on by Charles himself: "It also required a response from him [...] but also *artificially*, so that they seemed enveloped in a *double pretence*" [emphasis added] (FLW 129). However, Charles remains dutiful to Ernestina even when he breaks off his engagement to her. So instead of going to Sarah to tell her that he has chosen her over Ernestina, he rather follows duty and first handles his affairs with Ernestina:

A modern man would no doubt have gone straight back there. But Charles's accursed sense of *Duty* and *Propriety* stood like castle walls against that. His first task was to cleanse himself of past obligations; only then could he present himself to offer his hand. [emphasis added] (FLW 370f.)

In opposition to Charles and Ernestina's rather platonic love stands **Charles's and Sarah's love story** which is depicted as more passionate and hence promises a higher amount of suspense. At the beginning theirs is even a forbidden love, which heightens suspense. Already at their first meeting Charles is fascinated by Sarah's "unforgettable" and "tragic face" (FLW 10) and when he unexpectedly meets her again at the Ware Commons "[h]e stood unable to do anything but stare down, tranced by this unexpected encounter" (FLW 71). Later in the novel the effect of Sarah's face on Charles is repeatedly remarked on as in:

She turned, to see him hatless, smiling; and although her expression was one of now ordinary enough surprise, once again that face had an *extraordinary effect* on him. It was as if after each sight of it, he could not believe its effect, and had to see it again. [emphasis added] (FLW 86)

Furthermore, the physical part of their relationship seems also to be more passionate than Charles and Ernestina's as the following description of their first kiss shows:

He took her into his arms, saw her eyes close as she swayed into his embrace; then closed his own and found her lips. He felt not only their softness but the whole substance of her body; he sudden smallness, fragility, weakness, tenderness... (FLW 252)

Here it becomes clear that Charles's and Sarah's first kiss is not only more affectionate than Charles and Ernestina's "chaste" kissing but the suspensefulness is further heightened by the

fact that their love is clandestine and they can be detected by other people (as they are in this case by Sam and Mary).

The significance of the open question concerning Charles's and Sarah's romance is further increased by the fact that here the *Sexus* drive is transgressed by the *Crimen* one. Thus, Sarah's criminal affiliation is remarked on by herself when talking about her supposed affair with the French Lieutenant Varguennes:

‘Mr Smithson, I know my folly, my blindness to his real character, must seem to a stranger to my nature and circumstances at that time so great that it cannot be but *criminal*. I can't hide that [...].’ [emphasis added] (FLW 172)

Later on she states that other people “will never understand the reason for my *crime*” [emphasis added] (FLW 176). Furthermore, Dr Grogan suspects criminal intentions behind Sarah's mysterious behavior when suspecting her of suffering from hysteria (FLW 223ff.). Also Charles's behavior towards Ernestina is defined by Dr Grogan as criminal: “You have committed a *crime*. Your punishment will be to remember it all your life” [emphasis added] (FLW 399). This transgression of the *Sexus* and the *Crimen* drive make the open questions concerning Charles and Sarah especially suspenseful.

All in all it can be said that the open questions on the macro level are significant firstly as the story is described in a detailed manner so that the reader can become immersed in the story. Secondly, two drives, namely *Sexus* and *Crimen* are activated. Here it becomes clear that these drives transgress mainly in the open questions concerning Charles and Sarah, which leads to the tentative conclusion that the strand of plot focusing on them might be more suspenseful.

Limited amount of answers

Regarding the amount of answers for the open questions, the first two open questions being yes/no-questions, offer only two (binary) possible answers. More specifically, for the first open question, namely “Which woman will Charles choose?” the outcome can either be in favor of Ernestina or Sarah. For the second open question, namely “Will Sarah and Charles reunite?” there are only two options, i.e. a happy or a bad ending for their relationship. Therefore one can assume that the limited amount of possible answers of the first two open questions heightens the suspense.

However, regarding the third open question pertaining to the mysteriousness of Sarah the amount of answers is clearly not as limited. Thus, the people of Lyme believe her to be a whore and “a little mad” (FLW 9). Dr Grogan supposes hysteria as the reason for her strange conduct. Charles, however, immediately realizes that there is “no sign of madness” (FLW 10) in her face and throughout the book tries to get to the bottom of her mysteriousness, forming many hypotheses during his investigation. This shall be dealt in greater detail when it comes to analyzing the discourse level. For now it is suffice to note that there are different interpretations of Sarah’s mysteriousness resulting in a high amount of possible answers for this open question. Thus, with regard to this criterion of suspense this open question appears to be less suspenseful than the other two.

Equal probability of outcomes

Turning to the criterion of equal probabilities of outcomes, one can assume that for the **first question**, this criterion does not seem to be fulfilled. Charles rational and dutiful behavior appears to imply that he will chose his fiancée in the end. Although Charles often thinks about Sarah, at least at the beginning he does so for scientific reasons as Sarah seems for him to be a rare specimen¹⁴. Due to altruistic motives he decides to help her since “the *human* [sic] fittest had no less certain responsibility towards the less fit” (FLW 165). The unequal probability of outcomes is stressed shortly before its resolution (i.e. the “false” ending) when it is stated that “Charles had certainly decided, after his night of rebellion, to go through with his marriage to Ernestina. It had never seriously entered his mind that he would not” (FLW 334). After dismissing the first ending as a daydream the narrator also admits that “[w]here I have cheated was in analyzing the effect that three-word letter continued to have on him. It tormented him, it obsessed him, it confused him” (FLW 343). Thus, the perception of an unequal probability of outcomes can also be ascribed to the narrator neglecting to provide more insight into Charles’s feelings for Sarah.

Considering the **open question of Sarah’s and Charles’s reunion**, the probability of the outcomes is definitely equal. This is stated by the narrator himself who refuses to “fix the fight” and consequently decides “to show two versions of it” (FLW 409), presumably a happy and an unhappy outcome, which makes the probabilities of the outcomes equal.

Regarding the **third open question**, this criterion also seems to be adhered to. This is due to the fact that Sarah’s behavior seems inexplicable for both the reader and Charles. Although

¹⁴ This allusion is heavily implied in Charles’s and Dr Grogan’s first talk about Sarah (FLW 154ff.).

the latter clearly prefers to think of Sarah as a fallen woman who has to be saved by him¹⁵, he not only continuously changes his opinion about her but also his viewpoint in general is not reliable since his views about her are merely projections of his own wishes: “He foists upon her all the things he would like to be, the sum of his unrealized potential. But his transference causes her to become an abstraction” (Tarbox 66). Hence other hypotheses concerning the mystery of Sarah (e.g. her suffering from madness or hysteria) seem equally plausible for the reader.

Character sympathy

With regard to the vital criterion of character sympathy three characters will be analyzed, namely Charles, Sarah and Ernestina as these are the characters most intrinsically involved in the open questions.

Sarah Woodruff, the title character of the story “embodies the energizing mystery that is such an important part of Fowles’s existential and aesthetic premises” (McSweeney 139). Already in the first chapter Sarah is presented in a mysterious manner. While at least the gender of Charles and Ernestina is revealed, Sarah is merely described as a figure, more specifically “a figure from myth” (FLW 5). In the course of the novel Sarah is continuously depicted as mysterious (e.g. FLW 84) and as totally different from typical Victorian women. There are even references to a certain masculinity in her appearance and conduct, such as in: “Something about the coat’s high collar and cut, especially from the back, was masculine” (FLW 168) and “There was [sic] something male about her there” (FLW 181). However, as Tarbox (64) aptly remarks “[a]ll the reader’s impressions of Sarah come either from Charles or from a narrator who looks at her only from the outside, and who stubbornly refuses to give any irrefutable information about her”. So the reader mostly gets to know Sarah through outward impressions or unreliable hypotheses from other characters. An exception is chapter 9 which allows some insight into her character. Here some biographical information is given about her family and education. Furthermore, it is revealed that she has the “uncanny intelligence” of seeing through other people, i.e. “to understand them, in the fullest sense of that word” (FLW 53). Thus, “[h]er perceptiveness in human relations is praised without reserve” (Loveday 70). At the end of chapter 12 once again a brief insight into Sarah’s state of mind is provided when the reader “is told that she is standing at her open window in the middle of the night because she is contemplating jumping from it” (McSweeney 140).

¹⁵ His assumption becomes especially obvious in chapter 60 when Charles must realize “the folly of his own assumption that fallen women must continue falling” (FLW 445).

However, at the beginning of the next chapter the narrator reveals that he refuses to enter the mind of his characters as he wants to give them freedom. With regard to Sarah he indeed from then on “only [reports] the outward facts” (*FLW* 98). This becomes especially apparent in chapter 36 when Sarah is depicted in her hotel room in Exeter unwrapping her purchases. Here “the narrative point of view is strictly that of the camera eye” (McSweeney 140). This impression is heightened by the narrator explicitly proclaiming to refuse entering her thoughts:

And I no more intend to find out what was going on in her mind as she firegazed than I did on that other occasion when her eyes welled tears in the silent night of Marlborough House. (*FLW* 282)

Thus, with regard to the levels of engagement one can say that although there are some instances in the book where the reader could establish an **alignment** with Sarah, in general only the level of **recognition** seems to be achieved since the reader most of the time does not know her thoughts and feelings and thus cannot really understand her. With respect to the love story between Charles and Sarah one cannot be concerned about her as one does not understand her actions. Although she assures Charles that she loved him from the moment she saw him (*FLW* 358), she constantly deceives him: “She lies about Varguennes; she invents a sprained ankle when Charles comes to see her in Exeter” (Loveday 71). Her secretive behavior continues up to the last chapter when she first pretends not to have known about the advertisements or the broken engagement. Hence one can conclude that due to the fact that Sarah’s actions cannot be understood by the reader it is not really possible to feel emphatic concern for this character.

In opposition to Sarah, the reader gains considerable more insight about **Charles Smithson**. In chapter three a detailed account of his biography as well as his character traits is given. He is characterized as a bright, well-travelled English gentleman but also as an “intelligent idler” (*FLW* 17) since laziness is “Charles’s most distinguishing trait” (*FLW* 17). Charles fancies himself a Darwinist and works hard to find rare tests in the Cobb (see chapter 8). He also believes to be superior and more knowledgeable than other people (especially regarding the women in his life) as can be seen in the following quotation: “He continued smiling, at ease in all his travel, his reading, his knowledge of a larger world” (*FLW* 122). His apparent superiority is further strengthened by his assertion that he belongs to one of the fittest: “he was a highly intelligent being, one of the fittest, and endowed with total free will” (*FLW* 190). Thus Charles’s attitude towards Ernestina as well as Sarah (in the beginning) is rather

condescending as he fails to recognize both their intelligence. For instance, this becomes apparent in his reflection on Ernestina's artificiality: “

He smiled at her. She was so young, such a child. He could not be angry with her. After all, she was only a woman. There were so many things she must never understand: the richness of male life, the enormous difficulty of being one to whom the world was rather more than dress and home and children. (FLW 130)

Hence Charles does not appear a truly morally good character. This impression is strengthened by his sometimes cruel behavior towards Sam, who “was like all servants, dismissable” (FLW 375) and his snobbish contempt of the trade business as he is convinced that “he was a gentleman; and gentlemen cannot go into trade” (FLW 290). Thus, despite the fact that Charles possesses some virtues (e.g. he takes care about the prostitute's child in chapter 41) he cannot be regarded as a morally good character.

However, with regard to the levels of engagement one can definitely assume that with Charles the level of **alignment** is reached. The reader gets a lot of insight into this character's thoughts and feelings. Thus, for instance after Sarah's confession about her supposed affair with Vargueness Charles's thoughts about her are revealed:

He perceived that her directness of look was matched by a directness of thought and language [...] He did not think this subjectively, but objectively: here, if only some free man had the wit to see it, is a remarkable woman. (FLW 182f.)

Also his thoughts about Ernestina are laid open:

She was very pretty, charming... but was not that face a little characterless, a little monotonous with its one set paradox of demureness and dryness? If you took away those two qualities, what remained? A vapid selfishness. (FLW 129)

So in general the reader gets a very clear picture of what is going on in Charles's mind, with the exception of his thoughts on Sarah's letter which has been already discussed above. However, it is questionable if the level of **allegiance** can be attained due to his moral lapses. One can nevertheless be fairly sure that this character elicits emphatic concern from chapter 55 onwards when he resumes the role of a social outcast and desperately searches for Sarah.

The third character taken into consideration is **Ernestina Freeman**, the unfortunate part of the love triangle as she quite surprisingly loses her fiancé. Comparable to Charles the reader gets considerable insight into her character and her thoughts and feelings. Thus, a whole chapter (i.e. chapter 5) is solely devoted to her. Here she is depicted as a pretty woman having “exactly the right fact for her age” (FLW 26) but also having “certainly a much stronger will

of her own than anyone about her had ever allowed for” (FLW 29). Furthermore, despite the fact that as an only child of wealthy parents she is rather spoiled, she possesses “a sense of self-irony” (FLW 29) redeeming her pamperedness. Moreover, her moral goodness seems to be stressed by her compassion for people less fortunate than her, such as Mary whom she gives an old dress of hers as a present (FLW 108f.). Furthermore, she also appears to truly love and also understand Charles. This becomes clear in her last appearance in the book when she reveals that she wanted to give Charles “faith in himself” as a bridal present, which is exactly the thing he lacks and longs for (FLW 382). Thus, one can say that **alignment** is surely established with Ernestina and it can also be assumed that especially in the last scene even the level of **allegiance** can be reached. Furthermore, Ernestina clearly elicits emphatic concern since she constitutes the weaker part in the battle for Charles. Although she is sometimes presented as a strong woman, she is in general depicted as weak, feeble and always close to tears, which makes her definitely weaker than the masculine Sarah. Hence due to the fact that enough access to Ernestina’s state of mind is given and because of egotistic reasons one could feel empathy towards Ernestina with regard to the open question of which woman Charles will choose.

All in all it follows from this analysis that of the three characters under examination, only two might elicit empathic concern. These two are Charles and Ernestina due to the fact that the reader is gained access to their thoughts and feelings and can form an opinion about their moral virtues. However, it is obvious that Sarah’s mysteriousness and inexplicable behavior does not induce the reader to feel empathy for her.

Generally speaking, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* fulfills almost all criteria to be regarded as suspenseful on the story level. On the macro level there are three significant open questions with two of them providing a limited amount of answers. Furthermore, also two questions fulfill the criterion of equal amount of possible answers and two of the characters analyzed are able to elicit empathic concern.

6.3.2.2 *Suspense on the discourse level*

With regard to suspense on the discourse level an analysis of the discourse structure of each open question will be conducted. Here the first open question follows the suspense discourse structure since it is targeted towards a future outcome while with regard to the second open question, namely “Will Charles and Sarah reunite?” a combination of both discourse structures seems suitable as it concerns the detection of Sarah’s whereabouts on the one hand and Sarah’s acceptance of Charles on the other hand. The question concerning Sarah’s mysteriousness appears to adhere to the curiosity discourse structure as it relates to the detection of a mystery.

Suspense discourse structure

Concerning the **first open question** on the macro level, namely whether Charles will choose either Ernestina or Sarah, an analysis with regard to the suspense discourse structure is definitely reasonable as the attention is oriented towards the future.

The **initiating event** for this plot line can be assumed to occur in chapter 10 when Charles and Sarah meet for the second time and it is apparent that from then on Charles is interested in her. Though the initiating event is not dangerous it proves to upset Charles’s and Ernestina’s life plans. So in a sense it is threatening Charles’s and Ernestina’s engagement and Charles’s social status. This initiating event is announced in a suspenseful way: There is the use of cataphoric advance references such as “that first meeting” (*FLW* 10) implying subsequent encounters. Furthermore, there are cliffhangers shortly before the initiating event is presented: For instance chapter 10 ends in a cliffhanger since one does not know why Mrs Poulteney is so shocked when she is told that Sarah takes walks in the Ware Commons (which is also the place where the initiating event takes place). Furthermore, even before the initiating event there is an introduction of the characters aimed at inducing **empathy for the characters** (see also section 6.3.2.1). After the initiating event Charles’s as well as Ernestina’s emotions are described eliciting empathic concern on either side. Thus, Ernestina’s strong feelings for Charles become obvious in chapter 11 when she spends the majority of the day daydreaming about Charles. Also Charles’s feelings for both women are depicted; for instance Sarah’s face “had an extraordinary effect on him” (*FLW* 86) whereas his thoughts about Ernestina are more negative: “Her humour did not exactly irritate him, but it seemed unusually and unwelcomely artificial” (*FLW* 129). However, although Sarah fascinates him, he does not want to admit this even to himself and thus it seems that he will choose Ernestina over Sarah.

This outcome might be desired by readers who feel empathy for Ernestina as the weaker and more sympathetic of the two women. The phase of **changing fortunes** commences when Charles gets to know about his possible disinheritance and “felt himself in a very displeasing position of inferiority as regards Ernestina” (*FLW* 219). Here his regrets regarding the engagement with Ernestina are made explicit and the option of breaking it off is implied implicitly. Then there is the phase of Charles’s decision making process, which can also be regarded as a phase of changing fortunes as Charles repeatedly changes his opinion. For instance he kisses Sarah (*FLW* 252) but then advises her to go to Exeter and vows never to see her again (*FLW* 260). Interestingly, at this stage there are one of those rare moments when Sarah apparently reveals her true feelings when exclaiming: “Though seeing you is all I live for” (*FLW* 260). Thus, it is not clearly channeled by the narration who to feel empathy for – Sarah or Ernestina. When Charles is in London the phase of changing fortunes seems to be most pronounced as Charles constantly changes his opinion about the engagement. Once he regards himself as a prisoner of the engagement (*FLW* 309) but then happily plays with the prostitute’s child and is able to “face his future” (*FLW* 323) only to receive a letter from Sarah in the next chapter. A **retarding phase** before the apparent solution could not be detected as Charles seems to have made up his mind and then rushes to Exeter to reunite with Ernestina. The abruptness and “lack of consonance” (*FLW* 343) of the apparently last two chapters is even remarked on by the narrator himself.

However, this **false outcome** in favor of Ernestina is surprisingly presented as a false ending when it becomes clear that it is just a daydream by Charles as a matter of fact. As this has not been announced or foreshadowed it is a surprise and hence the presentation of the **false outcome** cannot be regarded as suspenseful because surprise needs to be differentiated from suspense. Suspense rises again when Charles visits Sarah in Exeter and sleeps with her. There is again a phase of **changing fortunes** since after the intercourse “[i]n the distant shadows Ernestina stood and stared mournfully at him” (*FLW* 354). Furthermore, Charles realizes that Sarah has deceived him by pretending she has had an affair with Vargueness and also the strained ankle was a lie; he leaves her angrily. In chapter 48 Charles finds himself in a church contemplating the advantages and disadvantages of the two women and finally arrives at a decision in favor of Sarah (*FLW* 366ff.), which is made official by the breaking off his engagement in chapter 50. This constitutes then the **real outcome** of the first open question, which is equally not suspenseful due to the lack of a retarding phase or a “last minute crisis”.

Although the plotline for the first open question does not strictly follow the suspense discourse structure, it can be assumed that the prevalent phase of changing fortunes – which was above mentioned as the most important stage of this discourse structure – creates a rather high amount of suspense.

Combination of discourse structures

The **second open question** is concerned with whether Charles will find Sarah and whether they will reunite. As this plot line focuses on a riddle the curiosity discourse structure seems prevalent but since the question of a happy reunion is targeted towards the future some elements of the suspense discourse structure can be expected as well. Hence both discourse structures were taken into consideration for this analysis.

The **riddle** to the mystery is quite suddenly introduced in chapter 54 when Charles returns to Exeter where – to his surprise – he is told that Sarah has left for London. As typical for this discourse structure this initial situation is perceived from the viewpoint of a character, namely from Charles's point of view. The introduction of the riddle can be assumed to be mixed with the phase of **horror, surprise and bewilderment** as Charles shows especially the emotions of surprise and bewilderment when he finds out that Sarah is not in Exeter anymore and he realizes that he has been betrayed by Sam. For instance he exclaims: "Sam! A thief! A spy!" (FLW 404). Charles eventually vows to find Sarah at the end of chapter 54, thus initiating the **analytical phase**. However, then the fictional illusion is destroyed in chapter 55 when the narrator appears as a character contemplating on how to end the story. In section 7.3.1 it will be discussed whether this metafictional commentary has a negative effect on suspense. The analytical phase then definitely commences in chapter 56 when Charles and four hired detectives search for Sarah. As typical for this stage they make false hypotheses, such as that Sarah might be a prostitute (FLW 412) and are misled by red herrings, such as following the lead of a Miss Woodbury, a teacher at a girl's academy who "bore only the faintest resemblance to Sarah" (FLW 419). All inquiries eventually lead to nowhere and one can thus assume at this stage a phase of **character empathy**. At this point the reader has definitely some emphatic concern for Charles who not only fails to find the girl he loves but is also humiliated by having to sign a statement of guilt to redeem his broken engagement (FLW 412ff.). One can assume a brief **blocking phase** where the insolubleness of the mystery is suggested, especially by Montague, Charles's solicitor, who advises Charles to go abroad (FLW 419f.). This heightens suspense shortly before the **solution** to the curiosity discourse

structure is presented. In chapter 57 Mary apparently detects Sarah and tells Sam about it, who then evidently thinks about disclosing this information to Charles in order to ease his conscience. Mary's detection of Sarah is depicted in a suspenseful way as referentless pronouns are used and the reader learns only about the identity of Mary when she tells Sam about the incident (*FLW* 421f.). Sarah's name is not even mentioned so one cannot be absolutely sure about the identity of the woman Mary has seen at the embankment in Chelsea, though it is heavily implied by the text. Afterwards there is clearly a **retarding phase** when Charles's travels and the insights he gains there are lengthily described (chapter 58 and chapter 59). The **first outcome** is then presented in chapter 60 in a very suspenseful way. Not only is Charles's anxious emotional state depicted eliciting emphatic concern but the reader is at first denied the knowledge of the identity of the other inhabitants of the house, raising suspense with regard to Sarah's relations with them. There is a last minute crisis in Sarah's strange and hostile attitude towards Charles. Here one can also assume a phase of **changing fortunes** as Sarah and Charles each argue against and in favor of a reunion (*FLW* 450ff.). The outcome of this problematic situation is then the introduction of Charles to his daughter Lalage, which seems like a surprising *deus ex machina* solution to a rather hopeless situation. More specifically, Huffaker (107) asserts that "Lalage is the conventional *deus ex machine* –or more accurately *dea ex coito* – whose birth is believable enough in a Victorian context".

As the first outcome is a rather happy one, the reader can be sure that the **second outcome** is a bad one. Hence a rather limited amount of anticipation and suspense can be assumed. This outcome is also presented in a brief and not very suspenseful way since Charles soon stops arguing with Sarah and leaves the house (*FLW* 468).

Considering the discourse structure of this story line, it can be concluded that a rather high amount of suspense is generated, especially through character empathy as the reader clearly feels empathy for Charles who is now a social outcast and madly in love with Sarah. Furthermore, the rather long blocking or retarding phase where it is not clear if Sam will tell Charles about the whereabouts of Sarah further heightens suspense. Lastly, at least the first outcome is presented in a very suspenseful way.

Curiosity discourse structure

The **third open question**, namely “Who is Sarah Woodruff?” concerns the mystery and detection of a person. Thus, an analysis with regard to the curiosity discourse structure seems reasonable.

Although Sarah is presented as mysterious throughout the whole novel (e.g. *FLW* 84), the **introduction of the riddle** can only be assumed when the narrator at the end of chapter 12 exclaims: “Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?” (*FLW* 94). In the chapter before some insights into her character are given but from chapter 12 onwards it becomes clear that the narrator does not want to “enter her mind to analyse her thoughts” (Loveday 55) and that even for himself Sarah is a mystery. According to Loveday the narrator’s explicit denial to reveal Sarah’s thoughts in chapter 13 and also later in the book heightens suspense since it adds to “the aura of mystery which hangs intriguingly round Sarah right to the end of the book” (Loveday 57). Atypical for the curiosity discourse structure this initial situation is not perceived from the perspective of a character. Charles – after having become interested in Sarah in their encounter in the Ware Commons (chapter 10) – definitely assumes the role of the detective in chapter 14 when he observes Sarah at Mrs Poulteney’s, thus initiating the **analytical phase**. Although Charles does not directly regard himself as a detective, Eriksson (174) asserts that “his interest in natural science [...] has tuned his mind into detective ways of thinking: he searches, discovers, examines and collects”. In chapter 14 Charles already seems to gain the first insight into Sarah’s character, namely that Sarah is merely pretending to be a submissive woman:

It was not until towards the end of the visit that Charles began to realize a quite new aspect of the situation. It became clear to him that the girl’s silent meekness ran contrary to her nature; that she was therefore playing a part; and that the part was one of complete disassociation from, and disapprobation of, her mistress. (*FLW* 103)

In the course of the following chapters Charles finds further “clues” to Sarah’s personality. In another accidental meeting in the Ware Commons he realizes that Sarah’s mind “was very far from deranged” (*FLW* 139) and eventually realizes that she is intellectually equal to him (*FLW* 451). Dr Grogan offers another hypothesis, namely that Sarah “wants to be a sacrificial victim” (*FLW* 157) and likes to savor her sadness. This theory seems to be substantiated by Sarah’s apparent confession about her affair with Varguennes which she made public to resume the role of an outcast in order to be different from other women (*FLW* 176). Charles then thinks of her as “an innocent victim and a wild, abandoned woman” (*FLW* 177) and realizes that she is “a remarkable woman” (*FLW* 183). His view is contradicted by Grogan’s

opinion about Sarah, who thinks that she is mentally diseased. Grogan expresses his view in great detail in chapter 27 and seemingly substantiates it with authentic material from similar cases in chapter 28. According to Tarbox (69) “Grogan examines Sarah and accepts a good deal of slanted evidence about her behavior and promptly diagnoses her as melancholic and hysterical”. In chapter 28 there is an extract from a contemporary work giving “a number of examples of hysterical illness and self-inflicted injuries undergone by young women” (Loveday 49). These cases are linked to Sarah by both Grogan and Charles. Charles, however, refuses to believe Grogan and still clings to regarding her as “a sinner [...] but also a woman of exceptional courage, refusing to turn her back on her sin” (FLW 238). This is why he eventually decides to meet her one last time. In their meeting he learns for the first time – to his **bewilderment** – that she has lied to him, but nevertheless is not inclined to change his opinion about her and helps her to leave Lyme (chapter 33). In the course of the novel Charles tries to understand Sarah and “continually constructs and revises his hypotheses about her” (Hagen 445): “Each new revelation (whether falsified or accurate), expands or alters his reading of her, his [...] construction of her” (Hagen 445). He thus makes a lot of false hypotheses and is misled by red herrings. For instance after having intercourse with Sarah Charles believes her to be “a nobler being than either of them” (FLW 356) only to find out moments later that she has lied about her affair with Varguennes and was in fact still a virgin. In this brief **phase of horror, surprise and bewilderment** Charles believes that Sarah intends to blackmail him. He is yet again unable to understand this “swarm of mysteries” (FLW 358): “Is she a hysterical Marie de Morell? Is she, more unpleasant still, a scheming gold digger?” (Loveday 71). However – initiating another **analytical phase** – shortly afterwards Charles seemingly understands her behavior and realizes that she stands for the freedom he himself craves for (FLW 369) and decides to marry her. He is once again deceived when he finds out that she has left Exeter. Searching for Sarah constitutes the “true detective work” which is also partly placed in the hands of professional detectives (chapter 56). Despite the fact that Sarah has continually deceived him, Charles believes that she has a “candour” (FLW 420). Although he does not find her, he continues to form hypotheses about her but finally realizes that he cannot distinguish between the real Sarah and his imagination any longer (FLW 432). One can then assume a **blocking phase** when Charles is on his travels and tries not to think about her and thus implicitly declares the mystery as insoluble. In the last two chapters of the novel it is questionable if a real **solution** to the riddle is offered. Charles once again jumps to false conclusions, for instance when he believes her to have an affair with the scandalous master of the house: “A vision of some orgiastic *ménage à quatre – à cinq*

[sic] if one counted the girl who had shown him up – rose in his mind” (FLW 449). In chapter 60 it is claimed that he did perhaps “at last begin to grasp her mystery” (FLW 456), namely that her deceiving behavior is part of an armoury to fight against him. However, he is then introduced to his daughter and the chapter presents a kind of happy ending for them, which seems to falsify this hypothesis. Also in chapter 61 no real solution to the mystery of Sarah is offered, which is stressed by the narrator who once again refuses to reveal her feelings: “There are tears in her eyes? She is too far away for me to tell” (FLW 469). Thus, Sarah remains mysterious to Charles as well as the reader until the end. One can thus agree with Tarbox (69) that “[t]he only thing certain about Sarah is that she can neither be classified nor explained”.

The analysis of the discourse structure of the plot line concerning the third open question has shown that in general almost all phases of the curiosity discourse structure (except for the solution) are adhered to. Here one can recognize a focus on the analytical phase which is often interrupted by brief phases of horror, surprise and bewilderment, which show that most assumptions about Sarah prove to be red herrings. This heightens suspense and raises anticipation concerning her character until the end where a definite resolution is not given, though.

6.3.2.3 *Linguistic devices generating suspense*

Considering the linguistic devices generating suspense in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* it can be claimed that the **title** of the novel does not create suspense. From the title itself it can be concluded that the book is about a love story between a French Lieutenant and a woman and as a result one expects a romance, which – as has been discussed above – evokes a rather limited amount of suspense.

With regard to the **lexical-semantic level**, though, an abundance of suspenseful vocabulary can be detected on the macro level of the novel. Thus, one can find words from the semantic field of *horror*: “one *terrible* moment” [emphasis added] (FLW 70), “a *dark* movement” [emphasis added] (FLW 118), “the Victorian *horrors*” [emphasis added] (FLW 159) or “yet another *horror*” [emphasis added] (FLW 253). Furthermore, as the story is also about the mystery of Sarah, there is also vocabulary from the semantic field of *mystery*: “thoughts of the *mysterious* woman” [emphasis added] (FLW 84), “[a] swarm of *mysteries*” [emphasis added] (FLW 358), “my sweet and *mysterious* Sarah” [emphasis added] (FLW 373) or “my sweet *enigma*” [emphasis added] (FLW 374). Lastly, due to the fact that Sarah and Charles are both

eventually regarded as criminals breaking social conventions one can also find words from the semantic field of *crime*: “the reason for my *crime*” [emphasis added] (FLW 176), “[a]n agonized look, as if he was the most debased *criminal* caught in his most abominable *crime*” [emphasis added] (FLW 253), “he had not committed the *fatal deed*” [emphasis added] (FLW 321), “[m]utiny, I am afraid was not his only *crime*” [emphasis added] (FLW 391) or “reference to the *criminal* and sordid liaison that the writer well knows is the blackest aspect of his *crime*” [emphasis added] (FLW 414). There are also some negatively connotated terms referring to a state of anxiety and fear: Charles “stopped with a *sudden dread*” [emphasis added] (FLW 244), “Charles stood *stunned*. [...] He was as shaken as a man who suddenly finds the world around him standing on its head” [emphasis added] (FLW 445) or “Now she was the one who was *shocked*” [emphasis added] (FLW 447). It has to be added that despite the use of suspenseful vocabulary some of it is used in an ironic and exaggerated way (e.g. “Victorian horrors”) which diminishes the suspense.

Turning to the **syntactic level** the ample use of elliptic sentences becomes apparent. Here are some examples: “And there, a dark movement!” (FLW 118), “[...] I will come to the point. I am confident –” (FLW 121), “Then he turned and looked at the distant brig, as if that might provide an answer to this enigma. But it did not.” (FLW 125), “They came to the base of the lower cliff, and went through the first tunnel of ivy, over the clearing, and into the second green corridor – and then!” (FLW 184), “A moment.” (FLW 184) and “A sound.” (FLW 446). These elliptic sentences often appear in suspenseful situations (e.g. when Sarah and Charles meet clandestinely) and thus further heighten the suspense.

As already hinted above, on the **textual level** one can find many cataphoric advance references, such as: “And there, below him, he saw a figure” (FLW 70), “Charles entered upon his first fatal mistake” (FLW 330) or “But they [Sam’s eyes] remained averted from his keen gaze; and drove him into his second fatal mistake” (FLW 331). Here the reader anticipates subsequent information concerning the mysterious figure or the consequences of Charles’s “fatal” mistakes. In the novel also referentless pronouns are used for the same purpose. They are most effectively applied in chapter 57 where the pregnant Mary surprisingly sees Sarah at an embankment in Chelsea. However, at the beginning it is not at all clear that the chapter is about those two women as Mary is referred to as a young pregnant woman and then mainly the pronoun “she” is used. Also Sarah’s name is not mentioned in the

whole chapter and due to the fact that the reader does not know the identity of the women, the following scene is very suspenseful:

A woman [=Sarah] emerges, steps down to the pavement, takes a coin from her purse. The mouth of the girl on the embankment [=Mary] falls open. A moment's pallor attacks the pink, and then she flushes. (*FLW* 422)

Another interesting feature on the textual level is the abundant use of cliffhangers, a characteristic of the novel which has also been noted by various literary critics. Tarbox (83f.) for instance assumes that “[o]ne of the narrator’s tricks is to build a dramatic line slowly, bring it to a near climax, and then change the subject for a chapter or two”. Thus, typically there are cliffhanger chapter endings raising open questions which are only answered in later chapters. One of the first occurrences of this technique is the cliffhanger chapter ending of chapter 9. Here Mrs Poulteney is informed about Sarah walking in the Ware Commons and is very shocked at this information: “Indeed her mouth did something extraordinary. It fell open” (*FLW* 65). However, why it is outrageous for Sarah to walk there is only answered in chapter 12 when it is revealed that the Ware Commons is a place where especially young couples “could go and not be spied on” (*FLW* 89). This technique of cliffhangers and long procrastination phases is applied throughout the book, though most frequently at the center of the novel. Here many things happen in a short amount of time. Loveday (54) claims that various “crude” techniques are used for heightening suspense. More specifically the material is constantly intercut “so as to defer the required information” (Loveday 54). For instance in chapter 23 there are deliberate hints about Charles getting disinherited, namely: “Yet something else had also changed. [...] But still he did not guess” (*FLW* 198). Here the description of Charles’s visit at Winsyatt is interrupted by depicting Sarah being discovered by Mrs Fairley when leaving the Undercliff. However – as Loveday aptly remarks – instead of describing what happened to Sarah “[c]hapter 24 takes up Charles’s story, but *after* [sic] the Winsyatt incident is concluded, so that we are left to wonder what the ‘monstrous’ event [*FLW* 200] was” (Loveday 54). Only in chapter 26 there is a full account of the talk between Charles and his uncle. The same strategy is used for depicting Sarah’s dismissal at Mrs Poulteney’s, which is only fully outlined in chapter 30. Loveday (54) concludes that in “the thematically and structurally central bloc of chapters running from 29 to 39 the process is used repeatedly and to very good effect”.

The analysis of the linguistic level has shown that – except for the title – suspenseful linguistic devices on all other levels under examination are used. However, it needs to be

noted that not all chapters contain the same amount of these devices. Indeed the most suspenseful chapters are those with an abundance of them, as shall be shown in the analysis of the micro level.

One can conclude that on the macro level *The French Lieutenant's Woman* adheres to the majority of criteria to be regarded as a suspenseful novel. Although genre expectations do not promise a high amount of suspense, a closer analysis on the other levels showed that this novel nevertheless induces the reader to feel suspense. Thus, it not only offers significant open questions with limited amount of answers and more or less likeable characters but also generates suspense on the discourse level. Despite the fact that the suspense discourse structures are not strictly adhered to, there is a focus on certain stages of these structures (e.g. the phase of changing fortunes or the blocking phase) which are pivotal in generating suspense. Furthermore, suspenseful linguistic devices prove to be another means to make the novel suspenseful.

6.3.3 Suspense on the micro level

Considering the micro level of suspense an exemplary analysis of one of the suspenseful chapters seems appropriate to gain more insight into how suspense works in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Here chapter 29 will be analyzed more closely. It is in the center of the novel and thus belongs to the most eventful and thus most suspenseful chapters of the text.

Chapter 28 has already ended in a suspenseful way, with Charles preparing himself for the walk to the Undercliff in order to find Sarah before Grogan discovers her. Regarding the **story level**, for chapter 29 the prevalent open question pertains to whether Charles finds Sarah before others do, who might possibly commit her to an asylum. As this question is a yes/no-question there are only two possible answers for it, increasing the amount of suspense. This question is also significant for the reader as enough detail is applied to convey Charles's feelings as well as the outward surroundings. Thus, for instance the reader not only learns that "[t]he sky was without cloud, washed pure by the previous night's storm and of a deliciously tender and ethereal blue" (FLW 240) but can also picture the remote and forlorn barn, which is presumably the place where Sarah hides. Through these detailed and vivid descriptions the reader becomes immersed in the story. Furthermore, the *Crimen* drive seems to be activated as Charles's does something forbidden by meeting clandestinely with another woman. Due to the fact that his thoughts and feelings are clearly depicted, the level of allegiance is reached and one can say that in this chapter the narrative channels the reader's sympathies in favor of

Charles. Thus, it is revealed that “Charles felt in all ways excommunicated” (FLW 242) and guilty: “Some paranoiac transference of guilt now made him feel that the trees, the flowers, even the inanimate things around him were watching him” (FLW 242). When he is approaching the barn Charles is depicted as nervous and at first does not even dare to open the door (FLW 243). Hence it is clear that this chapter certainly elicits some character empathy for Charles.

Turning to the **discourse level**, this chapter obviously follows the suspense discourse structure. There is an initiating event, namely that Charles has decided to find Sarah before anyone else does. However, instead of showing the meeting there is a lengthy description of Charles’s walk to the Undercliff, constituting the retarding phase of the structure. Suspense is heightened by the fact that this phase overlaps with the stage of reader empathy as insights into Charles’s thoughts and feelings are given. One can then assume a phase of changing fortunes as Charles first believes that the barn is empty but upon examining the inside of the barn more closely, apparently detects something. The chapter, however, ends in a cliffhanger and does not provide an outcome to what Charles sees in the barn.

Furthermore, there are also many **linguistic devices generating suspense**. There is vocabulary from the semantic fields of *mystery* and *horror*: For instance, on his way to the Undercliff Charles sees “two animals that seemed *fraught with significance*” [emphasis added] (FLW 241). In his paranoia Charles feels threatened and watched by the plants and the animals in the woods: “Flowers became eyes, stones had ears, the trunks of the reproving trees were a numberless Greek chorus” (FLW 242f.). In addition to this the barn is described as *forlorn* and *deserted* [emphasis added] (FLW 243). Once inside the barn Charles has an “icy premonition” (FLW 244). Furthermore, there is not enough light in the barn so he cannot see very well but he “could make out something hanging from a nail” (FLW 244). Here the use of the anonymous “something” creates suspense. Charles is so anxious at this moment that “he nearly turned and ran out of the barn and back to Lyme” (FLW 244) But then he gathers all his courage and looks further into the barn. Here the chapter effectively ends with a cliffhanger, another linguistic device inducing suspense. The use of elliptic sentences further adds to the suspense: “Charles advanced to the slanting bar of light; and then stopped with a sudden dread” (FLW 244). Here the last part of the sentence is elliptic creating curiosity as to why Charles stops.

The analysis of chapter 29 has shown how suspense in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* works on the micro level. At this level of analysis there are also specific open questions which are made significant through various techniques (e.g. activation of drives). Furthermore, a particular discourse structure can be detected and the use of linguistic devices further heightens suspense.

7 The influence of postmodern features on suspense

The analyses of suspense in three postmodern texts by John Fowles have revealed that although they all contain a certain amount of suspense, they cannot be regarded as typical suspense texts. It is now interesting whether this is due to their postmodern features. In the following an exemplary analysis of the influence of postmodern features on suspense will try to provide an answer to this question. As an in-depth analysis of all postmodern features will go beyond the scope of this thesis, there will be a concentration on the self-conscious features of the texts and their effect on suspense. A concentration on the postmodern concern of revealing the text's status as an artifact seems to be convenient since it can be assumed that this breaking of the fictional illusion might affect suspense most radically.

7.1 "The Enigma"

The analysis of suspense in "The Enigma" has shown that it fails to provide certain aspects to be regarded as a typical suspenseful story and it is now of great interest to determine in how far the postmodern application of metafictional devices contribute to this fact and to what extent they influence suspense in the story in general.

7.1.1 Metafictional devices

Reader engagement and thus the entering of the state of "willing suspension of disbelief" seem to be necessary when creating suspense. The notion of reader involvement can be best explained with the concept of frames. Frames are present and organize all sorts of fiction. They "are explicitly laid bare in metafiction" (Waugh 30). This process of revealing the frame through metafiction can be defined as frame-breaking (Waugh 31). An essentially deconstructive method of frame-breaking is applied when an illusion is constructed "through the imperceptibility of the frame" (Waugh 31) which is then shuttered by constantly exposing the frame.

The concept of frame-breaking can also be applied to "The Enigma" since it first establishes the frame of a detective story which is then shuttered by the story's metafictional devices, most notably when Isobel declares that "Nothing is real. All is fiction" (*EN* 229) and concludes that Fielding felt "like this minor character in a bad book" (*EN* 234), which is why he decided to "walk out of the story". In addition to Isobel's metafictional theory there are other "minor" metafictional allusions beforehand, such as Mrs Fielding's comment on the red herring (*EN* 215), the comparison of the text to a news story (*EN* 197) as well as the various allusions to the detective genre itself. These metafictional comments may not only break the state of "willing suspension of disbelief" but also result in shifting the reader's attention away

from the “vital” question of Fielding’s disappearance to the construction of reality in the text. So rather than concentrating on the promising suspenseful question of Fielding’s whereabouts the reader probably gets much more concerned with the construction of reality in the text. Due to the metafictional remarks the reader presumably concentrates on discerning and analyzing narrative elements and structure, as holds true for all self-referential texts (Bauer and Sander 214). One can assume for instance that the conventions of the detective genre become rather more important than Fielding’s disappearance when Isobel suggests pretending that she and the other characters in the text are part of a detective story (see *EN* 229ff.). As a result, Fielding’s disappearance becomes not only of minor importance to the reader but also to the characters in the story, as becomes obvious in the following quotation:

And in some strange way the case had died during that last half-hour; it was not so much that he [Jennings] accepted her theory, but that like everyone else, though for a different reason, he now saw that it didn’t really matter.
(*EN* 237)

One can be fairly sure that the metafictional devices in “The Enigma” affect suspense in the short story as they seem to induce the reader to deal with other issues than Fielding’s disappearance.

7.2 “Poor Koko”

The examination of suspense in “Poor Koko” has revealed that it is a fairly suspenseful story. However, certain aspects of this story, which can be linked to the postmodern concern of parodying popular genres, destroy the suspense. These shall now be analyzed in greater detail.

7.2.1 Parody of popular suspense genres

According to Waugh (4) parody is another form of metafiction or self-conscious writing since “[t]he breaking of the frame of convention deliberately lays bare the process of automatization that occurs when a content totally appropriates a form” (Waugh 68).

Regarding the **thriller part** of the story firstly the frame of a popular genre, namely the thriller is established. Thrillers can be defined as “stories of heroic adventure set in criminal situations” (Reilly & Bloom 460). As typical for a thriller the narrator does indeed find himself in a dangerous or – as it is ironically remarked on in the story – “melodramatic” (*PK* 145) situation, namely a burglary. Furthermore, the setting, an isolated, North Dorset cottage adds to the dangerousness of the situation. Although certain thriller elements are used in the short story, they are utilized in a postmodern and hence ironic manner. Thus, the ironic and “depreciatory remarks on the detective genre” (Eriksson 151) in the first passage already point to the fact that this specific “melodramatic situation” (*PK* 145) should not be taken too seriously. This is heightened by the “absurdity” (*PK* 156) of the narrator’s and the thief’s encounter. When the young man realizes that he is not alone in the house, he reproaches the narrator by blaming him not to have made a noise in order to scare him away. Instead of threatening or using violence against the narrator, as one would expect in a typical thriller, the thief engages the narrator in a discussion about Karl Marx and Joseph Conrad. He even presents in great detail his motives for stealing, which further adds to the absurdity of the situation as remarked on by the narrator: “I have had a good many people try to justify bad behavior to me but never in such *ridiculous* circumstances” [emphasis added] (*PK* 158). He goes on by commenting on the burglar’s outer appearance: “Perhaps the greatest *absurdity* was that red woolen hat. It had to my poor vision a distinct resemblance to a cardinal’s biretta” [emphasis added] (*PK* 158). In the course of the story it becomes more and more apparent that the dangerousness of the situation is subverted. Even when the thief eventually binds the narrator to a chair “[h]e is most considerate of the older man, offering him coffee and brandy and suggesting he dress warmly in preparation for being bound and gagged” (McSweeney 116).

This undermining of the thriller-genre conventions by the constant allusions to the absurdity of the situation diminish the dangerousness of the situation and thus lead to a reduction of suspense. As a result the encounter between the narrator and the thief is not regarded as threatening anymore but rather as funny and hence not suspenseful. This is in line with the analysis of the suspense discourse structure which revealed a drop of suspense as soon as the two opponents actually meet each other.

Turning to the **detective part** of “Poor Koko” it seems that also here the parody of genre conventions lead to a reduction of suspense. Here the atypical reference to the insolubleness of the mystery at the beginning of the part makes it impossible for the reader to anticipate a resolution. This is further strengthened by the narrator’s self-conscious remarks on his inaccurate depiction of the thriller part events, which prevent the reader from raising expectations with regard to a definite solution to the mystery.

All in all it can be concluded that although “Poor Koko” is suspenseful at the beginning, its suspensefulness ceases when the parodying elements become obvious. As for the detective part of the story the analysis of the influence of postmodern features on suspense has shown that due to the parodying elements at the beginning of this part no anticipation with regard to closure can be raised, which is a vital criterion for creating suspense. This is in accordance with the analysis of suspense in the detective part which revealed a rather small amount of suspense.

7.3 *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

This novel contains many of the above discussed postmodern features, which have also been the center of concern of literary critics. Thus, for instance Foster (68) asserts that in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* “Fowles engages in an interplay of forms, combining Victorian conventions, parody, pastiche, essay, and elements of the Gothic in a way that is completely postmodern”. Also Loveday (48) regards this novel as a combination of the historical novel (set in the mid-nineteenth century) and of a “self-conscious work of fiction”.

The analysis of suspense in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has in general revealed that it contains many features of a suspenseful story. Just like the other two texts by Fowles it is now of interest whether the postmodern features affect the suspense. Here there is a focus on the metafictional devices of this novel and their influence on suspense.

7.3.1 Metafictional devices

Comparable to “The Enigma” also in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* metafictional devices are applied drawing attention to the artificiality of the story: “The narrator calls his authority into question by frequently losing control of his characters, such as when Charles disobeys his orders [FLW 96], or when Sarah disappears and even he does not know where she is [FLW 409]” (Tarbox 82). Throughout the novel this deconstructive technique of frame-breaking is applied; for instance when Mary is introduced: “Of the three young women who pass through *these pages* Mary was, in my opinion, by far the prettiest” [emphasis added] (FLW 75). Although the narrator continuously violates the illusion, he most notoriously does so in the “metafictional” chapter 13 as well as in the two instances when he occurs as a character in the story (i.e. chapter 55 and chapter 61). An analysis with regard to suspense at these stages in the book seems to be reasonable here.

One can regard chapter 13 as “a response to a cliff-hanger question” (Foster 88). More specifically the question at the end of chapter 12 constitutes one of the main open questions on the macro level, namely: “Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?” (FLW 94). One can assume that suspense at this stage is rather high as the reader expects to find out more about the mysterious Sarah in the next chapter. However, instead the narrator admits the following: “I do not know. This story I am telling is all imagination” (FLW 95) and then begins “to discuss the conventions of Victorian storytelling, including the omniscient, godlike narrator” (Foster 84). In this chapter postmodern motifs such as “self-conscious narrative, distrust of realism, exploitation of previous forms, and narrative indeterminacy or

unreliability” (Foster 84) are displayed. So here the – for the state of suspense – very important “willing suspension of disbelief” is deliberately destroyed, which is even remarked on by the narrator: “I have disgracefully broken the illusion?” (FLW 97). This comment bears a strong resemblance to Isobel’s statement in “The Enigma”: “Nothing is real. All is fiction” (EN 229). So one can assume that – comparable to “The Enigma” – with the laying bare of the fictionality of the novel suspense is broken and the attention shifts to the constructiveness of the text. This may be true for this chapter where the reader seems to be induced to think about the development of a fictional story and the freedom of its characters. However, at the end of this chapter the narrator once again continues to tell the “story”, albeit merely “the outward facts” (FLW 98) of how Sarah was surprised by Charles when taking a nap at a meadow in the Ware Commons. Also the subsequent chapters primarily concentrate on the story without being interrupted by illusion-breaking metafictional comments. Thus – in opposition to “The Enigma” where once the illusion is broken the focus is mainly on the constructiveness of the story – the reader in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is once again invited to enter the “willing suspension of disbelief”, which in turn forms the basis for generating suspense.

In chapter 55 the fictional illusion is again destroyed by the appearance of the narrator as a character. He is described as a “massively bearded” man of about forty and shares a train compartment with Charles, who is on his way to London to search for Sarah. After an in-depth description of the narrator’s outer appearance he does not want to “keep up the pretence no longer” (FLW 408) and discloses his identity. Comparable to chapter 13 he discusses the conventions of writing fiction, especially focusing on endings in Victorian fiction. He then contemplates on how to end the story. Here Foster (69) assumes that “[t]he author’s obviously contemporary interest in narrative indeterminacy undercuts expectations of certainty and resolution embodied in the Victorian structure”. One can agree here that by promising the reader two versions of the ending, he or she cannot expect a definite solution to the story and the illusion of “one true ending” is shattered. However, with regard to suspense Stratmann’s criterion of giving the reader a feeling that some kind of solution will be offered is nevertheless fulfilled. The reader even seems to be allowed to choose which ending he or she likes best. Suspense is heightened by the fact that one does not know which ending will be told first; it is just revealed that there will be a happy ending for Charles and one ending in favor of Sarah, which is presumably a not so happy one for Charles. Thus, it can be assumed that despite the fact that the illusion is once again broken in this chapter, the promise of some kind of a solution actually heightens suspense rather than destroys it.

In chapter 61 the narrator once again appears as a wealthy business tycoon, who is so powerful that he is able to manipulate the time in order show another ending to Charles's and Sarah's reunion. Thus, yet again the fictional frame is broken. However, as the ending in chapter 60 proved to be the happy one, an unhappy resolution can be expected in this chapter. Hence due to this limited amount of anticipation suspense cannot be destroyed by the application of this metafictional device, as it was not very high in the first place.

From this it can be concluded that the use of metafictional devices do not drastically and negatively affect suspense in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Although the fictional illusion in chapter 13 is definitely destroyed along with the suspense, the reader is once again drawn into the story and is able to feel suspense. In the case of the narrator as a character – at least in chapter 55 – one can even assume that this metafictional intrusion might have a positive effect on suspense since some kind of outcome is promised. Thus, readers who want to concentrate on the story and feel suspense can easily ignore these intrusions and immerse in the story. This is to say that the reader is not “forced” to merely focus on the constructiveness of the story as soon as self-conscious remarks destroy the “willing suspension of disbelief” (as in “The Enigma”) because after breaking the illusion through metafictional comments, ample devices are used for the reader to reengage in the story.

8 Conclusion

This paper has examined the suspensefulness of three postmodern texts by John Fowles. More specifically these texts have been analyzed with regard to suspense on the genre, story, discourse and linguistic level. Afterwards an investigation of selected postmodern features of these texts and their effect on suspense aimed at providing further insight into the research concern of this thesis. The research question pertained to whether suspense was possible in postmodern texts in general and how the postmodern features in particular affect suspense.

The three literary texts showed varying degrees of suspense. Thus, the short story “The Enigma” revealed a rather limited amount of suspense. Despite the fact that it apparently belongs to a suspense genre, namely detective fiction, it cannot be regarded as a suspenseful text. This is due to the fact that except for the level of genre expectations the other levels of analysis did not show a high amount of suspense. For instance on the story level there are no characters the reader can sympathize with and who are also important to the suspenseful mystery. On the discourse level the analytical phase overlaps with the blocking phase, which suggests that there will not be a solution to the mystery. This violates Stratmann’s criterion for postmodern suspenseful texts, which is to playfully flirt with suspense by keeping up the promise of a solution without providing it, though. There is also a rather low amount of linguistic devices used to generate suspense; quite on the contrary vocabulary seems to be used to destroy suspense rather than create it. Furthermore, the metafictional devices used in the text seem to break suspense as the attention is shifted from the story to the construction of the narrative itself. Thus, in the case of “The Enigma” postmodern techniques do indeed affect suspense in a negative way.

The second short story which was analyzed, “Poor Koko”, seemed to be more suspenseful than “The Enigma”. Potential for suspense could be detected on all levels of analysis at least for the thriller part of the story. In this narrative especially the transgression of the *Crimen* and the *Fructus* drive as well as the use of suspenseful vocabulary creates suspense. However, similarly to “The Enigma” the analysis of the postmodern features revealed a negative effect on suspense. In this case the parody of the thriller and detective genre seems to destroy suspense as the reader cannot take the “dangerousness” of the situation serious anymore. Readers may thus be more inclined to regard the ironic depiction of the burglary as funny instead of suspenseful.

Considering the last text analyzed, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the results of the analysis are somewhat different from the other texts. Despite the fact that this novel belongs to the romance genre, which is not regarded as a very suspenseful genre, it showed a high amount of suspense on the other levels of analysis. This narrative not only contains many devices to draw the reader in the state of “willing suspension of disbelief” but there are also characters (i.e. especially Charles and Ernestina) one can sympathize with. Furthermore, there is an abundance of techniques on the linguistic level (e.g. cliffhangers, cataphoric advance references, etc.) which further generate suspense. Also with this text the postmodern technique of metafiction was analyzed with regard to its effect on suspense. In opposition to the other texts it was revealed that metafictional devices do not drastically destroy suspense in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This is due to the fact that after breaking the illusion the text seems to endeavor to immediately create it again in order to draw the reader into the story once more. In spite of its being considered as a postmodern novel in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* there are nevertheless many storytelling techniques applied, which has been noted by many scholars, such as Foster (17):

What sets Fowles apart from many metafictionists is his love of storytelling. While he does place the conflict between creating the illusion and laying it bare in the foreground, he takes great care to create a masterful illusion. He shares with his Victorian forebears a belief in the power of story to engage readers.

Thus the reader is able to suspend the knowledge of the fictionality of the text in order to feel suspense again.

From the analyses of suspense in the three postmodern texts by Fowles it can be concluded suspense is indeed possible in postmodern texts. Although postmodern features have an influence on suspense and might destroy it, it can be recreated by inducing the reader again in the state of “willing suspension of disbelief”. Thus, in addition to Stratmann’s criterion of promising closure one can add the importance of creating a fictional illusion as another condition for suspense in postmodern texts. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* illustrates how by reengaging the reader into the story after laying bare the illusion suspense can be generated.

Regarding the two short stories the in the introduction mentioned assumption that this brief literary genre does not leave enough space to recreate the fictional illusion once it is broken seems to be substantiated, at least for postmodern short stories. However, further research concerning suspense in short stories is needed to gain further insight into this matter.

Furthermore, as the analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has shown that suspense is indeed possible in romance literature, also more research in this field of interest would be necessary. Hence a more varied research in the field of suspense in literature could be achieved.

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10 Appendix

10.1 English Abstract

Suspense is a complex and not easily graspable phenomenon. In literary studies it has been investigated only recently and there does not yet exist a straightforward model to analyze the suspensefulness of literary texts. Suspense in literature has until recently been assessed on the basis of commonsensical judgments. Thus, for instance postmodern literature has been viewed as boring and not being able to create suspense. This thesis aims at investigating this hypothesis on the basis of a four-level-model for analyzing suspense. Three postmodern texts by John Fowles are analyzed with regard to this suspense model. A further, more specific analysis considering the influence of their postmodern features on suspense provides further insight in how far postmodern features affect suspense. Thus, it is examined whether suspense is possible in postmodern texts in general and how far postmodern characteristics influence suspense in particular. Thereby this thesis strives to contribute to a more varied research of suspense in literature.

10.2 Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Der Titel dieser Diplomarbeit, in Deutsch “Arten von Spannung in John Fowles‘ Postmodernen Prosawerken“, deutet bereits darauf hin, dass hier die verschiedenen Arten von Spannung in ausgewählten postmodernen Werken des britischen Autors John Fowles behandelt werden. Das Zitat von John Barth, „Goodbye suspense goodbye“ (Barth 113) (dt. „Auf Wiedersehen Spannung auf Wiedersehen“), welches auch im Titel verwendet wird, soll ein Hinweis darauf sein, dass Spannung in der postmodernen Literatur nicht unbedingt häufig anzutreffen ist und sich postmoderne Autoren wie John Barth anscheinend sogar davor hüten sie in ihren literarischen Werken zu erzeugen. Dies scheint ihnen auch zu gelingen, denn viele Literaturkritiker sind der Meinung, dass postmoderne Literatur keinerlei Spannung erhält.

In dieser Diplomarbeit wurde untersucht, ob postmoderne Werke nun tatsächlich keine Spannung erzeugen bzw. inwiefern die postmodernen Charakteristika einen (negativen) Einfluss auf die Spannungserzeugung haben. Hierzu wurden drei Texte des britischen Autors John Fowles untersucht, zwei Kurzgeschichten aus seiner Kurzgeschichtensammlung *The Ebony Tower* (dt. *Der Ebenholzturm*), „The Enigma“ (dt. „Das Rätsel“) und „Poor Koko“ (dt. „Armer Koko“), und sein vielgerühmter postmoderner Roman *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (dt. *Die Geliebte des französischen Lieutnants*). Hierfür wurde zuerst, basierend auf dem aus zwei Analyseebenen bestehenden Modell von Wenzel (*Story* und *Discourse*-Ebene), ein Modell entwickelt, das zusätzlich noch die Genre- und die sprachliche Ebene untersucht. Das komplexe Phänomen der Spannung, welches nicht nur von der Literaturwissenschaft, sondern auch von anderen Wissenschaften wie der Psychologie erforscht wird, soll durch dieses Modell für eine literaturwissenschaftliche Analyse untersuchbar gemacht werden.

Ausgehend von der von Stratmann formulierten Hypothese, dass postmoderne Werke spannend sein können, wenn sie dem Leser/der Leserin das Gefühl einer (nahenden) Lösung der im Werk dargestellten (problematischen) Situation vermitteln, wurden die drei Texte von Fowles untersucht. In Einzelanalysen wurden die drei literarischen Texte hinsichtlich ihrer spannungserzeugenden Mittel auf den vier Analyseebenen analysiert. Im Anschluss daran wurde der Einfluss der postmodernen Eigenschaften auf die Spannung durchleuchtet. Hierbei wurde ein Fokus auf die illusionsbrechenden Techniken der Werke gelegt, da angenommen wird, dass durch den Illusionsbruch auch ein Spannungsbruch entstehen kann.

Die Analyse zeigte unterschiedliche Ergebnisse für die drei literarischen Werke. So stellte sich heraus, dass „The Enigma“ an sich schon wenig spannungserzeugende Mittel einsetzt und durch die metafiktionalen Aspekte der Kurzgeschichte die Spannung schließlich zerstört wird. Sobald die Illusion gebrochen wird, liegt der Fokus des Textes auf das Reflektieren dessen Fiktionalität. „Poor Koko“ weist viel mehr spannungserzeugende Elemente auf und besonders der Beginn der Kurzgeschichte kann als spannend bezeichnet werden. Diese wird jedoch durch die postmodernen parodistischen Elemente verringert. Die problematische Situation, der Einbruch, wird eher als lächerlich und nicht als gefährlich dargestellt, was dazu führt, dass der Leser/die Leserin eher dazu geneigt ist die Situation als lustig und nicht als spannend zu empfinden. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* weist andere Ergebnisse auf. Bei der Analyse zeigte sich, dass trotz der Zugehörigkeit zum romantischen Genre, das als nicht besonders spannend angesehen wird, viele spannungserzeugende Mittel auf den anderen Analyseebenen verwendet werden. Obwohl auch hier häufig illusionsbrechende Elemente auftreten (z.B. in Kapitel 13), wird die Illusion nach dem Bruch immer wieder von neuem hergestellt, sodass sich der Leser/die Leserin wieder auf die Geschichte konzentrieren und somit Spannung empfinden kann.

Aus den Analysen konnte gefolgert werden, dass Spannung in postmodernen Werken tatsächlich möglich ist. Zusätzlich zu Stratmanns Kriterium des Versprechens einer Lösung wurde erkannt, dass auch illusionsfördernde Mittel für die Spannungserzeugung wichtig sind, besonders, wenn diese Illusion gebrochen wird. Es wird vermutet, dass es aufgrund der narrativen Kürze von Kurzgeschichten nicht genug Raum für eine Wiederherstellung der Illusion gibt. Dies erklärt, warum bei „The Enigma“ und „Poor Koko“ die postmodernen Elemente tatsächlich für einen Spannungsbruch sorgen, während es bei *The French Lieutenant's Woman* durch einen erneuten Aufbau der Illusion auch gelingt die Spannung neu aufzubauen.

10.3 Lebenslauf

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