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Death Comes to Pemberley Or Pride and Prejudice Revisited

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Resumo

P. D. James é uma autora do cânone literário inglês com uma extensa carreira dedicada aos romances policiais. A obra *Death Comes to Pemberley* combina a longa carreira da escritora com a sua admiração pela obra de Jane Austen. Esta tese estuda a obra de James, que se apropria do mundo e das personagens de Austen, seis anos após os acontecimentos narrados em *Pride and Prejudice*.

O primeiro capítulo da dissertação centra-se nas características da literatura policial, de modo a compreender que elementos foram utilizados por James e que convenções são abertamente rejeitadas pela autora. Assim, é possível compreender como James adapta um romance do século XIX, abalando a estabilidade de Elizabeth e Darcy com a descoberta de um crime na sua propriedade, Pemberley. Os termos detective, herói, vilão, assassino e vítima surgem associados às personagens masculinas, procedendo-se também à caracterização de Darcy, Wickham e Bidwell no contexto da literatura policial.

A escolha de Pemberley enquanto cenário do crime revela-se crucial para a análise da obra. De acordo com as convenções da literatura policial, o cenário rural permite observar o impacto de um crime na vida quotidiana de uma pequena comunidade. James mostra-se particularmente interessada neste elemento. Pemberley representa a ordem social e a estabilidade familiar.

James apresenta apenas um suspeito para o crime, Wickham. Austen caracteriza a personagem como um vilão, mas nunca como um assassino. Por isso, Wickham não é o assassino em *Death Comes to Pemberley*, mantendo apenas o rótulo de vilão. James brinca com as expectativas dos leitores, expostas através da perspectiva de Darcy, que se questiona continuamente se Wickham será ou não o criminoso. Por sua vez, Darcy não pode ser considerado um detective. A sua presença em *Death Comes to Pemberley* encontra-se relacionada com o assassinio, embora Darcy não possa estar envolvido na investigação oficial devido à sua relação familiar com o acusado. Assim, James utiliza a focalização interna de modo a exhibir as dúvidas de Darcy em relação a Wickham. Darcy, destituído dos seus poderes enquanto membro da comunidade, considera os factos mas não os investiga.

Uma das dimensões mais importantes da ficção policial é precisamente o castigo do assassino e a restauração da ordem na comunidade afectada. Em *Death Comes to Pemberley*, o assassino não é punido pelo crime. Bidwell morre vítima de uma doença grave que já o afligia. A sua confissão, que salva a vida de Wickham, surge no leito de morte, pois o

assassino desejava morrer de consciência tranquila. Apesar da morte de Bidwell, a ordem apenas é restaurada em Pemberley com a partida de Lydia e Wickham.

Para além disso, o capítulo refere as recepções de ambos os livros nas respectivas épocas, equiparando as expectativas dos leitores da obra de cada uma das autoras.

O conceito de intertextualidade é bastante vasto e esta tese não pretende defini-lo. Jane Austen encontra-se entre os autores mais adaptados da actualidade. As adaptações de *Pride and Prejudice* apresentam-se como trabalhos distintos que frequentemente revisitam a relação amorosa de Darcy e Elizabeth. Contudo, James não interfere na história original, situando a acção da sua obra seis anos após o casamento do casal. Deste modo, o capítulo analisa a liberdade criativa de James na sua apropriação das personagens Elizabeth e Darcy.

A obra de James apresenta-se como uma homenagem a Austen. James interpreta o enredo de *Pride and Prejudice*, assim como as motivações das personagens, transpondo esses elementos para *Death Comes to Pemberley*, que se torna o produto de uma reinterpretação. É possível observar quais as características de que James se apropria de modo a homenagear Austen. O enredo secundário do livro aborda a vida amorosa de Georgiana, que deverá escolher entre dois pretendentes. Elizabeth guia os leitores pelas aventuras românticas da cunhada, enquanto observadora e conselheira. O segundo capítulo caracteriza Elizabeth focando-se particularmente nas informações contidas no prólogo e no comportamento da personagem no primeiro capítulo do *Book One*. A Elizabeth de James já não se apresenta como uma figura que desafia as normas sociais. Em vez disso, a personagem compara o ambiente social de Meryton e Pemberley, criando uma ligação entre *Death Comes to Pemberley* e *Pride and Prejudice*.

James utiliza a dupla perspectiva, estabelecendo uma clara divisão de papéis entre as personagens. Darcy é impedido de cumprir o seu papel enquanto representante legal, pelo que é apresentado como um homem poderoso numa situação sem poder. Assim, visita Wickham na prisão e mostra-se incapaz de entender se o cunhado será culpado ou inocente. A autora explora os limites da autoridade de Darcy, colocando continuamente a personagem em situações desconfortáveis. O crime provoca o cruzamento da esfera doméstica e da esfera privada, uma vez que Wickham e Darcy pertencem à mesma família. Deste modo, o protagonista masculino mostra-se incapaz de evitar os escândalos. Durante o julgamento do cunhado, Pemberley é visto por Darcy como o seu refúgio. James dá ênfase à vertente social de Darcy, explorando as suas fraquezas em relação ao mundo exterior. Por outro lado, Elizabeth favorece a esfera privada, dedicando-se à sua irmã Lydia e à cunhada Georgiana.

A obra *Death Comes to Pemberley* permite muitos níveis de leitura. Apresenta um enredo original a partir de um cenário e de personagens criadas por Austen. Torna-se possível ler *Death Comes to Pemberley* sem ter lido *Pride and Prejudice* pois a autora age como moderadora, utilizando o prólogo para recordar o enredo de *Pride and Prejudice* e caracterizar as suas personagens. As preocupações sociais de James diferem das abordadas por Austen no século XIX, e o mesmo sucede com os seus leitores. James escreve para leitores do século XXI, abordando assim temas que Austen deliberadamente não menciona. Assim, a obra de James valoriza o contexto social e político da época. A leitura de *Pride and Prejudice* permite aos leitores compreender as escolhas de James na abordagem e tratamento das personagens e do cenário. A autora apropria-se das personagens principais, de personagens secundárias menores, como Mrs Reynolds e Captain Denny, e cria também personagens originais, como a família Bidwell. James exerce a sua liberdade criativa essencialmente no que diz respeito às personagens que inventa. Wickham é apenas um vilão, tal como caracterizado por Austen, e não um assassino. James explora a personagem de acordo com o comportamento que Wickham apresenta do longo de *Pride and Prejudice*. Bidwell, uma personagem criada por James, é o assassino, mas não é um vilão. Para além disso, as personagens criadas por James não pertencem ao mesmo círculo social da família Darcy.

Vivemos imersos numa cultura de adaptação e *Death Comes to Pemberley* surge como um produto do seu tempo. A obra combina o mundo de Austen com os códigos sociais e expectativas dos leitores de James.

O terceiro capítulo da dissertação analisa a estrutura dos cinco capítulos do *Book One* e tem como objectivo estudar o dia-a-dia em Pemberley. Ao longo dos capítulos é possível observar a construção da atmosfera adequada à ocorrência de um crime. Pemberley é o principal elemento de ligação entre as três famílias: os Darcy, os Wickham e os Bidwell. A hierarquia social é também um elemento crucial nesta análise, uma vez que a organização em Pemberley espelha a estrutura rígida da sociedade. Os cargos, tal como o estatuto social, são herdados.

A relação entre Lydia e Wickham é também alvo de estudo. A presença das personagens em Pemberley gera o caos, pois o casal transgride todas as regras de conduta social ao forçar a sua entrada na propriedade de Darcy e Elizabeth. Uma vez que Lydia e Wickham raramente interagem um com o outro, a relação é abordada a partir do ponto de vista de Elizabeth, Darcy ou da sociedade.

Finalmente, o capítulo aborda também os destinos de cada personagem. A paz é reinstaurada em Pemberley com a partida de Lydia e Wickham. O exílio do casal apresenta-se como um elemento que contribui para a felicidade de Darcy e Elizabeth. A dissertação defende que é atribuído um final feliz a cada personagem, como forma de homenagem a Jane Austen.

Palavras-chave: James, Austen, Pemberley, adaptação, sociedade

Abstract

Death Comes to Pemberley is a crime fiction book that appropriates the characters and the world created by Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice*. The dissertation studies James' adaptation and treatment of the characters created by Austen. It approaches the characteristics of crime fiction and its direct application on the appropriation of a romance novel. The thesis focuses on the structure used by James to convey the atmosphere for the crime and the use of double perspective to address the intertextual relation between the two texts. The analysis of the characters and the setting are crucial to exemplify the parallels established by James in relation to Austen's novel.

James' Elizabeth and Darcy are a happy couple living peacefully on their estate. It is important to address how James appropriates these characters, who guide the readers throughout the book. James uses the Prologue to establish a connection with *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as abundant flashbacks that cover the six years since the wedding. Therefore, Elizabeth's perspective covers the domestic sphere, often comparing her previous life in Meryton to her role as Mrs Darcy of Pemberley. Darcy's perspective explores the public sphere, as the male protagonist gradually loses power and control of the situation. He is not allowed to investigate the murder, nor does he express any interest in doing so. Through internal focalization, James exposes Darcy's doubts regarding Wickham's innocence or guilt. The shift in perspective is an element reclaimed by the author. The protagonists are complex characters and James is careful in their characterization. The author also expands the context of the events at the time, including references to the war, an element that Austen deliberately does not approach. *Death Comes to Pemberley's* main plot dwells on the murder, its investigation and Wickham's fate. James includes a romantic subplot centered on Georgiana as homage to Austen.

Pemberley is a crucial element of analysis due to its relevance as a mirror for society. It represents order and tradition. In order to study this aspect, the dissertation analyses the Prologue, the five chapters of Book One and the Epilogue.

The dissertation studies James' stylistic choices in her adaptation of the setting and of the characters created by Austen.

Key-words: James, Austen, Pemberley, adaptation, crime fiction

Table of Contents

Introduction	10
Talking About Crime or Detective Fiction.....	16
In Murderous Company or a Murderous Family.....	36
A Certain Justice or a Certain Death	54
Conclusion.....	71
Bibliography	76
Filmography	80

Introduction

Jane Austen and P. D. James are both renowned authors of the British literary canon. Austen is an established author who wrote six novels. James, on the other hand, is a name recognized in the realm of detective fiction, known as the mind behind detective Adam Dalgliesh.

The two authors appear to have little in common, were it not for the fact that James is an admirer of Austen's works. Nonetheless, James wrote *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011), a crime novel set in 1803 Pemberley and her main characters are Austen's most famous couple, Elizabeth and Darcy from the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). *Death Comes to Pemberley* is the focus of this dissertation, which shall analyse James' adaptation and appropriation of Austen's setting and characters. It is important to clarify that this dissertation has James' book as its only theme. Naturally references to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* will be necessary to better analyse the intertextual elements of this particular work but this should not be confused with taking Austen's book as a secondary subject of the present work. Criticism regarding Austen's book has been used in order to elaborate on the analysis.

Death Comes To Pemberley appropriates characters from Austen's novel, well-known from the reading public. Thus, the main characters mentioned throughout the dissertation will be referred to by the names popularly associated to them, following the denominations used by James throughout the novel. Commonly, men shall be addressed by their surname and women by their first names. However, there was a need to further distinguish characters, particularly the male hero, Darcy. His cousin, who shares his name, shall be mentioned as Colonel Fitzwilliam, a choice selected by James. The victim, Captain Denny, is mentioned using his rank and surname. There is one exception regarding James stylistic options on the characters' names. The murderer, William Bidwell, due to his significance is referred to only by his surname. When his father, Thomas Bidwell, is mentioned, both first name and surname are used for the latter, in order to distinguish the two men.

James is a crime writer, but she is also an Austen reader. Her novel combines those two characteristics in an exercise that results of James' own interpretation of Austen, which is then transposed to the 21st century, as she writes for herself and 21st century readers. My main objective throughout the dissertation will be to study how intertextuality is imbedded in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, highlighting the similarities and differences between James' work and

the critics' interpretation of Jane Austen. The setting and the characters of *Death Comes to Pemberley* are the main elements of study in this analysis.

Pemberley becomes relevant; the setting is of particular significance in order to establish an intertextual connection. In James' novel, Pemberley is an intersection between Austen's thorough depictions of society and the disrupted refuge of the main characters. Thus, Darcy's magnificent estate is linked to an important convention of crime writing applied by James, whose first task when approaching a new book is to select its setting. This is approached in depth in the first chapter of the thesis.

Particular importance has been given to the first chapters of *Death Comes to Pemberley*, namely the Prologue and Book One. These chapters show the universe created by Austen through James' eyes and provide important hints on the treatment of the characters. In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, Elizabeth and Darcy are the protagonists. That is to say that Elizabeth's role is reduced in order to accommodate a new perspective. This shall be a crucial theme explored in the second chapter of the thesis. Due to the genre of the book, much attention is also given to Wickham, the prime suspect, and Bidwell, the murderer.

The dissertation is divided into three major chapters. This was a deliberate choice, as all topics are intrinsically connected to one another, and further divisions did not appear necessary.

Chapter One, "Talking About Crime or Detective Fiction", explores the genre in which *Death Comes to Pemberley* is inserted. Readers of P. D. James and Jane Austen have different expectations, as each devoted herself to one specific genre. James' *Talking About Detective Fiction* (2009) is an instrumental work of research, as the author herself navigates the concepts she has worked with throughout her career. The book provides an outlook on the importance of setting, a key element of detective fiction particularly relevant to the present thesis. The partial perspective allows for an understanding of the author's stylistic options and concerns in her own words. James does not ignore the elements crucial to Austen in her rewriting of Austen's characters. The author, however, adapts the world created by Austen, adjusting it to her own background. Nonetheless, James deliberately evades a few conventions. It becomes important to approach crime and detection fiction as a literary genre in order to understand how James adapts and moulds Austen's world.

Priestman's introductory essay "Crime fiction and detective fiction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2003) was a relevant instrument of research. The

purpose of crime fiction must be to both entertain and surprise the reader. The genre has been portrayed as strict and organized, elements that can be observed consulting R. Austin Freeman's 1924 essay "The Art of the Detective Story", used here in order to portray an example of the evolution of crime fiction.

P. D. James is a name widely recognized within the British literary canon of crime fiction. The author is featured in Susan Rowland's *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective Fiction* (2001), which offers a powerful insight on the work female writers have done for the genre. James appears alongside Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh and Ruth Rendell.

Christie, Sayers, Allingham and Marsh constitute the 'Four Queens' of the so-called English country house murder, which I will refer to as the 'golden age genre'. The novels of James and [Ruth] Rendell engage in a literary debate with the earlier form in order both to scrutinize its limits and to develop the representation of crime in the context of literary realism. (Rowland, 2001: viii)

Freeman, Knight and Craig are critics who focus on the characteristics of the genre highlighting the purposes of its most important conventions. On the other hand, Priestman and Rowland provide an insight on James' style within crime and detective fiction. The first chapter of the dissertation pays close attention to the conventions of the genre and how those are defied by James in *Death Comes to Pemberley*.

The first chapter also compares the expectations of Austen and James readers, with particular focus on how each book was critically received. That difference is closely linked to the intertextual dialogue established with readers approached in the second chapter of the thesis. To that effect, it is important to observe criticism from Austen's period along with essays from the 20th century critical works, such as Dorothy Van Ghent's "On *Pride and Prejudice*" (Van Ghent in Gray, 2001). The essays compiled in Gray's Norton Critical Edition of *Pride and Prejudice: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Sources and Criticism* (2001) were essential throughout the dissertation. Those essays are quoted from the critical edition due to the lack of access to the original texts.

Therefore, the focus of the first chapter is the analysis of the structure used by James. The terms hero, detective, villain and murderer are applied to Darcy, Wickham and Bidwell, respectively.

Chapter Two, “In Murderous Company or a Murderous Family”, explores the intertextual relationship between two texts. The purpose of the present dissertation shall not be to define or theorize intertextuality. My dissertation will select concepts studied by several authors, which will be applied to the reading of *Death Comes To Pemberley* as an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Most critics seek as wide a definition of intertextuality as possible, which fails to be practically applied. These will not be relevant for this study. Graham Allen’s historical approach of the topic in *Intertextuality* (2011) is a primary source of knowledge for this research. Furthermore, the concepts of narratorial voice and perspective are introduced and developed, along with a clarification on the use of the term text. A text may possess multiple readings and the experiences of readers who know Austen’s novel will be distinct from readers unfamiliar with the text. That is to say that James creates the prologue as an overview of the characters’ lives prior to 1803 in order to link her crime novel to *Pride and Prejudice*. In addition, the author plays with the readers’ assumptions about Wickham. Each reader may find in a text a plurality of meanings and James gives as much detail as possible to the characters she appropriates from Austen, either by narrating events of their past or by exposing their internal monologues to present a complete picture.

The concepts of adaptation and appropriation are used in a wider sense in the dissertation, as the novel transposes Austen’s period, setting and characters onto a new genre; a genre that, according to James, would not be approved of by Austen. It could be argued that *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*. The decision to refuse that classification arises from the fact that the texts were written by different authors. James’ work resembles a writing exercise created as homage rather than as a succession of events to *Pride and Prejudice*. James adjusts Austen’s characters to a situation of crisis and exercises her creative freedom by developing them. Notwithstanding, the author also creates her own characters, which are crucial to the discovery of the mystery. The way James interacts with the appropriated characters and her creations is also our object of study.

The focus of the chapter is the use of a double perspective and the way it divides the social and the domestic spheres. In order to develop this argument, Elizabeth and Darcy’s roles are further studied. James’ Elizabeth finds herself lost in thoughts, comparing her life in Meryton to her married life in Pemberley. Through this exercise, James sparks a comparison

between the two phases of Elizabeth's life, which are translated into her personality in *Pride and Prejudice* versus her life as presented in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Darcy's purpose, on the other hand, is to follow the crime investigation and reason with the readers' expectations towards Wickham. Thus, the chapter analyses James' role as both a creator and a mediator.

It is crucial to recall that Austen's works have been adapted to various media. Adaptation is a broad term, which may be defined as the transposition of a text into another form, format or mean (Coelho, 2013: 6). Ana Daniela Coelho's *Pride and Prejudice in Two Adaptations for Cinema and Television* (2013) became a crucial element of investigation, particularly due to its definition of the concept of adaptation applied to Austen's universe. James' book is one of many adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. The chapter dwells on Austen's popularity and the different types of adaptations in order to understand which elements James incorporates in her story and which she reclaims as her own. *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a period adaptation with an original plot, positioning itself after events narrated in *Pride and Prejudice*, not altering any elements of the source material. That is to say that there is no retelling of Elizabeth and Darcy's love story. This conscious choice allows the creative freedom to insert new characters, such as the Bidwells, and project how the characters have been living after their weddings. Setting the action in 1803, six years after Darcy and Elizabeth's wedding, offers James the opportunity to show readers ordinary everyday life at Pemberley.

Chapter Three, "A Certain Justice or A Certain Death", narrows the field of approach and focuses on the connection between each character and Pemberley. First, we approach the roles of the servants in both Pemberley and Longbourn, seen by Elizabeth. This is important because Bidwell, a servant, is a murderer, which goes against a common convention in detective fiction. In addition, this emphasises Elizabeth's role as the lady of the house in Pemberley.

The five chapters of Book One are analysed in order to see how James builds up the atmosphere for the crime, paying particular attention to the characters. These chapters of slow and careful rhythm often look back on the past, to let the readers know how the characters' lives evolved. These slow paced chapters contrast with Lydia's dramatic entrance. Her marriage to Wickham is one of the focal points of the chapter.

The topics of courtship and marriage are at the core of the portrayal of society present by Austen, according to Rubinstein in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1969), a crucial work for the third chapter. This

dissertation will demonstrate how James combines the pursuit of marriage with a crime investigation. James' portrayal of women differs from Austen. Chapter One and Two of the dissertation focus closely on the men due to their involvement with the crime investigation. However, the third chapter prioritizes Elizabeth, Lydia and Georgiana.

In addition, the happy endings of each character are equally discussed. Order is reinstated at Pemberley as Lydia and Wickham leave. Their fate, along with Bidwell's, is an important point of analysis.

Finally, the dissertation aims to study the parallels found between James and Austen's works. Both authors base their work on the social codes of the respective periods. Austen dwells on a society of manners with strict behaviour guidelines, where one may challenge the system of values, but must do it adequately. Thus, the small communities presented are a mirror of English society, a parallel that James uses in this novel. In fact, the tagline of *Death Comes to Pemberley* immediately discloses the two main parallels a reader should expect: "They wanted dancing and merriment. They got murder."

Pride and Prejudice can be approached as a novel of perceptions. The action is rooted in Elizabeth's perceptions of the society to which she belongs, with added comments from a heterodiegetic narratorial voice. Darcy, the love interest, is depicted as a complex character, and Elizabeth judges him based on her prejudice towards his status. *Death Comes to Pemberley* is also a novel that relies on perceptions. However, James plays with the readers and the character's perceptions of the crime, as crime fiction must both entertain and surprise the readers. Wickham is popularly known as a villain, therefore readers are immediately biased against him, as is Darcy. His beliefs of Wickham's guilt or innocence are a core element of the novel. Therefore, it becomes essential to study the role of each major character of *Death Comes to Pemberley*. The third chapter aims to analyse character portrayal and development closely through the figures of Elizabeth, Darcy, Lydia and Wickham. Thus, the third chapter conveys the environment and it aims to show how Pemberley connects every character.

Death Comes to Pemberley offers various dimensions of study and this dissertation has focused particularly on its structure, setting and characters.

Talking About Crime or Detective Fiction

The first detective story is attributed to Edgar Allan Poe, who published “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in 1841. However, it is the appearance of Sherlock Holmes, forty years later that marks the uprising popularity of detective fiction, a genre which has gradually grown.¹

In her autobiography², P.D. James assumes her great admiration for Jane Austen and for the world she portrayed. The temptation to turn the estate of Pemberley in a murder scenario arises from the combination of the author’s great passions – crime literature and Jane Austen.

This chapter will present definitions of detective and crime fiction, deciding the preference of terms, as well as its distinctive characteristics. The chapter shall equally dwell on P. D. James’ style as an established detective novelist, in order to analyze how the conventions of the genre influence her adaptation of Jane Austen’s world.

It has previously been stated that the genre of detective fiction is historically recent, emerging from the realm of short fiction. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle followed the tradition of publishing short stories in magazines, creating detective Sherlock Holmes and his companion, Dr. Watson. The author could not have anticipated the impact of these two figures in a genre that was just in its genesis, and which set the tone for subsequent private detective figures. Sherlock Holmes’ stories consist of four novels and countless short stories published in magazines, which were later collected in five anthologies.³ The stories present a first-person narration process by a secondary character, Watson. Thus Watson is one of the first examples of a homodiegetic narrator⁴ in detective stories. This character may also be classified as deuteragonist⁵, “a person who serves as foil to another”. This contrast is essential to establish a dynamic which became a recognizable characteristic of early detective stories, as will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

It was only in 1920, with Agatha Christie’s *Mysterious Affair at Styles* that “the detective plot was expanded and elaborated” (Craig, 1992: x), doubling in length and earning

¹ See Craig, 1992: ix or Priestman, 1998

² See James, 2001

³ See Priestman, 2003

⁴ Ceia, Carlos: s.v. “Diegese”, *E-Dicionário de Termos Literários* (EDTL), coord. de Carlos Ceia, ISBN: 989-20-0088-9, <<http://www.edtl.com.pt>>, consultado em 12-11-2016

⁵ According to Merriam-Webster, the term first emerged in Greek classical dramas and referred to “the actor taking the part of second importance in classical Greek drama”.

the definition of novel. Agatha Christie's novels present private detective Hercule Poirot and his companion Captain Hastings. Similar to Doyle's narratives, the secondary character, Captain Hastings, narrates most of Poirot's adventures, thus providing another example of a homodiegetic narrator. The detective is portrayed as a misunderstood genius who always solves the crimes through the careful consideration of clues and deduction work. Thus, the companions must serve as intermediaries between the ingenious detective, the main character, and the readers. They also serve as a bridge between the protagonist and other elements of society, such as figures of law enforcement and clients.

The narratorial voices have clear functions within the detective fiction genre. A homodiegetic narrator allows for the reading public to identify with the clueless companion, who provides all the necessary clues to the reader through narration but cannot make sense of them until those are explained by the protagonist. The homodiegetic narrator has been used essentially in series of adventures with recurring characters. "The psychic construction of the detective through the detection includes the reader" (Rowland, 2001: 23), developing "an affectionate trust" between the readers and the recurring characters. Authors of detective fiction show a preference for the creation of one main detective figure who stars in many of their novels. In order to portray an eccentric detective, they need to create their approachable counterpart as well. This type of detective is usually closer to the definition of anti-hero, rather than hero, due to his anti-social manner, a tradition that started with the figure of Sherlock Holmes, whose trademarks are "his very isolation and distance from the reader (emphasised by Watson's self-evident inadequacies)" (Rowland, 2011: 18).

Detective fiction writers may also select an autodiegetic narrator, as is the case of Albert Campion in Margery Allingham's *The Case of The Late Pig* (1937), in which the amateur detective narrates his own adventure. In these two situations, the narratorial voices also provide the object of focalization, which will be both the crime and the detective's actions to discover the criminal. It is therefore clear that the perspective corresponds to that of the narrator. However, an author may prefer an heterodiegetic narrator, who is not a character within the story and is often omniscient. Allingham herself wrote some of Campion's adventures as narrated by an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator, and the book *The Fashion In Shrouds* (1938) may be an example. This type of narratorial voice opens possibilities in terms of perspective and focalization. This topic will be further developed regarding *Death Comes To Pemberley*, as James focuses on two different perspectives, in order to explore the private and the public spheres.

Detective fiction and the emergence of its sub-genres, such as crime fiction, are approached by Martin Priestman in the introductory essay of *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, “Crime fiction and detective fiction”. This chapter does not oppose the two concepts; in fact, it assumes crime fiction as a later expansion of detective fiction. The present dissertation shall equally consider crime fiction as a sub-genre of detective fiction.

Up to the early 1980s, study of the form was still focused mainly on ‘detective’ or ‘mystery’ fiction, and nodded back to the half-serious ‘rules’ which had been drawn up for the genre in the inter-war period and stressed the figure of the detective and the author’s fair handling of clues. (Priestman, 2003: 1)

The ‘rules’ mentioned by Priestman refer to the popular conventions of detective fiction established in the interwar period, which was later labeled the Golden Age of Detective Fiction. According to most critics, Golden Age Detection refers to detective stories published during this period. The designation, as well as its main characteristics, is widely discussed by Stephen Knight in the essay “The Golden Age”, used here to offer a critical view of the period. Some of these characteristics are, for example, the occurrence of a murder, the existence of a detective, the lack of consideration for the political context, the role of the reader as an outsider detective and a plausible and credible solution achieved at the end of the story.

P.D. James herself claims that detective fiction has a strict structure, for it must follow a mystery investigation. In fact, James wrote *Talking About Detective Fiction* in order to bring up a conversation on the genre. The work is of crucial importance to the dissertation, due to James’ comments on the genre and her chronological approach of influential authors, as well as several remarks on her own methods of writing. We may also find the latter in her autobiography, which follows a year in the life of the writer. These books offer a personal grasp on the techniques James selects again and again regarding plotting, setting and character development.

These topics are equally approached in a conversation with Susan Rowland, included in the book *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction* (2001). James is one of the six authors Rowland analyses closely, due to her

relevance within the group the author chose to study. These works allow for the study of James' perception of her own style, as well as its evaluation through a critical lens, essentially organized by Rowland. Rowland states that crime stories such as P.D. James' "are interested in society and its attitude to deviance" (Rowland, 2001:ix). This element will be widely approached concerning *Death Comes To Pemberley*.

Golden Age Detection conventions are of notable importance as the groundwork of any detective story. In order to surprise the reader, one must follow them closely or break them intentionally, overtime creating new conventions within each sub-genre. These dated conventions are at the centre of any story which aims to uncover a mystery.

Speaking of her conscious crafting of the detective genre, Lady James described her novels as retaining the credible puzzle inherited from the golden age writers, but reshaping it so as to be able to explore moral ambiguities in the tradition of literary realism. (Rowland, 2001: 196)

According to Rowland, James establishes a dialogue between golden age aesthetics and literary realism (Rowland, 2001: 11), a declaration that James does not refute. James assumes an adaptation of the genre, which may be observed as a parallelism with the attitude of the author regarding *Pride and Prejudice* when writing *Death Comes to Pemberley*. James does not conform to conventions; she appropriates some of those conventions and adapts them to her own purpose. It may be observed that this escape from the structural form of crime detective novels shows a clear intention to test the boundaries of the genre, as well as its ability to surprise readers.

It is important to add R. Austin Freeman's 1924 essay "The Art of the Detective Story" to this discussion regarding the structure of detective stories. Freeman's essay is clearly outdated, but its value lies precisely in the moment it was published. Freeman provides a partial view of the age in which Golden Age Detective Fiction conventions were first set.

The essay first evaluates the genre's reading public, in order to present the adequate structure for a good detective story. Freeman is strict in his notions, due to the belief that the poor reputation of the genre at the time could be blamed on amateur writers, who were unaware of the proper rules. Thus, the author chooses to dictate all that a detective story cannot be, before presenting the proper way to write it. Some of these structural elements,

such as the order of events or the need for an entirely logical solution to the mystery are also mentioned by P.D. James in *Talking About Detective Fiction* (2009). That is to say, the core characteristics of the genre have remained similar over the span of nine decades.

Elements that were randomly present in earlier crime fiction⁶ suddenly become a norm [during Golden Age], like multiple suspects, and some earlier tendencies largely disappear, notably the use of coincidence and historical explanations. (Knight in Priestman, 2003: 77)

It may be interesting to note that *Death Comes to Pemberley* does not present multiple suspects, with all attentions focused merely on Wickham. On another note, the author relies on coincidence in order to solve the mystery, particularly with Bidwell's confession, a topic that will be thoroughly approached further on. This conscious choice may demonstrate James' refusal to abide by popular Golden Age conventions.

Although the core characteristics of the genre have remained similar, the genre has evolved and expanded. The following chapters will take a closer look at the elements crucial to a mystery story. Freeman and Knight refer specifically to the conventions set during Golden Age Detection, which may or may not still be significant, whereas Priestman and James approach the wide genre of detective fiction. Rowland provides an insight on crime fiction written by women.

First and foremost, according to Freeman, the story must provide intellectual satisfaction to the reader, a convention that has remained unchanged over the years.

The entertainment that the connoisseur looks for is an exhibition of mental gymnastics in which he is invited to take part; and the excellence of the entertainment must be judged by the completeness with which it satisfies

⁶Knight shows a clear preference for the term crime fiction as a unifying concept, distinguishing several types that would later emerge, such as the psychotriller and the procedural. That is to say, Freeman uses term detective fiction, whereas Knight prefers crime fiction to refer to the genre as a whole.

the expectations of the type of reader to whom it is addressed. (Freeman, 1924:3)⁷

Freeman also emphasizes the need to involve the reader in the discovery of the crime. In fact, all of the previously mentioned sources agree that the reader must be in possession of all the clues available to the detective, so that he may attempt to solve the mystery himself. For the reader, “the attraction of the story is this satisfaction in solving the mystery.” (James, 2009:52). This would be the crucial appeal of the genre. That is to say, that the reader must only be cleverly deceived as, in Freeman’s words, “the reader can always be trusted to mislead himself” (Freeman, 1924: 5). Rowland’s approach completes this idea, as she argues that the appeal of these stories is not linked to the closure, the moment in which the criminal is brought to justice, but to the process, “the *means* by which the criminal is finally identified out of many narrative possibilities.” (Rowland, 2001: viii). Readers become fascinated with the way they have been misled by the story.

On the other hand, the author of *Death Comes to Pemberley* refuses the idea of “rules”, suggested by Priestman, choosing to specify other characteristics of the genre, and how they have changed through time and space. James’ perspective on the conventions of detective fiction shall prove crucial to my analysis in the present dissertation, as the author shares her writing process, highlighting the clear importance of setting in her novels.

The setting of a mystery has often proved to be the key to its solution, as authors seem to devote particular attention to this element.

Earlier authors were predominantly concerned with the surface interaction of characters in a social setting (a house party, say, or a village fête), with a central dramatic event (Craig, 1992: xix)

Priestman elaborates on this comment, explaining the reasons behind the writers’ preference towards setting their stories in a rural environment. A section of the chapter is devoted to P.D. James’ recurrent character Dalgleish, a police hero “descending on the usually rural crime scene” (Priestman, 2003: 178). In fact, the tradition of placing the action

⁷ Freeman focuses a great part of his essay on the profile of detective fiction readers, an element not approached by modern critics, due to the vast popularity of the genre.

in a rural environment is again and again used by P.D. James. Rowland argues that home, pictured by James, “rarely lives up to the promises of order and nurture that the word may evoke.” (Rowland, 2001: 13). The social aspect of domestic crime scenes cannot be disregarded, as it is irrevocably linked to both the private and the social spheres. According to James, a rural setting provides insight into the daily life of a community, which is then disturbed by a dramatic event, allowing for a narrow suspect list. It will be possible to study all these elements in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, as the writer remarks in her Author’s Note at the end of the book:

Nearly all my detective stories have had their genesis in a place and setting, which is important to any work of fiction and is particularly so in a crime novel, especially if there is a contrast between peace, order and beauty and the contaminating eruption of violent death. This contrast is assured by setting a murder mystery in the grounds of Pemberley, a house that in my book enshrines married happiness, children, a household at peace with each other and a daily life in which duty to the community, learning, tradition and an ordered, civilised, lifestyle embody all that is good about the age. (James, 2012: 329)

Pemberley does not immediately enshrine happiness in the eyes of *Pride and Prejudice*’s Elizabeth Bennet. In fact, she was first distressed when her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner, expressed her wish to revisit Pemberley (Austen in Gray, 2001: 158). In time, Pemberley becomes her home, through her marriage to Darcy. (Butler in Gray, 2001: 320). The first chapter of *Death Comes To Pemberley* begins with a careful description of the room Elizabeth has chosen for herself, ensuring her privilege as Mrs. Darcy of Pemberley. In fact, James devotes the first book, “The Day Before the Ball”, to the ordinary life at Pemberley in preparation of a ball. The author needs to show her readers how the characters move through the estate before there is any chaos. It may be important to note that the estate is disturbed due to Elizabeth’s familial bond to Wickham. The Bidwell family has been peacefully living on the grounds and Wickham’s arrival disturbs them as well. Therefore, it may be argued that the feeling of safety in the estate is a direct mirror of the stability or instability of the relationships maintained by Elizabeth and Darcy.

Knight summarizes the importance of setting while addressing the “archetypal setting of English novels”, as actions take place in a secluded country house. He goes as far as to quote Raymond Williams, who “sees the detective novel as an evolution of the country house literary tradition.” (Knight in Priestman, 2003: 78).

However, a clearer distinction must be established between the terms detective fiction and crime fiction. The first distinction of the terms *detective fiction* and *crime fiction* was made by Julian Symon’s in *Bloody Murderer* (1972), which allowed the uprising of sub-genres such as the thriller, the spy novel and the police procedural. Symons is often quoted by Priestman (2003), who devotes a whole chapter to the distinction of these two broad definitions, which shall be used on the dissertation. Knight selects the concept of crime fiction, as opposed to detective fiction. This author recalls the criticism addressed to the expression “Golden Age”, often believed to be too homogenous, and refers to crime fiction, claiming its denomination comes from “its central mechanism as the clue-puzzle” (Knight in Priestman, 2003: 77). Rowland, on the other hand, offers a definition of crime fiction rooted in its opposition to the institutions of law enforcement, underlining the term fiction. According to this author, crime fiction is made up of the stories that cannot be told by the authorities, complementing them, as “there is more to criminals, their motives, actions and lives that can be represented through the cultural authority of the legal system.” (Rowland, 2001: 17).

The previous paragraphs of the present dissertation have considered conventions common to the wider genre and to its sub-genre; the following paragraphs present two dynamics that distinguish both concepts.

The discovery of the criminal, and subsequent punishment, is one of the core characteristics of detective fiction. Readers expect a logical solution to the mystery presented earlier, and the satisfaction often arises from the knowledge that order shall be restored. However, the topic has generated some controversy. In a detective story, readers expect the detective – the hero figure – to uncover the mystery and lead the criminal to justice. In fact, according to James, the key challenge to the writer is “that of portraying a murderer in a fictional form that is supposed to keep the reader guessing.” (Rowland, 2001: 196). One must consider that the genre, although strict in its structure, intends to surprise the reader.

Golden age detective fiction offers a reassurance in the promise of a rationally determined world. The reader is confident that the novel *will work* to offer a coherent solution tying up all loose ends: the detective is a kind of guarantee for the reader that narrative completion will ensue. So what happens if crime fiction omits the detective? (Rowland, 2001: 21).

James appears to respond directly to this question in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. She has also questioned the pertinence of what many consider “the prime unwritten rule of detective fiction” (James, 2009: 17). James claims that the hero, in fact, does not have to solve the mystery. The mystery must be uncovered, and the readers should feel satisfied with the logical solution. Despite that, it is not important the detective hero is proven right in his assumptions. That is to say that James steers away from one of the principal conventions of the detective genre, as one may confirm regarding the plot choices in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. The book is not centered in the discovery of the mystery. Instead, James guides her readers through Darcy’s ethical considerations during the trial. Thus, the trial is of significantly more importance than the actual finding of a culprit. The question posed by *Death Comes to Pemberley* is not “Who killed Captain Denny?”, it is “Did Wickham kill Captain Denny? Will he be hanged for it?”. Therefore, it may be noted that in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, the hero does not solve the crime, despite the fact that the mystery is solved, and order is reinstated at Pemberley.

The terms hero and detective hero have been interchangeably mentioned throughout this chapter. Within the realm of British detective fiction, both refer to the person who is supposed to solve the mystery. Hero is a broader notion, more acceptable in the environment in which *Death Comes to Pemberley* is set, whereas detective hero indicates that the main character must, in fact, be in that field of work. Despite that, not all detectives will be considered heroes even if the crimes are solved by them.

Detective fiction, as conceived by Priestman, should present one central figure of a detective hero, the one who solves the mystery. The genre, in its apparent simplicity, follows the detective hero through his/her attempts of solving the crime, by analyzing clues and making logical deductions. There may be three types of detective figures. Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot are examples of professional detectives, who often work as consultants to the police. Both have liaisons within Scotland Yard: Holmes’ aids Inspector Lestrade; Poirot,

a former Belgium policeman, helps Chief Inspector Japp. Secondly, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple is the perfect example of an amateur detective, a private citizen who finds herself involved in small town mysteries, solved through her knowledge of the human condition. Finally, P.D. James' Adam Dalgliesh is the exemplary police hero, a detective who is employed by the local police department. According to Knight, amateur detectives with liaisons to the police department are more common in an earlier period of Golden Age, whereas the figure of a distinguished police official arises later. Rowland goes as far as to compare the detective to the readers, as both follow the "clues in order to arrive at a coherent story." (Rowland, 2001: 21). It should be highlighted that detective fiction, as shown by its denomination, focuses mainly on the detective figure; whereas crime fiction places its focus on the crime itself, allowing for a wider set of perspectives.

It is important to note that the external structure of *Death Comes to Pemberley* is divided. It consists of the prologue, six books and the epilogue. The internal structure is equally divided, allowing for a double perspective that alternates between the two main characters, dividing the gendered spheres of influence. The initial books unravel Elizabeth's insights, and the final books dwell on Darcy's doubts throughout the trial, in such a way that the distinctive functions of each character are extremely explicit.

Elizabeth Darcy cannot be regarded as a detective. The female protagonist deals mainly with the private sphere of life at Pemberley. Therefore, Elizabeth is in charge of maintaining order at Pemberley, while attending to her house guests and mediating the attentions of Georgiana's suitors.

Fitzwilliam Darcy, however, must deal closely with the murder, giving the fact that it occurred in his property and the accused is a family member. Furthermore, Darcy is himself a constable, one of the figures of law enforcement in the county. However, due to his strong personal interest in the case, he is not allowed to investigate it. The reader follows Darcy through the inquest and the trial as a man stripped of his legal power.

The dynamics of the discovery of the mystery by the hero and the subsequent punishment of the murderer are irrevocably linked in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, culminating in its inexistence. These two dynamics, deemed crucial to a good detective story, do not emerge as expected. A violent crime happens in an idyllic estate, Pemberley, home to Elizabeth and Darcy. This circumstance, along with the familial bonds with Wickham,

prevents Darcy from taking active part in the investigation. Thus, the detective hero does not solve the mystery and the criminal is not punished.

Therefore, it shall also be remarked that the crime is not solved by the hero. In fact, the murder is not solved by anyone. Law enforcement is thoroughly convinced that Wickham is the culprit, making a point to prove it. Wickham is set free due to a confession. The murderer, William Bidwell, dictates the confession on his deathbed, urged by the Reverend. He does so in order to settle all his affairs before death, thus saving Wickham, who is innocent of the crime. Bidwell confides in the reverend and the doctor, who announces that his death is imminent. It is only afterwards that Bidwell decides to write, convinced by these two important figures of the county. Thus, the confession is made upon pressure, as a matter of conscience and religious devotion.

He [Dr McPhee] urged me to make this confession and sign it, and so I do. I have written nothing but the truth knowing that I shall soon be answering for all my sins before the throne of God, and in hope of His mercy. (James, 2012: 266)

It is also important to return to the topic of redemption. Order must be restored to the setting, whether it is a party, a village or an estate like Pemberley. Any crime threatens the readers' sense of safety and the eventual attribution of guilt to the criminal aims at restoring it. Notwithstanding, Bidwell dies and one must question if this death may be considered a punishment. Bidwell does not emerge as a villainous figure who faces or challenges the hero. He commits the murder out of revenge, love for his family, and a sense of duty. No matter how weak he is, he must fix a past wrongdoing and defend his sister's honour. The fact that his death is not a result of the consequences of the crime makes it impossible to classify it as a punishment. Bidwell dies with a clean conscience, unaware that he has murdered the wrong man.

However, according to James, an official investigation of a murder in an isolated community is a process that "can destroy the privacies both of the living and of the dead" (James, 1999: 42). That is to say, no character escapes the thorough analysis of law enforcement. Therefore, all must withstand the shame caused by an investigation. The criminal is not the only one affected by the murder; the entire community suffers.

Death Comes to Pemberley deliberately ignores the prime convention of detective fiction. This decision, however, allows for a careful analysis of the characters and what they represent. Each character has a function, fueled by the characters dynamics towards one another and towards their county. The previous paragraphs have focused essentially on the figure of the detective in the wide genre of detective fiction. It seems obvious to remember that Darcy, despite occupying the position of the hero, does not play the role of a detective.

It is of equal significance to address the remaining figures crucial to the crime: the criminal and the victim. The term criminal refers to a person who commits any sort of crime. A popular convention states that the criminal should come from the same social circle as his victim. In order to establish a motive, victim and criminal ought to be acquainted. Knight adds that “servants are very rarely guilty” (Knight in Priestman, 2003: 78), echoing S. S. Van Dine in “Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories” (1928)⁸. This convention is equally dismissed by James in her novel, as victim and perpetrator do not belong to the same social circle. In fact, the murderer is a servant – not to the victim – but to Darcy and Elizabeth.

According to literary tradition, murders do not occur without motive. In order to discover who committed the crime, heroes and readers much ask themselves ‘how?’ and ‘why?’. Detective stories present these questions, which should be answered by the detective and the reader, in order to uncover the culprit. Each investigation begins with the assumption that murderer and victim were acquainted and that an event will have triggered the crime. Therefore, it is equally important to stress that Captain Denny was not the intended victim. Bidwell was not in possession of all the facts at the time of the murder; he was only aware that a man from the militia had assaulted his sister. It was a crime of opportunity, as Captain Denny was a man of the militia alone in the woods of Pemberley. The lack of connection between the real perpetrator and the victim, as well as the lack of knowledge of Wickham’s role in the matter, was enough to produce a faulty investigation from the start.

In the case of *Death Comes to Pemberley*, Captain Denny is murdered. He is, therefore, the victim. Victims in detective fiction often act merely as a trigger for the plot. Their importance is only as big as their impact on the other living characters.

⁸“11. A servant must not be chosen by the author as the culprit. This is begging a noble question. It is a too easy solution. The culprit must be a decidedly worth-while person — one that wouldn't ordinarily come under suspicion.” (S. S. Van Dine, 1938: 2)

The victim will be a man (...) of some importance and wealth, though that position is rarely of long-standing or antique respectability; instability is constant. The victim is also a person of little emotive value; he (...) is not mourned, nor is the real pain and degradation of violent death represented. (Knight in Priestman, 2003: 78)

It is possible to check that Captain Denny is of some importance, holding a position of respectability within the military. It may also be added that his connection to Wickham is what makes him relevant, as he is murdered due to the misfortune of being mistaken for Wickham. He suffers a violent death, which is not depicted until the confession, and he is not mourned.

Murder is considered the highest form of crime by detective fiction writers and their detective figures. There appears to be a consensus that the book deals with a murderer. Despite the fact that the terms hero and detective hero may, in this particular context, be interchangeably used, one cannot address murderer and villain in the same way. Murderer refers to anyone who is guilty of committing a murder, whereas villain refers to “a person who is morally bad or responsible for causing trouble or harm” (Hornby, 2010: 1718). The importance of this distinction is deeply rooted in the intentions presented. Bidwell is not morally bad, nor is he a character with criminal inclinations or intent. He has been a loyal servant of the Pemberley house and he is devoted to Darcy, which is reciprocated, within the dynamics of their social roles as servant and county nobility, respectively. One may therefore argue that Bidwell is a murderer, a criminal, but not a villain.

A villain often challenges or confronts the hero. If one is to categorize Darcy as the hero and Bidwell as a murderer, one must feel obligated to evaluate Wickham. Wickham is the prime suspect, as the law enforcement figures appear to have no doubts that he would have committed the murder. The moral questioning is only considered by Darcy, who shares troubling secrets of the past with the former friend. This dynamic is obviously established in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, who portrays Wickham as a villainous figure. In fact, Wickham is the undisputed villain in the original creation of the character, and his punishment is to be excluded from the society to which he belonged. James appropriates the character, but does not change his core. The question “Did Wickham kill Captain Denny?” posed throughout the book reflects the readers’ expectations towards Wickham, who they know as a

villain from *Pride and Prejudice*. Wickham is seen by his former society as a pariah, and outsider, which along with the lack of clearer evidences, lead to a fast arrest. Thus, Wickham is innocent of the crime, although he is never characterized as an innocent person. In fact, he is not held accountable for his previous transgression, which ultimately resulted in Captain Denny's death. Nonetheless, it would not have altered the way his reputation is perceived.

The way Wickham is portrayed and treated in *Death Comes to Pemberley* shall be addressed in the following chapters as an example of intertextuality.

Thus, it would not be appropriate to use the terms murderer and villain when referring to Bidwell. One may be a criminal and not a villain, just as one may be a villain and not a criminal.

Figures of power are a constant in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. It is possible to admit the presence of a triad of power, which ultimately lead to Bidwell's confession. James devotes many paragraphs to the construction and portrayal of a law enforcement process, which is addressed by the high nobility figures of the county. These figures, however, resolve minor disputes and are not fully adequate to the investigation of a murder. They perform the inquest, and the trial must be set in London, where these figures have no real power. Secondly, there is a member of the clergy whose relevance is undisputed. The religious aspect plays an important role in the time and space the action is set in, which may be considered a tribute to Jane Austen, an element which shall be further analyzed. Bidwell feels the need to die peacefully and free of sins, thus he confesses. The reverend has the power to convince Bidwell do to right by God and by Wickham. Finally, the doctor is an equally important character who holds power over Bidwell. He is acquainted with the criminal prior to the murder, informing the readers that Bidwell was already dying. As the condition aggravates, the doctor urges him to confess to the crime, as it is the only way to prevent the death of an innocent person.

The passage of time is not particularly important in this genre. Stories in the genre usually present a tri-parted structure. The first moment provides the setting, the characters and the baseline of normal activity. The discovery of the crime follows this moment, and it is then replaced by the investigation. The final moment is the longest and the most relevant, as it may be prolonged for as long as it is justified by the investigation. It is possible to recognize this structure in *Death Comes To Pemberley*.

Upon analysis of several characteristics of the genre, as well as its sub-genres, it would be possible to conceive *Death Comes to Pemberley* as a police procedural novel, focused on an official investigation of the crime, not performed by the hero, which is later followed by a trial. “Certain writers approach the business of crime writing from a particular angle – for example, the standpoint of a relevant profession, like the law.” (Craig, 1992: xix). This inclusion of *Death Comes to Pemberley* on a sub-genre of crime fiction makes an argument for its definition as a crime novel, and not a detective fiction work.

Thus, *Death Comes to Pemberley* will be referred to as a work of crime fiction, as it does not present a clear detective figure who attempts to discover the murderer. Furthermore, the crime portrayed is a violent murder, investigated according to the county’s law, including a great extension of police procedure accessible to the main characters, as high figures of society and law enforcement in the country. However, they are presented primarily as character witnesses, as family of the accused, and not as detective figures.

Finally, it is possible to consider the ending of the book as an investigation failure: the murderer is not caught; he is not punished for his crime, as he is dead already. However, his deathbed confession saves Wickham from a terrible fate. All these factors contribute to the usage of the term crime fiction, as opposed to detective fiction.⁹

And detective stories are not the only novels which conform to a recognized convention and structure. All Jane Austen’s novels have a common storyline: an attractive and virtuous young woman surmounts difficulties to achieve marriage to the man of her choice. (James, 1999: 4)

James compares the structure of detective stories to Austen’s structural choices. Both these concepts are immediately connected to the expectations established by belonging to each author. It has previously been stated that *Death Comes to Pemberley* is perfectly recognized within the sub-genre of crime fiction, as the orderly and idyllic Pemberley is disturbed by the murder of Captain Denny. This violent disorder, albeit common to James’ readers, is unexpected to Austen’s readers.

⁹ The notions discussed in this chapter apply specifically to British fiction. American detective fiction, which also progresses to crime fiction, presents very different sets of characteristics regarding detective and crime portrayals.

For more information on the topic, see Priestman, 2003

A reader of Jane Austen would be likely to expect a romantic novel with emphasis on the rules of society and the pursuit of marriage. According to Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (2013), the novel is an adaptable form of literature that attracts an endless variety of topics and themes, and its popularity grew exponentially in 19th century Europe. In addition, the author adds that "in the early years of the 19th c. two figures dominate English fiction: Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen." (Cuddon, 2003: 479). The term romantic may refer to several concepts, originating either from the word romance or the movement Romanticism. Romantic, derived from Romanticism, is a term applied to "describe literature, music or art, especially of the 19th century that is concerned with strong feelings, imagination and a return to nature, rather than reason, order and intellectual ideas" (Hornby, 2010: 1330). This dissertation shall refer to the adjective in its broader notion, as a romance may be to "a story about a love affair", which is an adequate classification of the novels written by Jane Austen. Thus, a romantic novel is a literary work that is "connected or concerned with love" (Hornby, 2010: 1330).

The essay "Technique and Moral Effect in Jane Austen's Fiction" (1821) by Richard Whately defends that Austen is "evidently a Christian writer: a merit which is much enhanced both on the score of good taste, and of practical utility, by her religion, being not at all obtrusive" (Whately in Gray, 2001: 290)¹⁰. The opinion emphasizes the good moral lessons included throughout Austen's novels and mirrors the societal concerns of the time. The essay is a testimony to the reception of Austen's novels in her time. It is important to remember that Austen herself had a strong connection to the church, as the daughter of a reverend. The religious element is, both in moral and social concerns, of a widespread importance in Austen's works.

James does not exclude the important factor of religiousness in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Religion is present in the figure of the Reverend, whose function was previously discussed. It was both historically significant as well as a homage to the impact of good morals in Austen's novels. The Reverend is partially responsible for Wickham's release – his combined efforts with Dr. McPhee prevent a pointless death.

Notwithstanding, Richard Simpson's essay on "The Critical Faculty of Jane Austen" (1870)¹¹ provides a wider insight on the organized structure used by Austen in her works:

¹⁰ Whately was a clergy member of the Church of England

¹¹ Simpson was a liberal Roman Catholic

Her plots always presuppose an organized society of families, of fathers and mothers long married, whose existence has been fulfilled in having given birth to the heroes and heroines of the stories (Simpson in Gray, 2001: 293)

Throughout the essay, the author defends Jane Austen's stylistic choices such as the omission of "great political and social problems", as well as the usage of "ironical complacency". These elements contribute to the portrayal of man as a social being, which according to Simpson, was the main ideology approached by Austen: "A man is only known to her in the process of his formation by social influences" (Simpson in Gray, 2001: 294-295). Readers choose Austen's novels in order to appreciate how each individual becomes adjusted to life in society. This particular essay constitutes an important element of the corpus of the present dissertation, as it is a historically dated document of stylistic devices.

James also addresses Austen's omissions of reality in *Talking About Detective Fiction*. It may be interesting to add that Knight addresses the lack of consideration for the political context a trademark of earlier Golden Age Detection (Knight in Priestman, 2003: 78). In a book whose main topic is crime, James frequently mentions Austen as an example of literary genius, reinforcing the idea that Austen is both a model and an idol for the author of *Death Comes to Pemberley*.

Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest.
(Austen in James, 1999: 39)

Several other critics praise Austen for her treatment of intricate social expectations in *Pride and Prejudice*. The marriage motivation is clearly the central conflict of the plot, as well as its initial trigger. However, it may equally be analyzed as a metaphor. This metaphor dwells on the desire of a single woman to pursue a marriage respecting the proper rules of society, which oppose individual feelings and wishes against the complicated needs of a civilized community. Dorothy Van Ghent defends that Austen's genius is present since the very first line of the *Pride and Prejudice*:

What we read in it is the opposite – a single woman must be in want of a man with a good fortune – and at once, we are inducted into the Austen language, the ironical Austen attack, and the energy, peculiar to an Austen novel, that arises from the compression between a barbaric subsurface marital welfare and a surface of polite manners and civilized conventions. (Van Ghent in Gray, 2001: 301)

The author elaborates on her comment, ensuring that irony arises from this “mode of simultaneous opposition and union: civilized convention and economic primitivism” (Van Ghent in Gray, 2001: 304). That is to say, feelings and fortune are the key-words throughout the novel, first presented as opposed to one another, and later reunited in marriage. Elizabeth and Darcy, as well as Jane and Bingley, are examples of these unions. On the other hand, the language used by Austen highlights Mr. Colin’s stupidity, as Van Ghent states that “language is the mirror of his degeneracy”. Although he was an adequate match for Elizabeth in terms of class and finances, he would not have been an appropriate suitor, as he possesses no emotional intelligence, which Van Ghent observes as the indications of a moral life (Van Ghent in Gray, 2001: 304). Samuel Klinger’s¹² interpretation of the roles of the characters expands the concept an antithesis brought together. Klinger defends that the figure of Elizabeth represents “nature, feeling impulse, originality, spontaneity” and her vivid style transform her into a revolutionary heroine. During the course of the novel, the Darcy and the heroine each exhibit changes provoked by the other, in a movement of “compromise and mutual instruction”. Elizabeth learns the importance of class and Darcy starts to appreciate the way in which Elizabeth address all people with respect and dignity. (Butler in Gray, 2001: 320). That is to say they fulfill the needs of society, as well as their individual desires.

The 2012 edition of *Death Comes to Pemberley* includes the author’s note on the book. James classifies this novel as a sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as a homage Austen’s style, which is “rich in wit, playfulness and epigrams”. This section is crucial, as the author explores her own evaluation of Austen’s work, both as a reader and as a writer. According to James, “in one sense, *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel about marriage”, set on good morals, as a marriage based solely on attraction shall not be happy; with Mr. Bennet and

¹² Author of “Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* in the Eighteenth Century Mode” (1946), quoted by Marilyn Butler in “Jane Austen and the War of Ideas” (1975)

Lydia as cautionary tales (James, 2012: 327). James' words echo slightly Richard Simpson's essay regarding the importance of the mismatched couples. As a conclusion, James adds that all six novels of Jane Austen share the common theme of all romantic fiction, establishing a genre categorization of these novels. (James, 2012: 330).

Most critics agree that Austen's portrayal of marriage as a contract is a key element of the novel. Marriages, by definition, are social and economical deals. The families of potential brides take on an active role in this pursuit, in order to assure the best lifestyle possible. According to Coelho, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage is an example of the established social order, revealing how a marriage may function perfectly with a complete absence of affection and maintained merely due to social conventions (Coelho, 2014: 53).

To Jane Austen and her contemporary audience, the subject of courtship was absolutely central, and it necessarily remained so because it was involved with the social perpetuation of the family line through inherited property with a larger interpenetration of social classes (Rubinstein, 1969: 8)

Death Comes to Pemberley combines the most important elements of the two authors. The romantic plot that would be the epicenter of a romantic novel finds its place as sub-plot in this crime story. Elizabeth, now happily married, must intervene so that Georgiana may equally find her perfect match, like Jane and Bingley, or herself and Darcy. Georgiana faces the danger of finding herself mismatched, if her choice falls on the wrong partner. With the absence of Mrs. Bennet, Lydia Wickham is the only cautionary tale in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, as her mismatched marriage faces drastic consequences.

P. D. James' readers would naturally expect a crime scene and a consequent investigation, due to James' extensive career in the realm of detective fiction. The book received generally good criticism. Anita Singh included *Death Comes To Pemberley* in the article "PD James: The 5 Novels You Should Read" (Singh, 2016). *The Boston Globe* described it "a novel of manners par excellence", a line far more likely to be associated with Austen's novels. This highlights the lengths James goes to in order to combine the best of Austen within the crime fiction, which does not go unnoticed to the reading public. On the other hand, *The Plain Dealer* focused exclusively on this combination, as "The queen of

mystery has taken on the queen of literature, [and] the combination sings. . . . [James'] elegance and sly wit are in top form.”, and *The Washington Post* goes as far as to declare the book as a “major treat to any Austen fan” with a hint of period mystery.¹³ That is to say, all major reviewers focus on the mastery James applies when adjusting these two very different universes. Her extensive knowledge of Austen’s plots and language does not go unnoticed, as she makes use of external structures and irony.

James rises well above the ever-growing pack of Austen-inspired authors, not only for her intimate familiarity with Austen’s work, but for her faultless replication of time, place and, most notably, Austen’s trademark writing style. (*Newark Star-Ledger*)

Finally, it is possible to declare that James’ *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a crime fiction work, a sub-genre of detective fiction that combines James’ extensive career in detective fiction with Austen’s wit and moral concerns.

The following chapters will analyze how James appropriates and adapts these characters to the main plot of *Death Comes to Pemberley*. In order to do so, the author employs several stylistic devices that will be studied alongside Austen’s unique style.

¹³ The reviews were quoted directly from *Death Comes to Pemberley*’s page at Penguin Random House, which can be consulted at <http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/218988/death-comes-to-pemberley-by-p-d-james/9780307950659/>

In Murderous Company or a Murderer's Family

Jane Austen's works have been widely interpreted, analyzed and adapted. Her stories have originated films, television shows and books. This topic was widely researched by Ana Daniela Coelho in *Pride and Prejudice in two adaptations for Cinema and Television* (2014). *Death Comes To Pemberley* is one of the countless works to have been inspired or adapted from Austen's novels.

The past decades have offered us various adaptations in several media. However, it is not only the novels that fascinate the audiences. There are biographies of Jane Austen, fictionalized romance stories in which the author becomes the main character¹⁴, and 21st century heroines trading places with Elizabeth Bennet¹⁵. Jane Austen's letters to her family and acquaintances have also been published¹⁶. The public finds itself drawn to anything related to Austen.

It is therefore evident that, over the centuries, the author's name became a brand. Any item associated with Jane Austen shall so be marketed, as it will present higher chances of success, defends Jennifer Schuessler in her article "Lit's Dynamic Duo, Will and Jane, Shared Path to Pop Stardom" (2016) on the show "Will & Jane: Shakespeare, Austen and the Cult of Celebrity". According to Coelho, Austen is one of the best examples of cultural re-appropriation of the literary canon (Coelho, 2014: 1). There have been modern approaches which do not focus on the protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*, nor on a modern version of Elizabeth. Megan Garber defends that the past two decades have widely focused on the forgotten Bennet sisters in "There's Something About Mary Bennet" (2016). Whereas as Lizzie, Jane and Lydia are crucial to the events narrated in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary and Kitty are nothing more than figurants. Writers deliberately create stories for these background figures.

Pride and Prejudice, Austen's most famous novel, has served as a starting point for many subsequent romantic quests in fiction. In order to approach a period novel, the first choices must be intrinsically related to the treatment of time and setting of the adaptation. The focus must be immediately decided. The film *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), an adaptation of Seth Grahame-Smith's 2009 eponymous novel, is a retelling of Elizabeth and

¹⁴ See *Becoming Jane* (2007)

¹⁵ See *Lost in Austen* (2008)

¹⁶ See Gray, 2001

Darcy's love story in a dystopian world plagued by zombies. Often, the choice falls on a contemporary setting. The characters are modernized and the adaptation transfigures Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters onto the 21st century reality. Curtis Sittenfeld's *Eligible* could be considered an example of this exercise.¹⁷ Another modern approach may be to merely use Elizabeth's central plot and "create a funny contemporary novel about a spirited young woman in search of love" (Kakutani, 2016). The characters are not the Bennet sisters, but the female protagonist may acquire some of Elizabeth's traits. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones Diary* is quoted as an example by Kakutani, who adds that the adaptation reminds the readers "that 'Pride and Prejudice' was one of the original screwball comedy/romcom templates." (Kakutani, 2016).

P.D. James found no interest in these forms. *Death Comes to Pemberley* is the product of a profound admiration, the homage from a female writer to another. Although it takes the form of a crime novel, it also presents many elements of a writing exercise. The book does not alter the events of *Pride and Prejudice*. In fact, P.D. James does not interfere with Austen's work; the author continues it. Austen's intentions remain carefully preserved. James works with the core materials Austen provided, such as Wickham's character and villainous characteristics.

Upon reading *Death Comes to Pemberley*, it is possible for the reader to infer how James modeled her Wickham. The author created a situation in which his character and reputation must be put to the test. Many writers who devote their careers to crime fiction highlight the premise that anyone may commit a murder, given the right motive. This belief may be one of the core elements James plays with in this novel. On the one hand, Darcy and the reader are forced to question their feelings towards Wickham, to the point of considering him either guilty or innocent of murder. In fact, Austen did not create a murderer, thus James could not portray him as such. Austen did create a villain, so it becomes obvious that in *Death Comes To Pemberley*, Darcy, as well as the readers, would have to believe that there was a possibility that the villain could have committed the ultimate crime.

On the other hand, Bidwell is capable of murder, precisely because he finds the right motivation and is presented with a favourable opportunity. James could play freely with his fate, because she created the character. It becomes necessary to readdress Bidwell's social

¹⁷ According to Michiko Kakutani's review entitled "Curtis Sittenfeld's 'Eligible' Updates Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice'" (2016). *Eligible* derives from the Austen Project, an initiative devoted to pair contemporary authors with Austen's novels.

status, as a creation of P.D. James. P.D. James appropriates the settings described by Austen and pictures the lives of the characters six years past the events of *Pride and Prejudice*. It has previously been stated that all the characters in *Death Comes to Pemberley* fulfill a specific function. Taking in consideration the period in which the action is set and the way James appropriates these characters, it is important to underline again that the characters created by James do not belong to the same social category as the Darcys, the Bingleys and even the Wickhams, as it was previously mentioned.

Pride and Prejudice presents a heterodiegetic narrator who follows Elizabeth Bennet. The readers are offered an interpretation of her thoughts and the narrator “assumes itself as the omniscient voice characterized by his critical and frequently ironic tone” (Coelho, 2014: 54). Coelho also argues that in the first chapters of the novel, the narrator does not address Elizabeth differently in relation to the other elements of her family, thus not providing any insight as to her role as a main character.

Death Comes to Pemberley presents a heterodiegetic narrator and a divided perspective between the two protagonists. The opening line of Book One is explicit, deliberately answering the questions when, who, what and where – “At eleven in the morning of Friday 14th October 1803 Elizabeth Darcy sat at the table in her sitting room on the first floor of Pemberley House.” (James, 2012: 15). There is no doubt as to who the main character is, firstly presented in the prologue and immediately addressed in the first chapter. This is a clear opposition to Elizabeth’s introduction in *Pride and Prejudice*, where she is seen as part of the loud Bennet family¹⁸. However, it may be argued that a similar introduction, from the general towards the particular, would be unnecessary, as readers of *Pride and Prejudice* would be aware of Elizabeth’s status as a protagonist. The remaining lines of the first paragraph highlight the change in Elizabeth’s life, as she realises “more even than had the more ostentatious glories of the house, the privileges that adhered to Mrs Darcy of Pemberley.” (James, 2012: 15).

Darcy is also mentioned in this first chapter, as Elizabeth recalls the delight in his face when she took possession of her sitting room. In this particular first moment, the male protagonist is seen through the female protagonist’s eyes. This establishes a clear contrast between the moment and the circumstances in which Elizabeth and Darcy first met. The surprise *Death Comes to Pemberley* assures is the promotion of Darcy from love interest to

¹⁸ See Coelho, 2012

protagonist. Thus, the narratorial voice follows both Elizabeth and Darcy, allowing for two perspectives. These are, however, divided.

This shift in perspective is an element that James reclaims. The author selects the main characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, a couple recognized by personal and social stability, six years into their marriage. James, like Austen, embraces internal focalization. This highlights Darcy's dilemma regarding Wickham's culpability or innocence, which is not vocalized – one must be reminded that the character introduced by Austen is driven by logic, assuming clear faults in matters of communication. Throughout the novel, Darcy must decide how to proceed, in order to honour his position as a constable and act accordingly to his familial bond towards Wickham, who is also referenced in the first chapter.

It is possible to analyse the reasons for this choice. Austen guides the readers in a world of social manners and marriage through Elizabeth's eyes. In a society which views marriage as a contract, Elizabeth Bennet is a defying figure. She does neither possess an agreeable personality, nor a big dowry and refuses a safe financial marriage to Mr. Collins. Elizabeth possesses traits similar to both Jane and Lydia, which makes it possible to place her between her sisters: she is not as charming and enchanting as Jane, and not as rebellious and unreasonable as Lydia. Coelho reminds us that the first chapters of the novel elaborate on a characterization of the sisters, each distinguished by their most relevant traits, as Jane is represented by her beauty, Elizabeth by her intelligence and Lydia through her optimistic and enthusiastic approach in life. (Coelho, 2013: 54).

In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, Elizabeth is the character responsible for establishing the communication, as it best suits her personality. James describes Austen's Elizabeth as a clever, witty and energetic heroine who is “probably the most enchanting female character in English literature” (James, 2012: 326-327). Thus, James' intentions regarding the heroine seem obvious, as these traits are carefully maintained. Occasionally, readers are aware that “Elizabeth's curiosity had overcome discretion.” (James, 2012: 23), exhibiting the strong personality present in Austen's novel. James' Elizabeth connects effortlessly with other characters. Her social position is now solidified, and although “Elizabeth was too much of a realist not to know that these antecedents had been forgotten” (James, 2012: 18) at first, she is soon accepted by the community of her new county. She cares after her sister Lydia during the tragic events, despite the fact that their relationship is portrayed as rather tense. Readers are introduced to one additional element in Elizabeth. She is no longer the defying figure who exposed Darcy's flaws. Instead, she possesses an agreeable personality, which may also be a

product of her harmonious existence alongside Darcy and her children in Pemberley. This detail may also be considered a product of Elizabeth's growth, as she became both the lady of Pemberley and a mother. The Elizabeth readers encounter in *Death Comes to Pemberley* may be described as mature.

It is also important to highlight that James is careful in her portrayal of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship, in order to respect Austen's wishes so that the couple is perceived as an example of an adequate marriage. James must then consider the period of the story, to act with historic faithfulness, and the period in which the book was written, as the adaptation will have 21st century readers as a reading public. The following excerpt allows for a deep analysis of James' premises and beliefs:

The library at Longbourn was Mr Bennet's domain and even Elizabeth, his favourite child, entered it only by invitation. The library at Pemberley was as freely open to her as it was to Darcy, and with his tactful and loving encouragement she had read more widely and with greater enjoyment and comprehension in the last six years than in all the past fifteen, augmenting an education which, she now understood, had never been other than rudimentary. (James, 2015: 15-16).

This excerpt from chapter one informs the readers that Elizabeth is an equal partner regarding household property, as she can freely access the library and read. This is James' first statement, which compares Elizabeth's position as a daughter in Longbourn and her upgraded position as a wife in Pemberley. At Pemberley, Elizabeth's natural curiosity and intelligence are not just valued; they are encouraged. As previously mentioned, the two characters portray a true union of personalities. Darcy is here seen not only as her supportive husband, but also as another source of her education, which evolves and rapidly grows. *Pride and Prejudice* presents a specific time in Elizabeth's life and her primary goal is established by her family in the first chapter: The protagonist must possess the traits to find a suitable husband. On the other hand, *Death Comes to Pemberley* shows the following stage of Elizabeth's life, according to her improved social status and wealth. She no longer has an objective established by societal norms and does as she pleases, in order to further her education out of mere personal interest. Her societal duties are otherwise fulfilled, as she

organizes Lady Anne's Ball, oversees all aspects of household and staff organization and serves as Georgiana's confidant in her sister-in-law's pursuit of marriage.

James sees Austen's Elizabeth as a clever character. Her development in *Pride and Prejudice* is rooted on the achievement of her primary goal, thus allowing her to overcome her prejudice towards Darcy. This passage reveals Elizabeth's understanding of the level of education she possessed before her marriage. This also comes to show that her intellectual value has since increased. James underlines that the focus of Elizabeth's life had not been her education. This passage illustrates the distance between what a character firstly described through her intelligence and a character that recognizes that the education she received during her upbringing cannot be compared to what she has yet to learn. This may be a direct reference to the way in which Elizabeth gives up her prejudice regarding Darcy's social position in *Pride and Prejudice*. She no longer lets prejudice towards his social class blind her to the reality of her previous situation. Upon this realization, Elizabeth finds herself able to progress steadily.

The following lines of chapter one further the comparison between Elizabeth previous lifestyle and the one she currently possesses.

Dinner parties at Pemberley could not be more different from those she had sat through at Meryton when the same group of people spread the same gossip and exchanged the same views (...). Now it was always with regret that she would catch the eyes of the ladies and leave the gentlemen to their masculine affairs. It had been a great revelation to Elizabeth that there were men who valued intelligence in a woman. (James, 2015: 16).

Elizabeth compares Pemberley to Meryton and finds herself describing two drastically distinct environments. Social life in Meryton was repetitive and followed the same pattern each time. One must also pay attention to the use of the term gossip, which serves to provide a contrast to the interests in Pemberley. Lastly, the character makes a clear reference to her husband; Darcy is the example of a man who values intelligence in a woman, as he married her. Overall, Elizabeth feels that Pemberley enriches her social life, both in terms of education and social gatherings.

These two quotes previously analysed refer to Elizabeth's private and social sphere, respectively. This goes to show how James introduces her female protagonist. Elizabeth is a beloved character who had her story told and retold countless times. When James builds a new story from the starting point which is the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, a clear contrast is presented. That is to say that James herself establishes distinctions between her source material and her novel, and Elizabeth gains a new life. Pemberley is one of the settings of *Pride and Prejudice* that the female character visits as guest. Pemberley then becomes the home Elizabeth is offered to reclaim as her own, which is the focus of the first lines of chapter one. This Elizabeth is both the result of her experiences in Longbourn and Meryton, as well as of her six years living as Mrs Darcy of Pemberley.

Whereas Elizabeth maintains the majority of her traits as a protagonist and a focalized figure, Darcy is offered more depth along with a central role. Elizabeth's complexity, broadcast in *Pride and Prejudice*, is soothed in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Her situation as a main character derives from these first chapters. As the investigation of the crime progresses, Elizabeth's presence diminishes and Darcy's is enhanced. As previously stated, Elizabeth is used to link the two stories and introduce the new Pemberley.

Admittedly Elizabeth was herself respectable and it was finally accepted even by the doubters that she was pretty enough and had fine eyes, but the marriage was still a wonder and one that was particularly resented by a number of young ladies who, on their mother's advice, had refused several reasonable offers to keep themselves available for the glittering prize and were even now nearing the dangerous age of thirty with no prospects in sight. (James, 2012: 19)

It is, therefore, crucial to access how James modeled Darcy. This excerpt refers to Darcy without a mention to his name. Notwithstanding, the readers can easily infer that he, along with Pemberley, is the "glittering prize" young women desire. Darcy is seen by those young women as a possession and a prize to be won. The choice of words does not go unnoticed. Coelho argues that the opposition of feminine/masculine is unquestionably recognized as matriarchal when Austen's works are approached (Coelho, 2013: 15). In fact, the pursuit of marriage is not lead by men but by the families of the potential bride, an idea

that James supports by claiming Darcy as a marketable prize, an element which is implied by Austen in her novel.

Darcy is aware that his position comes with relative attention, and the narrator describes the county's point of view of "a proud man for whom family tradition and reputation were of the first importance" (James, 2012: 18). This seems to go in direct confrontation to his choice of bride, as Elizabeth's lack of fortune and the proper familial bonds were distressing, particular due to her connection to Wickham, a character well known in the area (James, 2012: 18-19). This particular moment shows readers how Darcy and Wickham's lives have always been entwined. The fact that Elizabeth soon wins over the appreciation of her community and that Wickham was excluded from Pemberley are reassuring for the community, which leads to Pemberley becoming a social centre.

One must also acknowledge the impact Darcy feels when he is stripped of his legal powers. In this moment, his social and private spheres collide. Darcy, as a character, values reason over emotion. This fact is decisive in Austen's novel, as Darcy advises Bingley not to marry Jane due to her social status and prevents Georgiana from impulsive actions, which would lead to a binding marriage contract with Wickham. That is to say, Darcy is often ahead of a potential embarrassing situation, representing a protective figure. He also offers his help to the Bennets, either when it comes to finding Lydia and afterwards to pay Wickham in order to avoid a scandal.¹⁹

In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, Darcy is surprised by the tragedy and the unwelcome guests, who ultimately threaten his solid position as a leader. Darcy is a character who values order and, in a crime story, order is disrupted. James uses context to reveal just how little control and power Darcy has once he is removed from Pemberley. He is forced to recognize that his connection with Wickham is reason enough to not be officially involved in the investigation. Thus, events of his domestic sphere cross the boundaries and conflict with his social sphere within that small community. Darcy has no way to avoid a scandal and spread panic in his own county.

It must equally be highlighted that Darcy does not hold any power in London. His power is diminished in his county during the investigation. Furthermore, Darcy has no relevance in the big city. James challenges Darcy's limits, removing him from his natural element, not once, but twice.

¹⁹ See Gray, 2001

By the end of the trial Darcy felt as drained as if he himself had stood in the dock. He longed to ask Alveston for reassurance but pride and the knowledge that to badger him would be as irritating as it was futile kept him silent. There was nothing anyone could do but hope and wait. (James, 2012: 259).

These first lines of chapter ten illustrate the character's state of mind, with particular focus on his pride and powerlessness. Darcy feels dislodged when he is removed from Pemberley. His house is no longer a symbol of order and safety, as a trial in London implies that the name Pemberley is now associated with a murder.

The previous chapter argued that Darcy is not a detective figure in this crime fiction book. Darcy's inquiries are irrevocably linked to his ethical duty as a constable in his community and to a social obligation to protect family members. He is never truly sure of Wickham's innocence, despite all the guarantees and protests of the accused. He also fears that he is not absolutely convinced of Wickham's guilt either, thus finding himself trapped in this mindset of uncertainty. The character does not attempt to uncover any more information that could assist Wickham and he soon receives a guilty verdict and is sentenced to death. Notwithstanding, Darcy fulfills his familial obligations by visiting Wickham. His biases towards Wickham function as a clear parallel towards the readers, who cannot be absolutely sure of the villain's innocence or guilt.

Austen's deliberate refusal to provide political context to her works is cited by James in the author's note, worded as an apology to Jane Austen for involving her characters in such dreadful events as a murder investigation (James, 2012: xi). James does dwell on guilt and misery, and context is a key element to provide an accurate characterization of the way the characters deal with the upcoming trauma. Lady Anne's Ball is "regarded by the county as the most important social event of the year." (James, 2012: 16) and Darcy voices his concern as to whether the ball should in fact be hosted, introducing this key element of James' approach.

Mr Darcy had voiced his concern that it might not be a propitious year in which to hold the ball, with the expected war with France already declared

and the growing fear in the south of the country where invasion by Bonaparte was daily expected. (James, 2012: 17).

Darcy is aware of the current political situation, which does not affect his area directly. This passage is a direct testimony to Darcy's assumption of importance in a larger scale which is transversal to James' work. Darcy believes he holds more power than he in fact does, which will result in a feeling of helplessness after the tragedy. The following excerpt continues this idea, introducing a brief point of view, external to Darcy and Elizabeth. It also exposes men and women's opposing ideas, which could possibly result in a clash between the domestic and the social spheres.

A number of gentlemen, raising worried eyes from their account books, were inclined to agree that there should be no ball this year, but were met with such outrage from their wives and the certainty of at least two months of domestic discomfort that they finally agreed that nothing was more conducive to good morale than a little harmless entertainment, and that Paris would rejoice exceedingly and take new heart were that benighted city to learn that the Pemberley ball had been cancelled. (James, 2012: 17).

The passage illustrates James' initial use of irony, which is particularly evident regarding power relations. These relations are intrinsically connected to the county versus city dichotomy developed later in the book. As the trial proceeds, James increases these narratorial voice's comments in a similar resource used by Austen. This excerpt shows readers that Darcy is not the only character who believes he is more relevant than he in fact is. The gentlemen imagine that the lack of entertainment in Pemberley will be talked about in Paris and decide the ball should in fact succeed, thus refusing Paris' opportunity to rejoice. However, the prospect of long domestic discomfort appears to be the deciding parameter, attesting to women's role as connective figures in society.

James' novel relies on a deeply organized society that is disturbed by a horrifying tragedy. The first chapter is crucial in establishing the status quo, hence its focus on the dynamics of the people involved. Male characters are concerned with war and poor harvest, as well as its impact on their account books. The lack of entertainment in the country is also

approached by James, who insists on a carefully crafted detail. Pemberley becomes a gathering ground when Elizabeth is in charge of “the social obligations of a great house” (James, 2012: 17). The role of women in the novel is clear, as it respects the conventions of the period in which the action is set.

Coelho argues that an adaptation is a cultural product and provides valuable insight on the period it is created. This opposition of feminine/masculine is particularly important when approaching Austen, due to her treatment of topics of love, sexuality and marriage (Coelho, 2013: 15)²⁰. Thus, Elizabeth and Darcy’s spheres reflect and approach both Austen and 21st century concerns regarding the social role of men and women. The relationship established between the two texts allows an intertextual dialogue.

Intertextuality studies the way in which texts are related, whether they have suffered contextual or cultural influences, and how those changes may have impacted the reading of each text. A reader will read each text from his or her own standpoint, applied to their context, such as historical, social or cultural background. For example, a nineteenth century reader does not value the same elements which a twenty-first century reader will appreciate in a story.

Thus, the same text may present endless readings. One must recall that *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the most adapted works, which is to say that people have been reading it for centuries. Intertextuality is a historically recent concept that emerged within the broad area of linguistics, as Julie Kristeva borrows and combines terms firstly presented by Saussure²¹, in her dialogue of Bakhtin’s texts²². The notion of intertextuality itself originated through the adaptation of previously existing ideas, borrowed from another field. The belief that each work is highly influenced by the historical period and cultural background of both readers and writers is one of its core characteristics.

The reading of a text differs because it implies not only the meaning of the text within itself, as intended by the author, but also the knowledge the reader possesses. The author and the reader are both inevitably influenced by centuries of cultural aspects. *Death Comes To*

²⁰ Coelho quotes Jehlen, who states that “If gender is a matter of nature and not nurture, the character conventionally assigned to men and women in novels reflects history and culture rather than nature.” (Coelho, 2013: 15)

²¹ See Allen, 2011

²² Kristeva applies Saussurean semiology to the translation of Bakhtin’s works, as Structuralism is a movement based on the notions of Saussurean semiology. That is to say, no sign has a meaning of its own, as sign may only acquire meaning through its connection to other signs. Kristeva combined the Saussurean terms ‘signified’ and ‘signifier’.

Pemberley specifically reports to a previous text, and not an unknown source. The knowledge of *Pride and Prejudice* enlarges the readings of *Death Comes To Pemberley*. Its reading is not essential for the understanding of the plot events in the book; however, it is certainly of highest importance, in order to fully grasp the impact of the situation upon Austen's famous characters. The knowledge of *Pride and Prejudice* impacts the reader on a basic level of suspicion towards the murderer. Readers familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* will be aware of Wickham's villainous character, but readers who have not heard of him would miss one of the crucial points of Darcy's dilemma. Due to this fact, James' inclusion of the community's perspective in Book One, as well as the Darcys' reaction to their unwanted guests in Book Two are meant to illustrate the relationship between the two families. This element will be shortly addressed in the analysis of the prologue, due to the relevance of the book's structure.

It would be unwise to approach this vast field without a mention to the structuralist movement, considered responsible for the term intertextuality. Bakhtin and, later, Kristeva set the principles upon which several intertextual theories were afterwards developed. One of its principles lies in the creation of meaning through signs²³. Signs are arbitrary and only acquire meaning when analyzed in relation to other signs, creating texts. Decades later, post-structuralism emphasized that the meaning of a text must be explored through the relations among several texts, creating a wider net of connections. The wider net of the connection is at the centre of this analysis; these relations between the texts are the core of intertextual analysis, as the way in which a text is related to others becomes the object of study of intertextuality. According to *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2006), these texts may "contain references to other texts, (...) which have contributed to their production and signification." (Childs, 2006: 121). *Death Comes To Pemberley* has an original plot, created by its author, but its full understanding may depend on the knowledge of a previous text, *Pride and Prejudice*. James' novel offers several reading levels, as well as various references to Austen's world.

The definition of text must here be clarified. Texts can present themselves in various forms – oral, written, visual, amongst others. My dissertation addresses the written narrative text, as conceived by P.D. James in *Death Comes To Pemberley*, in relation to Jane Austen's book, *Pride and Prejudice*. Allen offers a useful definition of the term in his glossary.

²³ Defined by French linguist Saussure. See Allen, 2011

In structuralist and poststructuralist theory the ‘text’ comes to stand for whatever meaning is generated by the intertextual relations between one text and another and the activation of those relations by a reader. ‘Text’ becomes a term associated with the absence of stable and permanent meaning, while ‘work’ is now associated with the idea of a stable and self-contained meaning. (Allen, 2011: 227)

A written literary text possesses a meaning within itself. This particular type of text will present us with the characteristics of a narrative, such as time, space, narrator, conflict, and characters. *Death Comes to Pemberley* has its own plot, but it is not entirely independent from *Pride and Prejudice*. For example, readers must be aware of Wickham’s status as an outcast and the relations between each romantic pairing should be clear. The author provides this information in the prologue and throughout flashbacks in Book One. This meaning offered by James belongs to the internal structure of the text itself. However, others factors, such as social, political and historical context, will influence the meaning of the text. Austen refused to address the political problems of her time, focusing merely on the social dynamics and power relations, through the analysis of courtship and marriage in that particular social context. James, on the other hand, finds these variables essential to her crime story, adding important dimensions of characterization. Those variables constitute the discourse of each text. The term discourse refers immediately to language, stressing “the fact that language always occurs in specific social contexts and always reflects specific codes, expectations, ideological pressures and presuppositions.” (Allen, 2011: 219). Austen and James use language in a distinct way, in order to convey different feelings and trigger sets of reactions adequate to the genre of each novel. The success of a crime story depends on the readers’ response to the mystery and the criminal, so every utterance becomes a potential clue. This way, texts can occur in a multitude of situations and contexts, and are replete with various discursive practices. Texts will be placed within several categories divided by their formal characteristics, which allow the categorization. It may be argued that an understanding of the text’s discourse is crucial to its intertextual study.

It would be impossible to read *Death Comes to Pemberley* and disregard *Pride and Prejudice*. However, a reader may be unaware of the plot developed in *Pride and Prejudice*. Nonetheless, James presents a solution to this hypothesis and acts as a mediator. The prologue of *Death Comes to Pemberley* creates a bridge between the two stories. James devotes this

initial chapter to the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*, recalling its central characters and storylines. In doing so, James deliberately focuses on the timeline of the events which occurred in Austen's work, rather than filling the six-year gap between each book. In fact, only the last paragraph of the prologue refers to the time of the action, 1803. The title of the prologue may not go unnoticed. It is adequately named "The Bennets of Longbourn", referring to Elizabeth's origins, through her family name and county. The chapter states that the elements mentioned are not originally of James' creation. This act of separation between the two timelines, and the two books, ensures that characteristics such as the three relevant pairings – Jane and Bingley, Elizabeth and Darcy, and Lydia and Wickham - were not created by James, but borrowed from Austen. This is not to say that James does not create her own characters.

The prologue is presented in chronological order, whereas the structure of Book One is flexible. It first directs the reader to the present, the day before Lady Anne's Ball, but we are soon presented with multiple flashbacks, linked to the organization of the ball and to Elizabeth's gradual acceptance by the community in her new county. The flashbacks in chapter one of Book One present essentially Elizabeth, Darcy and the county people's perspectives. James uses these elements not only in order to recall the book's connection to Austen's work, but to show key moments spread through the six year gap. The prologue provides context regarding the characters, stating the events and its consequences in *Pride and Prejudice* and the first chapters provide insight on the six years neither book covers. It informs the readers of the imminence of war, it addresses Darcy's concerns in the present and shows the suspicion the couple endured for a month. In doing so, it also provides a characterization of Elizabeth and Darcy through an external point of view comparing the people's first impressions of the couple with their current beliefs, which state their essential role in the community. This period of early adaptation seems to have lasted a month, after which "consensus had been reached: the gentlemen were impressed with Elizabeth's beauty and wit, and their wives by her elegance, amiability, and the quality of the refreshments." (James, 2012: 18). As the chapter progresses, it recalls in depth the troubles Elizabeth encountered while organizing the first ball. It also evokes the characters that will resume their appearance in the upcoming ball and mentions other characters by name, such as Jane and Bingley's guest, Alveston, and Mrs. Reynolds. All of them will be secondary characters in *Death Comes to Pemberley*.

It is important to analyze how James exercises her creative freedom. Upon a careful reading of her novel, it is possible to notice a pattern in the liberties taken throughout the book. One must note that minor characters such as Mrs. Reynolds and Mr. Denny, who had small roles in *Pride and Prejudice*, are granted more attention. In fact, *Death Comes to Pemberley* presents a small set of characters due to its genre. It was previously mentioned that detective fiction authors show a clear preference for rural settings because it allows for a small list of suspects. *Pride and Prejudice*'s focus on social circles presents the need of several settings and a wider characters list. James then enlarges the participation of few minor characters. Mrs. Reynolds' role as a housekeeper remains the same, whereas Denny has been promoted to Captain Denny. The readers are also made aware that Elizabeth became a mother, which is another factor attributed to James. The children are not, however, relevant. It would have been expected for Darcy and Elizabeth to have become parents, so this addition to their household feels natural and allows a flow in continuity. Even though six years have passed, Darcy and Elizabeth lives were not stale during this period. The crime committed in Pemberley interrupts the Darcys perfect familial bliss.

James does not create many relevant characters that belong to the couple's social circle. As it has been previously mentioned, James is responsible for the creation of the Bidwell family, which is the reason why she may freely play with their fate. It is interesting to note that the Bidwells belong to a low social class, which creates a hierarchical dynamic. Social hierarchy is one of the greatest themes in *Pride and Prejudice*, therefore it could not be ignored by James. It is the main obstacle both Elizabeth and Jane encounter in their pursuit of happiness.

It may be noted that the characters created by James bring chaos to Pemberley, by generating violence, and serve the characters created by Austen. However, it is the arrival of Wickham and Captain Denny that triggers Bidwell. The only chaotic and disruptive elements taken from *Pride and Prejudice* are Wickham and his wife Lydia, and their function remains the same in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Their relationship dynamic will be analyzed in this dissertation. The murderer, who disrupts the order at Pemberley, is a servant who would be easily removed from Pemberley, had he lived. Darcy could not cut all bonds with Wickham due to their familiar relations, an important factor highlighted by Austen in the last chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*. However, William Bidwell could be easily erased from existence, with little impact to the family.

It becomes important to address the title of the novel: *Death Comes to Pemberley*. The focus is placed on the setting rather than on the characteristics of the characters. The title *Pride and Prejudice* is iconic, as critics defend that, in order to be together, Darcy must swallow his pride and Elizabeth must overcome her prejudice towards his social class²⁴. As a unified front, they are the owners of Pemberley, which functions both as home and as a social space where people of their status are entertained. This role is seen through the preparations for Lady Anne's ball – a home with its servants awaiting an important annual social event. The word “death” in the title foreshadows that crime and the verb “comes” insinuates that death finds its way into Pemberley, a metaphor if we are to consider how Lydia and Wickham are “accepted” into Pemberley, due to the unfortunate yet timely murder. Had it not been for the murder, they would not have been received at the estate. The title may also offer a logical insight into the plot. Death is not brought to Pemberley – the murder victim comes to Pemberley where the murderer lives, along with his sister, herself a victim of Wickham's behaviour.

Rowland states that “family life is heavily implicated in criminal passions” (Rowland, 2001: 6), a factor easily observed in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, as there are three families at its epicentre. The discovery of the mystery lies precisely in the tie that connects all the families. The ties between the Darcys and the Wickhams are clear and remembered in the Prologue. Wickham had chased Darcy's sister in the past, in events that preceded the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* and had successfully conquered Elizabeth's sister by the end of the novel. It may be noted that although Wickham's initial plan failed, he succeeded in becoming part of the Darcy family, which was his primary goal. He is not allowed on Pemberley grounds, nor in Highmarten, Jane and Bingley's home. His wife Lydia, on the other hand, may visit her older sister if she finds herself alone, and “it was from Jane that Elizabeth had news of the couple.” (James, 2012: 196). Despite that, both Elizabeth and Jane have helped the Wickhams financially. The couple had not been invited to the Lady Anne's Ball, and James reminds the readers that their appearance is a transgression of the rules established by Austen. It is also equally shown how Darcy and Elizabeth are connected to the Bidwells. However, the fact that Louisa Bidwell had Wickham's child is precisely the key to understand who killed Captain Denny, as it is equally the reason the victim was murdered.

Wickham is now related to Darcy, a fact that is a testimony to his resourcefulness and cunning, which Austen presents as demonstration of the character's moral values. In a book in

²⁴ See Rubinstein, 1969: 4

which every character has a strong code of conduct and they are guided by religious beliefs, Wickham's instincts propel him to always deceive and mislead in order to achieve fortune and enjoy a wealthy life. It is equally important to highlight that Wickham is first presented as a victim of murder, then he is believed to be a killer, and at the end of the book he is exiled. This had already occurred in *Pride and Prejudice*, as the initial contact other characters establish with Wickham is misleading. Throughout the novel, the others' perception of him changes. In *Death Comes to Pemberley* he is first seen as victim, then the complete opposite and at last he is proven to be merely a villain with a deficit in moral values, leading to his permanent removal from society. It may be argued that Wickham's progress in *Death Comes to Pemberley* mirrors his development in *Pride and Prejudice*.

It is important to suggest that a relation between postmodernism and the way intertextuality is applied now. *Death Comes to Pemberley* was written in a postmodern period; that will have an impact on how the adaptation is perceived both by the author and the reading public. In fact, many critics claim that "the Postmodern era can seem one in which reproduction takes over from authentic production." (Allen, 2011: 177). *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a significant example of this phenomenon, as it is an adaptation that originated a mini-series²⁵ adaptation. Society steams away from the idea of uniqueness and originality, choosing instead to reproduce formats proven successful in the past. The expectations of the reading public have equally changed, as people grow accustomed to adaptations. Intertextuality in a postmodern world enforces cultural clichés and repetition.

Authors of literary works do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of character, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition. (Allen, 2011: 11)

According to Allen, we live in a culture of adaptation. Genres are created and branded precisely because several authors follow the same guidelines. Authors have been copying techniques and adapting works for as long as we have records. That does not diminish works that are later produced, as each adaptation and re-creation has its own literary value. Several critics believe Shakespeare was a skillful storyteller, appropriating stories from the oral

²⁵ See *Death Comes to Pemberley* (BBC, 2013)

tradition. Two of his most famous tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, are said to not have been first invented by Shakespeare. James' work is present as a carefully thought writing exercise, created from a profound admiration towards Austen and a sense of wonder. The author does not hide that her main intention is to play with characters she admires. Thus, every element is intentionally intertextual.

Death Comes to Pemberley is a product of its time. It appropriates Jane Austen's characters and environment; it relegates the romantic plot to a background narrative and plays with Austen's stylistic devices. James' work is enriched by the topics Austen refused to approach, such as the war. The historical difference between the period of writing and the period the book portrays is an advantage James possesses. The author uses her historical knowledge in order to add characteristics that were merely implicit in *Pride and Prejudice*, such as Wickham's position and actions during the war. This choice allows for a recalling of the bond shared by Wickham and Captain Denny, which then poses various ramifications.

Death Comes to Pemberley adapts and combines Austen's world with postmodern expectations and double-codes.

A Certain Justice or a Certain Death

In the words of Elizabeth Darcy, neé Bennet, servants are an integral part of what turns a house into a home. James' Pemberley appears to impose itself not simply as a setting, but as an important part of the mystery, serving as a common link to each character. As previously mentioned, readers are introduced to life in Pemberley through Elizabeth, who devotes her attention to the people living among her. She then finds contrasting aspects when looking back on her previous life and compares the roles of the servants of each house.

Elizabeth first presents her current reality, stating that “the servants at Pemberley, the majority of long service had been trained by Mrs Reynolds (...) in the tradition that the family were never to be inconvenienced and were entitled to expect immaculate service.” (James, 2012: 22). This sentence shows the efficiency of the Pemberley staff. The senior members, Mrs Reynolds and Stoughton, are at the top of the hierarchy and train those who will eventually replace them. It also demonstrates their philosophy regarding the service to the Darcys; the family needs not to worry about the management for minor affairs of the estate. Such efficiency is obtained through this hierarchical process. The place in the hierarchy is not achieved through hard work; much like one's social class, it is inherited. James devotes a few pages to this matter, including the moment when Elizabeth first thinks of the Bidwell family, “Bidwell had been head coach to the late Mr Darcy, as his father had been to the Darcys before him.” (James, 2012: 21). This mention cannot go unnoticed, as it clearly shows that every job at the estate lasts a lifetime. The passage refers to the murderer's father, Thomas Bidwell. This may be present itself as clue towards his son's involvement in the following events. Thomas Bidwell is mentioned as an example of continuity, as he inherits his tasks from his father. The son, William Bidwell, is the one character who cannot assume any sort of functions at the end of the novel, due to his illness and consequent death. Notwithstanding, had he lived, he would have been arrested and would not have been able to fulfill any obligations.

Nonetheless, “Elizabeth, in her first months at Pemberley, had been surprised at the family's involvement in the life of their servants.” (James, 2012: 56). James shows how Elizabeth and Darcy are not only aware but also participate in their servants' personal lives, celebrating important occasions, such as “marriages, betrothals, changes of job, illness or retirement” (James, 2012: 56). This will also justify the recurrent mentions to the Bidwell

family. The Darcys are not to be troubled with household worries, but they enjoy the environment created by staff, tenants and family.

Elizabeth's look towards her current servants is that of a semi-outsider's perspective. The servants at Pemberley serve the family, in order not to trouble them, but they are seen as employees rather than part of a large family. It can easily be inferred that there are more servants at Pemberley than the Bennets had in Longbourn, due to the family's social status. It would not be surprising that Elizabeth missed the people who surrounded her in Longbourn. In fact, Elizabeth possesses a term of comparison, whereas Darcy does not, for he has known those people for his entire life.

It would not have occurred to Darcy that the murderer could be related to one of his servants. Regardless, Darcy has also known Wickham his entire life and has trouble believing his innocence. This portrayal speaks to the importance of the servants, who are not invisible, but are the backbone of order. This is present since the first chapter of Book One, and will be the answer to the mystery. The staff has an important role in the organization of Pemberley's every day ordinary life. In addition, they are reliable during the crisis, running the house when the family cannot. Darcy would never have been in possession of every clue, as it is the rule for the family not to be inconvenienced. He knew of only one suspect with a motive, and that was Wickham.

Elizabeth's children are another example of the important role of heritage in the novel. It is expected that they will inherit the estate, which means that life will remain unchanged. "There would continue to be Darcys at Pemberley" (James, 2012: 22) is a statement that reassures the estate staff that their lives will go on as usual, for they will have Darcys to serve. On the other hand, Louisa's child is a product of turmoil. However, Louisa cannot be regarded as the child's mother; for she is an unmarried woman and admitting so would result in shame and exclusion from society. In Louisa's case, the existence of a child would have symbolized the end of her life.

Thus, the organization of the house mirrors the strict structure of the societal tissue. It is both a testimony to social class and its inheritance in Austen's world as well as the faithfulness of its representation in James' adaptation.

Elizabeth missed little of her previous life, but it was to the servants of Longbourn that her thoughts most frequently turned (...). They had

become part of the family in a way that the servants at Pemberley could never be, but she knew that it was Pemberley, the house and the Darcys, which bound family, staff and tenants together in a common loyalty. (James, 2012: 22)

Elizabeth associates Longbourn with a lack of knowledge and freedom, recalling fondly the servants she knew. Pemberley, on the other hand, is a house of wonders, gifting her freedom to pursue her interests. She cannot see her staff as more than employees bound by a profound sense of duty. The estate is efficiently run by the staff, who upholds order. Pemberley functions as a micro-society.

James' Book One is entitled "The Day before Lady Anne's Ball". The readers follow Elizabeth's thoughts and concerns as she oversees last minute preparations for the ball, fully supported by Georgiana and Mrs Reynolds. The Ball is a major event that challenges ordinary life at Pemberley, so readers are immediately introduced to a busy time, which is later interrupted with a crisis. Elizabeth inherits the duties of lady of the house when she marries Darcy, and so the responsibility to host the Ball falls upon her. Elizabeth follows into Lady Anne's footsteps, using her notebook to prepare for the occasion. This functions as an example of Pemberley as an organized society where tradition plays a crucial role.

Pemberley unites family, staff and tenants. Nonetheless, it will hold a divided family with the arrival of Lydia and Wickham. The Wickhams are not loyal to Pemberley or its inhabitants, despite the fact that they are related. That is to say that Lydia and Wickham are presented as the intruders. In fact, Wickham is later revealed as a threat and the couple's arrival is the trigger to the plot.

James' Pemberley represents unity. The first chapter of this dissertation approached James' selection of the setting as one of the crucial elements of the crime process. The second chapter presents the use the Pemberley in order to explore Elizabeth's role in the novel. This comparison between house servants highlights the emotional bonds that surround Pemberley. Each character is connected differently to the house. This chapter explores those dynamics. Pemberley and the Darcys are the common element to every other character in the book.

The first description of Pemberley can be found in the prologue, though the enumeration of appealing elements referred by Mrs Bennet to remind her acquaintances of her daughter's successful marriage.

Mrs Bennet had only accompanied her husband to Pemberley on two occasions. She had been received by Mr Darcy with kindness and forbearance but was too much in awe of her son by marriage to wish to repeat the experience. Indeed, Elizabeth suspected that her mother had greater pleasure in regaling her neighbours with the wonders of Pemberley, the size and beauty of the gardens, the grandeur of the house, the number of servants and the splendor of the dining table than she had in experiencing them. Neither Mr Bennet nor his wife were frequent visitors of their grandchildren. (James, 2012: 10)

Pemberley is a big estate and not every area is equally valued. Elizabeth looks out the window “which gave a view of the long curving drive to the house and the river, fringed by the famous Pemberley wood.” (James, 2012: 23). James presents the space in detailed manner before the crime is committed. This way, readers may picture it and formulate a guess as to what happened in the woodland. The murder does not occur in the house; Captain Denny is murdered in the woodland. Thus, it becomes important to also analyze the woodland’s descriptions. The sentence “Elizabeth let her eyes rest on the familiar and calming but ever-changing beauty.” (James, 2012: 24) expresses the character’s feelings when staring upon her domains.

James highlights the tale of Darcy’s great grandfather, who became a recluse when he inherited Pemberley. Escaping both society and his home, he built a cottage, where he lived as a hermit and later committed suicide. It is the first time the Bidwell’s cottage is mentioned, establishing another link between these two families. The Bidwells must also overcome a family tragedy once the mysteries are solved. The cottage is located in woodland, named so in order to be easily distinguished from the arboretum. The woodland is described in the first pages of book one.

The first chapter of this dissertation approached the importance of the structure for the crime novel and gave an overview regarding the structure selected by P. D. James in the novel. Due to Book One’s particular relevance, it becomes essential to observe the topics raised by James in each chapter. Book One is divided into five chapters. The first chapter was previously analysed in detail in order to assess James’ use of perspective regarding Elizabeth.

Chapters two and three allow the progression of the romantic subplot. Jane is responsible for Alveston's introduction to Pemberley and will provide Elizabeth with valuable advice regarding both Georgiana and Lydia. In fact, the second chapter is devoted to the Bingley family, marking their important achievements during the six years, thus exploring the friendship that unites the couple to the Darcys, which contrasts with the bond established with the Wickhams.

The sisters, who had shared a room at Longbourn, had been particularly close companions since childhood and there was no matter on which Elizabeth could not speak to Jane, knowing she would be totally reliable in keeping a confidence and that any advice she gave would come from her goodness and loving heart. (James, 2012: 38)

Jane's description is used in order to show opposition towards Lydia, whose appearance in the book is enounced by the words "in the shaft of light from Pemberley they saw a woman almost falling out and shrieking into the wind" (James, 2012: 59) in chapter five. It is towards Jane that she then runs to when she reaches the house, pushing Elizabeth aside.

The second chapter also mentions characters and events which will later acquire significance. That is the case with Dr. McFee, first mentioned here as the doctor "who for years had looked after the Darcy family and the Pemberley household" (James, 2012: 37). He is Bidwell's doctor and will play a part in his confession.

Chapter three presents the family dining on the eve of the ball. The purpose of this chapter is to offer another glimpse of the romantic subplot, in the aftermath of Colonel Fitzwilliam's conversation with Elizabeth in chapter one regarding Georgiana. The dinner is nothing but a small family gathering, and Alveston is the only outsider. It also explains Mary's absence from the book. She is the last Bennet sister to be mentioned. The environment is cheerful yet somewhat ominous, as exemplified by the line "[B]ut this light-heartedness was not to last." (James, 2012: 45), which acts as a flash forward to the events about to happen.

The fourth chapter explores the Bidwell family. Thomas Bidwell "never worried about leaving his family alone in the woodland cottage, nor were they ever frightened there."

(James, 2012: 47). James uses this moment to develop Darcy's grandfather's life story, establishing a connection between the two families when revealing that Thomas Bidwell's grandfather had found the old man's lifeless body. That is to say that the story of the cottage entwines both the Darcy and the Bidwell families. Furthermore, the woodland is seen as a haunted place due to the occurrence of a crime two generations prior. Due to that, "the cottage was reputed to be unlucky but only in recent years had ill luck touched the Bidwells." (James, 2012: 49). Therefore, most servants are superstitious towards that area of the wood and they do not venture into it. This chapter marks the first time the murderer is mentioned in the novel, with the sentence "And now for the past year his only son, his hopes for the future, had been slowly and painfully dying." (James, 2012: 49). His death is bound to happen. That is to say that the cottage in the woodland will witness death again.

As the night progresses, in chapter five, Elizabeth recalls how her first visit to Pemberley is irrevocably connected to Lydia and Wickham's elopement. The expressiveness of the language used by James conveys the atmosphere suited to a crime, as character comment on the windy night and the narratorial voices announces that "[T]he wind rushed in immediately, a cold, irresistible force seeming to take possession of the whole house, extinguishing in one blow all the candles except those in the high chandelier." (James, 2012: 59). Verbs that invoke movement add dynamism to the scene, which presented a slow rhythm until that moment.

Death Comes to Pemberley presents a structure built on James' extensive experience as a crime author. The notions of past and present are distinguished through the use of context and continuity. These crucial elements of crime fiction are embodied in the Prologue and throughout Book One, slowly introducing the Pemberley household and the characters to the readers. There are equally a few clues foreshadowing the crime as well as clues towards its resolution.

It was generally agreed by the female residents of Meryton that Mr and Mrs Bennet had been fortunate in the disposal in marriage of four of their five daughters. (...) A family of five unmarried daughters is sure of attracting the sympathetic concern of all their neighbours, particularly where other diversions are few, and the situation of the Bennets was especially unfortunate. (James, 2012: 1)

The opening paragraphs in *Death Comes to Pemberley* hint directly to Austen's style. "It is a truth universally acknowledged" (Austen in Gray, 2001: 3) becomes "It was generally agreed" (James, 2012: 1). The social criticism can be perceived, particularly when equating gossip with the few diversions in *Meryton*. Furthermore, James immediately exposes the female angle on the matter approached, that of the now married Bennet sisters, who were once pitied in their social circle. In addition, the first paragraph mentions Netherfield Park, which "although impressive, is not mentioned in books about the county's notable architecture." (James, 2012: 1), implying that the remarkable estate, once let by Bingley, is not actually as impressive as the characters would make us believe.

The famous opening lines of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* have often been studied for their ability to immediately captivate the readers. Chapter one of the present dissertation includes Van Ghent's comments regarding that first chapter; which Rubinstein echoes when he declares that "the first half-dozen words announce not only a vast range of practical experience and practical wisdom on the part of the narrator but also a confidence and finality bordering on smugness" (Rubinstein, 1969: 3), thus emphasizing the immediate impact of the words selected by Austen. The dynamic is equally presented in Coelho's research²⁶, previously approached in the second chapter of this dissertation. Rubinstein also highlights the purposes of Austen's use of irony in the famous opening paragraph.

The opening sentence simply misrepresents the actual state of things: neither of the rich unmarried gentlemen we encounter in the story is in fact so actively seeking a wife. Despite what the opening sentence proclaims (or rather, in perfect accord with what it proclaims *ironically*), it is up to the ladies to make marriages happen. (Rubinstein, 1969: 4)

As previously mentioned, James applies this element in her treatment of the romantic subplot. Colonel Fitzwilliam does not approach Darcy regarding a possible union with Georgiana. Instead, he addressed Elizabeth and looks for her approval and support. As readers, we observe Elizabeth's discomfort throughout the scene; the character believes the choice of partner will belong to Georgiana.

²⁶ See Coelho, 2012

As Mrs. Van Ghent remind us, many of the key words (“fortune”, “property”, maybe even well fixed”) serve to locate the activities of courtship and marriage at the level of business transactions. (...) All the language (...) is meant to alert us to the dangers of the game of courtship – its brutalizing economic stresses (think of poor Charlotte Lucas) and, in the figures of the Bennets, the ghastly punishment meted out to those who play it foolishly. (Rubinstein, 1969: 4)

Lydia is the example. Lydia Bennet is not the oldest, the cleverest nor the prettiest. She is simply one of the five Bennet sisters. Yet, unlike her younger sisters, she refuses to be forgotten. Her main concern mirrors Mrs Bennet’s, despite their different reasoning. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs Bennet dreams of suitable men for her daughters, whereas young Lydia finds herself drawn to male companionship and admiration. Both creators of mismatched unions, Mrs Bennet and Lydia present themselves as opposites. The mother’s insistence on following all social rules in order to adequately marry all her daughters is a clear contrast to Lydia’s disregard for the rules of conduct. The family dynamic is therefore crucial for the analysis of a marital contract. Mrs Bennet is a crucial character in *Pride and Prejudice*, as she is often the object of ridicule²⁷. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Mrs Bennet is not present in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, she is merely mentioned. Her husband, however, makes an appearance in order to console his favourite daughter, Elizabeth. Therefore, Lydia and Wickham who once again become the example of what to avoid as the only mismatched couple present in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Such fate must be particularly avoided by Georgiana. James ensures the importance of a suitable match when creating a romantic triangle, following in Austen’s footsteps.

Such a passage [opening paragraph of *Pride and Prejudice*] invites the reader to experience the English language in a state of remarkable concentration, words pressed to yield up every possible drop of sardonic commentary. In the shortest possible time, an entire verbal environment

²⁷ See Van Ghent in Gray, 2001

has been made, a whole system of values both asserted and tacitly challenged. (Rubinstein, 1969: 4)

This system of values can be challenged. This idea is at the core of the development in *Pride and Prejudice* as female characters search for a single man in possession of a good fortune. Austen readers are introduced to this world and gradually realize the proper way in which to conduct courtship. It is not simply about obtaining a husband; a marriage must be obtained through the stipulated processes in order to be accepted in society. Whereas *Pride and Prejudice* focuses particularly on one way to move up socially, *Death Comes to Pemberley* broadens the social outlook by granting servants a preeminent role throughout the story. Due to the genre depicted, social events and leisure interactions are moved to the background. Internal focalization allows the reader to share the characters doubts regarding Wickham's culpability. Elizabeth's role is not to wonder about her brother-in-law's guilt or innocence; her first instinct upon seeing Lydia is to help her. Her sister, however, "thrust her aside with surprising strength, crying, 'Not you, not you.'" (James, 2012: 61). Nonetheless, Elizabeth, often characterized by her intelligence, takes in the burden of caring for Lydia, with Jane's valuable help. She does not attempt to solve the mystery of Captain Denny's death. Thus, Darcy must deal with the outside world while Elizabeth finds herself focused on her family. She becomes protective of Georgiana, who must not commit the same mistake as Lydia. The weight of Lydia's mistakes does fall upon Darcy, who "knew, and with bitterness, that if the trial went well he would have to support Wickham and Lydia, at least for the foreseeable future." (James, 2012: 196). This is not the first time he attempts to distance himself from his sister-in-law; it can be observed through an earlier shift in perspective, when "leaving the women to cope with Lydia, Darcy moved quickly." (James, 2012: 61). Through his conversation with Lydia's coachman, the readers realize Lydia's intent when travelling to Pemberley, as she announced she would be attending Lady Anne's Ball. Despite that, her husband would not accompany her to the Ball. That is to say that Lydia is willing to bend the social conventions to indulge in her own pleasure, but she would not be as forward as to force Wickham's presence onto her family.

Wickham was one of the many soldiers returning home from the war, a war Austen does not approach. The army employs men of various social classes, from Colonel Fitzwilliam, the son of an earl, to Wickham himself, whose father worked for the late Mr. Darcy. This institution is one of the few ways to alter one's social status. In a world ruled by

social hierarchy, the army allows for young men to be rewarded for displays of bravery. Wickham's desire to belong to a higher class relates closely to Lydia's ambition, as she too wishes for a life her status cannot guarantee. They are both ambitious characters, a trait which has not altered itself in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. In fact, "their spending had always exceeded their income" (James, 2012: 196) and the couple needs a way to support their extravagant lifestyle. The family, particularly Lydia's sisters, play an important role on this matter. Lydia does not marry out of love or convenience; she is fascinated by Wickham and she appreciates the world he belongs to, which represents adventure and the break from boredom she encountered daily. Lydia's iconic recklessness originates from her need to escape her provincial boring life.

Finally, as to the sexuality: if its physical manifestations are not directly represented, its social implications surely are. (...) In the figure of Wickham we see male attractiveness ruthlessly employed as a commodity for self-advancement, working its deadly effect upon those least able to resist, the mindless Lydia and the uncertain Miss Darcy. (Rubinstein, 1969: 7)

Lydia is described as mindless due to her unwillingness to resist her physical attraction towards Wickham. The villain is aware of his attributes and employs them in order to achieve his goals, using both Georgiana and Lydia. In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, he uses Louisa Bidwell for his own amusement, in an aggravated parallel to his behaviour towards the women of *Pride and Prejudice*. Rubinstein mentions that the women in Austen have no capable parents to guide them during the period of courtship (Rubinstein, 1969: 9). Whereas that might be true to Elizabeth, Lydia and Georgiana, that is not what happens in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Louisa Bidwell is engaged and relies on her family to overcome the consequences of Wickham's actions. Thus, this passage functions as an important description of Wickham's character.

Georgiana is described by Rubinstein as "the uncertain Miss Darcy" (Rubinstein, 1969: 7). James is not indifferent to the element of uncertainty in the character, placing her at the centre of a love triangle. She is the one to have escaped Lydia's fate. In *Pride and Prejudice*, her mistake is prevented by her brother. This time, however, she must make a decision on her own.

As it was previously observed, Elizabeth is in charge of the private sphere, the domestic sphere, which suddenly is not about the last minute details for Lady Anne's Ball; it can be resumed into being a soothing presence for both Lydia and Georgiana. Elizabeth may pose as her sister-in-law's mentor, but she is always careful not to overstep her boundaries. Elizabeth is well aware of the dangers to a relationship posed by outsiders, and is therefore determined not to be involved, as can be observed by the example "Elizabeth drew back from the window, anxious that they should not feel that they were being spied upon" (James, 2012: 25). Having once refused a safe marriage to Mr Collins, she understands the importance of Georgiana finding her own match. Rubinstein makes use of Charlotte Lucas to illustrate the role of attractiveness in the choice of a partner. Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins is a practical decision, and the couple is simply mentioned in *Death Comes to Pemberley*.

Austen is often accused of the limitations of her novels, due to the refusal to digress on certain topics. The previous quote defends that topics not explicit in Austen must not be assumed missing. In addition, Rubinstein underlines that there is more to *Pride and Prejudice* than what it explicitly explores, stating that if "a work as intricate and various as *Pride and Prejudice* can be said to be "about" any one subject would not be sexuality but rather its social expression, courtship" (Rubinstein, 1969: 7).

The relationship between Lydia and Wickham is one of the key plots in *Pride and Prejudice*. As a couple, Wickham and Lydia have been quoted as the perfect example of a mismatch, imitating Mr and Mrs Bennet. James agrees with this, classifying the elopement as the most distressing incident in the book, "since it is based on no more than animal high spirits on her part and sexual attraction, is unlikely to be lastingly happy. (James, 2012: 327). This is the starting point for the author of *Death Comes to Pemberley* to portray Lydia and Wickham's marriage, which is shown in complete opposition to Elizabeth and Darcy's. The fact that "the visits of Wickham and Lydia [to Longbourn] were hardly an advertisement for matrimony" (James, 2012: 13) is a detail that should not be overlooked. This line in the prologue is revealing and straightforward. In fact, the prologue is explicit about their relationship and marriage, as those descriptions are crucial to characterize Wickham as a villain. Readers do not witness the couple's relationship, as the characters are apart, but they are told that it is hectic, filled with "quarrels, recriminations and peevish complains" (James, 2012: 13). The purpose is to show their social relationship towards the Bennet family, contributing to the outlining of their social disgrace.

George Wickham, of course, could never be accepted in Meryton again to rob the female servants of their virtue and the shopkeepers of their profit, but it was agreed that, should his wife come among them, Mrs Wickham should be afforded the tolerant forbearance previously accorded to Miss Lydia Bennet. (James, 2012: 3)

This detail in the Prologue foreshadows an important detail about the reasons for a murder at Pemberley. The affair between Louisa Bidwell and Wickham should be seen as a predictable occurrence, as it is common knowledge that the villain maintains such behaviour. Socially, the Wickhams are simply tolerated. Whereas Lydia will be received alone by acquaintances and family, Wickham's presence is recurrently denied. Despite his charm, he is continuously in trouble, as it is possible to observe through Darcy's eyes in the fourth chapter of Book Four. Wickham's constant lack of money is a problem often mentioned throughout the book. Darcy's thoughts turn to the kind of lifestyle maintained by the couple, supported by loans and gifts offered by Lydia's sisters. Thus, James focuses on the young couple's dysfunctional relationship as seen by others, namely Elizabeth and Darcy. In fact, Lydia and Wickham do not share many interactions, as they are apart throughout most of the book. Lydia Wickham seems to be no more than a grownup Lydia Bennet. Notwithstanding, one must not forget that "the marriage of Lydia, the youngest, aged only sixteen, was not propitious." (James, 2012: 2). James highlights Lydia's young age, which does not function as an excuse for her behaviour, but reminds the readers she is still the same restless Bennet. It would also appear important to add that while Elizabeth is known as Mr Bennet's favourite daughter, Lydia is Mrs Bennet's favourite child, facts mentioned by James to underline the differences between the two sisters. Lydia does not exhibit regret towards her actions. Nonetheless, it would seem important to mention the topic of regret in *Death Comes to Pemberley*, as the word is chosen by James as the last word of the last Book.

Wickham, whatever his faults, was a clever, handsome and engaging man, and Elizabeth wondered whether, during their time together, Louisa, a girl whom the Reverend Percival Oliphant considered highly intelligent, had been given a glimpse of a different and more exciting life, but undoubtedly the best had been done for her child and probably also for her. Her future

would lie as a parlourmaid at Highmarten, wife of the butler, and in time Wickham would be no more than a fading memory. It seemed irrational to Elizabeth, and rather strange, that she should feel a twinge of regret. (James, 2012: 312)

Rubinstein claims that only women least able to resist a man's charm would succumb to Wickham. However, James appears not to be in accordance. This quote shows Elizabeth's understanding of Louisa's attraction towards the villain. In a society ruled by strict social conventions, equally enforced by gossip and the Church, the end of Book Six appears dissonant. The previous quote underlines that Louisa is considered an intelligent woman by the Reverend, the person who represents the power of the Church in the county. It has been previously stated that James portrays the period with care, remaining faithful to Austen's portrayal while adding outside intertextual elements, such as the mentions of war and political tension. The author also does not distance herself from the importance of religion. Throughout the book, she does not deny the importance of the Church in the community and she is not indifferent to Austen's social criticism. Elizabeth, however, appears to find it natural and believes the situation was resolved in the best way. This type of approach seems to arise from a 21st century perspective on romantic relationships where the focus is primarily the search for love.

This chapter has approached the women in Pemberley at the time of the investigation. Jane remains the same delightful creature, Elizabeth seems to have matured and Lydia is as reckless as ever, spending money she does not have to live an exciting life above her income.

The period of courtship was, for the English girl, a moment of unique adventure, the one time in her life when her destiny lay not in her family's hands, or in her husband's, but to significant degree on her own. (Rubinstein, 1969:8)

That is to say that, according to Rubinstein, there will be right choices and wrong choices. At the end of *Death Comes to Pemberley*, everyone is happy and satisfied. Georgiana may start to picture her life with Alveston whereas Lydia must follow her husband into exile

as he is once more forced out of Pemberley. Peace is reinstated the moment the investigation comes to an end and a solution is found to prevent Wickham from causing more trouble.

The abundance in happy endings is a characteristic typically associated with romance novels. According to the crime fiction tradition, the resolution of a crime reinstates order. In *Death Comes to Pemberley*, order is reinstated, but the author goes farther. The end of the investigation also assures happy endings for the characters, adjusted to their own needs. Elizabeth and Darcy return to their familial bliss, enounced in the Epilogue, where the readers see them together, acting as a team. Darcy admits he has been able to forgive Wickham, a feeling that gives him peace of mind. Elizabeth defends the openness in communication, a parallel to the way James approaches the period of the book. The couple discusses the past and the future, once again connecting the two books. Elizabeth suggests that Darcy starts an honest discussion with his sister about her past connection with Wickham, so that she may feel certain to have been forgiven. It would appear that James wishes to bring closure to every character of the novel, and healing Darcy's relationship with Georgiana is part of the process of coming to an end.

Death serves a purpose. Captain Denny was on his way to warn Louisa Bidwell of Wickham's villainous character when he was murdered by her brother, in a simple case of a mistaken identity. Bidwell killed the one person who would have been able to assist his sister. However, his crime also allowed for Wickham to be kept in jail and exposed as villain to his acquaintances, who could then find a permanent solution to his social behaviour. Exiling Wickham shall not affect the way he acts, but it contributes to a better social environment in England. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, he can no longer cause shame and embarrassment to the family. Throughout the book, James mentions how Wickham is socially treated, as Lydia is still accepted at Meryton and Highmarten, but he is not received; and as formerly shown, the couple is not welcome at Pemberley. These facts are commonly known by their acquaintances, which cannot, and will not, ignore the gossip. That can be closely analysed in the long opening paragraph of Book Four, which has been divided here in order to be analysed in depth.

It was taken for granted by both the family and the parish that Mr and Mrs Darcy and their household would be seen in the village church of St Mary at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. The news of Captain Denny's

murder had spread with extraordinary rapidity and for the family not to appear would have been an admission either of involvement in the crime or of their conviction of Mr Wickham's certain guilt. (James, 2012: 153)

Darcy and Elizabeth are expected at the funeral and their potential absence would have simply one of two meanings, none of which favourable to their social standing in the community to which they belong. Wickham's predicament has a direct impact on how Pemberley and the Darcys are perceived. Due to this, Wickham's exile is a part of Darcy's happy ending; Wickham is cleared, so it is proven that Darcy is not related to a murderer. However, the exile to the New World is a permanent solution that prevents further embarrassment and allows Darcy to regain control of the social perceptions about his family. The use of the expression "Mr Wickham's certain guilt" (James, 2012: 153) is crucial, as the narratorial voice presents the opinion of the community: Wickham must certainly be the culprit for lack of any other suspects. This assures the readers that Wickham is the only logical suspect and must therefore be the killer.

It is generally accepted that divine service affords a legitimate opportunity for the congregation to assess not only the appearance, deportment, elegance and possible wealth of new arrivals to the parish, but the demeanour of any of any of their neighbours known to be in an interesting situation, ranging from pregnancy to bankruptcy. A brutal murder on one's own property by a brother by marriage with whom one is known to be at enmity will inevitably produce a large congregation, including some well-known invalids whose prolonged indisposition had prohibited them from the rigors of church attendance for many years. (James, 2012: 153)

This excerpt exhibits the combination of functions of a funeral. James makes use of irony in order to highlight the social politics of the county. Captain Denny was not a known figure of that community, but he was the victim of a ghastly murder in estate of one of their Constables. As horrible as the murder might have been, it immediately creates a turmoil of excitement and curiosity. In a similar way to Pemberley, the village church of St Mary works as yet another example of this community. It is the symbol of religion and yet, serves

primarily as a gathering centre, rather a place of spiritual devotion. It is, therefore, a social place and the Darcys understand the implications of their wealth and power within that branch of society. Pemberley, on the other way, belongs to the private sphere of the main characters and becomes a refuge in hard times, particularly for its owners, as can be observed in the following example: “It was with a surge of relief and a sense that he himself had escaped from durance that Darcy turned his horses towards Pemberley.” (James, 2012: 197). Despite the crime, Darcy and Elizabeth do not fear for themselves or their household. They are clearly distressed and worried about the circumstances in which they encounter themselves, but do not find themselves suspecting anyone within the estate. It should be noted that Bidwell writes his confession at Pemberley, the place he has known all his life, in his deathbed while the Darcy family is away in London for the trial and sentencing.

No one is interested in mourning Captain Denny and his death is hardly a cause for distress. The general feeling appears to be that of uncertainty and distrust towards outsiders. Notwithstanding, Darcy claims that Captain Denny’s death has made him realize his own flaws, claiming that his sister has often been hurt due to his negligence. The epilogue allows the readers to picture life at Pemberley after the ordeal, as Darcy assures “there will be no more silence” (James, 2012: 324) between him and his sister. That is to say that Wickham’s role in the crime has helped Darcy overcome the frustrations the character felt prior to the events narrated in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. This assumption made by James is deeply rooted in Austen’s characterization of the main characters, one as pride and the other as prejudice. Therefore, James forces Darcy to overcome his pride once again over an unresolved situation with Georgiana that involves her short-lived relationship to Wickham. Elizabeth stands by his side and encourages him, furthering assuring their strong connection. Darcy is not a hero of a crime fiction story, and he is not the romantic hero either. He is a tridimensional character flagged by internal dilemmas who decides to put his worries to rest in the epilogue.

Darcy is finally free of Wickham, and so is Elizabeth. They no longer have to intervene in the villain’s affairs. Georgiana, on the other hand, finds love and with it, she is granted the prospect of a happily lasting marriage. Bidwell corrects his wrongdoing and succumbs to illness. As it was previously discussed, the murderer is not punished, as he was already slowly dying at the beginning of the novel. Nonetheless, he finds peace, for he has time to profess his confession moments before his death.

It seemed probable that Wickham had at last found a job he could keep; whether he was able to keep his wife was a question from which the Darcys were grateful to be separated by three thousand miles of ocean. (James, 2012: 314)

It is important to study Wickham and Lydia's own happy ending. One may argue that the couple is exiled, which may not be considered a happy ending. The change of continents is approached by the secondary characters as a welcome chance for a new life, in the New World. Most characters are quite relieved to see Wickham abandon English society for good, so his happy ending is, in fact, more precious to those surrounding him. Lydia's future appears slightly more uncertain. She is Wickham's wife and must therefore follow the same fate as her husband's. James deliberately questions the durability of the marriage, in accordance to her belief that such a union would be both short and disastrous. However, the reason for Lydia's elopement with Wickham must not be forgotten. She was bored, and she was promised a new life filled with excitement. That is to say that a change of countries could in theory spark the girl's enthusiasm. Either way, the Darcys no longer must feel responsible for her and her lavish lifestyle. Therefore, Wickham and Lydia's future provides the Darcy family with a new opportunity. They shall not be further embarrassed by the chaotic couple. James' ending is both adequate and pleasant for all characters involved from the Darcys' point of view.

Conclusion

P. D. James is both a reader and a writer. *Death Comes to Pemberley* appears to be a writing exercise that combines the author's love for Austen's universe and the excitement for the unraveling of a good mystery.

Death Comes to Pemberley becomes a crime novel set in a famous fictional household populated with beloved characters. Unlike many other adaptations from Austen's works, James chose not to alter the original story. Instead, the author builds from it, appropriating herself of the characters created by Austen and motivated by the question: What if? What if Elizabeth and Darcy became the unwilling investigators of a gruesome murder in their idyllic estate? The question appears to be the starting point of the novel, which then combines Austen's world and James' structure. In fact, neither investigates the crime.

The book is a crime novel, a strongly organized genre that follows a few conventions since its establishment. James selects the aspects of crime and detective fiction that she aims to use. As it was possible to observe throughout the first chapter of the dissertation, Darcy cannot be considered as a detective figure. His value as a protagonist arises from the internal dilemma regarding his feelings towards Wickham. Therefore, one may conclude that James' novel could not be considered detective fiction, as it lacks the core element of the subgenre, the detective. Darcy and Elizabeth do not investigate the crime. Their connection to the murder, however, is widely explored by the author.

The first chapter of the dissertation illustrates which conventions of crime fiction James follows and dismisses. It would seem obvious to conclude that the book is both well thought and well executed, often playing with the traditions of two genres – romance and crime fiction. The author is familiar with the crime and creates her own rules within her genre. However, James applies the same mechanisms previously used by Austen in the creation and narration of a romance. In order to do so, James interprets Austen's works and creates her own Pemberley and her own adaptations of the characters. Therefore, *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a reinterpretation of the source material mixed with an original plot. In addition, the book presents many elements of homage to Austen's style. James also exhibits a great understanding of the social constructions of Austen's period, as well as the techniques used by Austen to portray that time.

The initial hostility, gradual reconciliation, and final union of Elizabeth and Darcy represent the social history of Jane Austen's England writ small, for the challenge laid to the aristocracy by a newly effectual middle class, and the inevitable assimilation of the former by the latter, are among the crucial facts of European social history from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. (...) Jane Austen's manner of communicating the larger pressures that determine and modify the behavior of her characters is purely novelistic and dramatic; the small world she creates is precisely that – a world, albeit small. (Rubinstein, 1969: 7)

According to Rubinstein, Austen's love story is a framework for a depiction of 18th century English society. The concept of a small world is precisely the same construct used by James in her novel. Austen's small world represents the society of her time focusing on the human aspect of marital contracts, which will serve as an example of that complex mechanism. That society is depicted in *Death Comes to Pemberley* through a different plot. James extracts that society from the characters' ordinary lives and adds an element of danger to the narrative, placing the beloved character in the midst of a crisis.

The author argues that the setting is a key element in a crime fiction story. In fact, Pemberley has a remarkable importance in the novel, which dwells not only on the investigation of the murder but also on the impact of the tragedy on the community, that is shaken by the terrible event. This dissertation has analysed the importance of the estate as a structural element of crime fiction. James introduces her readers to Austen's reality, highlighting the fact that "the orderly world of Pemberley seems unassailable" (James, 2012: back cover). Pemberley appears unassailable, but Lydia Wickham's arrival exposes a threat to the Darceys' peaceful existence. This becomes the premise of the story.

The significance of Pemberley cannot go unnoticed, as it serves various purposes throughout the book. The element of order is associated with the large estate: Pemberley is peaceful, James' characters assure. Nonetheless, an old tragedy is mentioned in the beginning of the book, conveying the atmosphere for a crime. Blood has been previously shed in the woodland, where Captain Denny's murder occurs. This careful selection of the setting allows for an exploration of the dynamic underneath, as Pemberley is depicted as more than a house. It becomes the perfect setting for a period crime story, sustained by the superstitions of the community. The woodland is the part of Pemberley that challenges the people's rationality,

and the Bidwells live in the area precisely because they are immune to those rumors. The occurrence of the murder does not increase their fear, as Bidwell himself is responsible for it. One should equally remember that Wickham is well acquainted with the property, as he grew up there and, therefore, he would have been aware of the superstitions regarding the woodland.

Readers are given the opportunity to see ordinary day to day life in Pemberley. Elizabeth and Darcy's love story lives outside those walls and it is narrated in *Pride and Prejudice*. Pemberley is the embodiment of their happily ever after, representing the unity of family. Pemberley's fate depends on Darcy's conduct, as we can see from this quote by Mrs Reynolds:

It was a happy day for us all, madam, when Mr Darcy brought home his bride. It was the dearest wish of my mistress that she would live to see her son married. Alas, it was not to be. I knew how anxious she was, both for his own sake and for Pemberley, that he should be happily settled. (James, 2012: 23)

James places focus on Darcy's emotional dilemma throughout the investigation of the crime, using internal focalization to fully express his doubts regarding Wickham. It would seem plausible to observe the plot as trigger for the character's development. James' Darcy is humanized; he feels defeated and wishes to return to the refuge of his home when in the city. This element of character development is deeply intensified in the Epilogue, as he takes responsibility for his past mistakes and realizes he will not always be in control of every situation, recalling the incidents with Wickham and Georgiana. He is the master of Pemberley and appears decided to lead by example.

The villain, on the other hand, remains unchanged. As readers, we first assume that death comes to Pemberley because Wickham violates the rules of conduct and finds himself on the way to the estate, bringing death with him. We are lead to believe death comes through the hands of the villain. However, the murderer, Bidwell, lives at Pemberley. Death comes to Pemberley with Wickham, not because he is the killer, but because he is supposed to be the victim. Nonetheless, Wickham is never innocent; he is simply innocent of murdering Captain

Denny. James plays with society's perceptions of Wickham, but not with his morals. Austen's Wickham was not a murderer and neither is James'.

The characters' processes are not linear. Despite that, there seems to be a clear division between the protagonists, who reveal better qualities and a sense of maturity and consciousness, and the antagonists, who remain selfish and inconsiderate.

The structure is an essential element in *Death Comes to Pemberley*. The book has a prologue and an epilogue. It also consists of six books, whose titles announce the main theme or the setting of each chapter. Every element is the result of a conscious choice that appears to be entwined. The Prologue functions as a bridge between the two books and the Epilogue consists of a conversation between Darcy and Elizabeth. This exchange refers back to the beginning, to events and feelings that come from *Pride and Prejudice* and are addressed in the Prologue. However, in the Epilogue, the couple discusses everything openly.

Austen's novel portrays the concerns of the society of her time. James uses the same construct in order to address the concerns of her 21st century readers. The author expands the world depicted by Austen and recreates it, offering context to her readers. Thus, she continues Austen's work regarding the portrayal of society. In order to do, she uses murder instead of marriage.

She thought, Here we sit at the beginning of a new century, citizens of the most civilised country in Europe, surrounded by the splendour of its craftsmanship, its art and the books which enshrine its literature, while outside there is another world which wealth and education and privilege can keep from us, a world in which men are as violent and destructive as is the animal world. Perhaps even the most fortunate of us will not be able to ignore it and keep it at bay forever. (James, 2012: 55)

This quote summarizes James' approach to the context of the action and the perspective of the characters towards their surroundings. Austen chooses not to dwell on misery, whereas James reclaims that familiar element. The writer expands Austen's world by providing it with historical context. James' Elizabeth is aware of the current state of the world, highlighting the intelligence that has always characterized Austen's Elizabeth.

James writes *Death Comes to Pemberley* as homage to beloved characters who have been brought to life again and again. This dissertation has analysed simply a fraction of the contents of *Death Comes to Pemberley*. Other questions may still be approached when analysing *Death Comes to Pemberley*, such as the use of irony or the importance of the narratorial voice.

The main purpose of the current dissertation approached is to study the construction of *Death Comes to Pemberley* as a crime novel and the adaptation and appropriation of characters. This emphasises James' contributions to the characters development and growth. To that end, the structure of *Death Comes to Pemberley* was particularly significant, as well as the use of the double perspective.

Death Comes to Pemberley is a crime novel that allows for an interesting study on the adaptation of a popular romantic novel.

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