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A Room of Everyone’s Own: Sharing Space in *Pride and Prejudice*

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Early in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet assures Wickham that she is not favorably disposed towards Mr. Darcy: “‘I have spent four days in the same house with him, and I think him very disagreeable’” (77). In the UK, similar sentiments were widely shared during the lockdown caused by the coronavirus outbreak in the early part of 2020. Over Easter weekend, when the public had been under house arrest for three weeks and were being exhorted by a massive publicity campaign to “stay at home over Easter,” a number of newspapers and magazines animadverted on the pressures on domestic space caused by whole families spending all their time together in their houses (focusing on the lucky ones who *had* houses). On Easter Sunday itself, *The Sunday Times*’s “Home” section featured a double-page spread entitled “Get into the Zone,” with the description “Open-plan homes are driving families mad. Hugh Graham explains how to break up a room.” Coincidentally, Easter Saturday’s *Times* had contained a glancing reference to domestic space in Austen. A side column in the TV and radio listings headed “Radio Choice: Snakes & Ladders” introduced the show’s characters: “Here’s Simon, who began as a fireman with a mail-order business on the side. Now, as a financial adviser to squillionaires, he has a Jane Austen-style mansion, a housekeeper and an SUV with two tellys in the back.” A Jane Austen-style mansion: what’s one of those then? Perhaps there was a clue in April’s issue of *Country Homes and Interiors* (which I confess to having purchased in shameful defiance of the government’s injunction to buy essential items only), which had a nine-page spread called “Beauty and Utility,” offering a variety of designs for boot rooms. Boot rooms! Who even knew that was a thing, and what a perfect emblem of having more space than you actually need. The boot room feature will have been compiled before anyone had heard of Covid-19, but it spoke loudly to the moment in which it appeared.

Jane Austen (who did not live in “a Jane Austen-style mansion,” though she sometimes stayed in one) was acutely aware of the difficulties of whole families living together in houses, and in this essay I shall suggest that in *Pride and Prejudice* in particular, the number of rooms in a home, together with the ways in which they are used, is represented as a significant factor in personal happiness and family harmony. Elizabeth Bennet may be joking when she says that she dates her love for Darcy to her first sight of “‘his beautiful grounds at Pemberley’” (373), but it is certainly true that she has the opportunity to inspect Pemberley closely, and what she learns is not only that it has fine grounds and an impressive external façade but that it is a comfortable and convenient house. In the world of *Pride and Prejudice*, those qualities matter in themselves, and they also act as an index to the character of the person who owns Pemberley: there is a mutually shaping relationship between people and houses.

The question of the availability of domestic space is also raised repeatedly in the novel. The first time it is glanced at is when Mr. Bennet, having revealed that he has visited Mr. Bingley, “left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife” (8). Although it is not explicitly stated, it is obvious that one reason Mr. Bennet leaves the room is that he has somewhere else to go: his library. Although “a few days” later Mr. Bingley “sat about ten minutes with [Mr. Bennet] in his library” (9), the girls have to be content with seeing Mr. Bingley from an upper window. This moment is one of several in the novel when our attention is drawn to women looking out of windows: “As they drove to Mr. Gardiner’s door, Jane was at a drawing-room window watching their arrival” (152); “as they drew near the appointed inn where Mr. Bennet’s carriage was to meet them, they quickly perceived . . . both

Kitty and Lydia looking out of a dining room up stairs" (219); as Mrs. Bennet waits for Mr. Bingley to call until, "on the third morning after his arrival in Hertfordshire, she saw him from her dressing-room window, enter the paddock, and ride towards the house" (333). We also hear of "Mrs. Philips' throwing up the parlour window" (73) to invite the officers inside. Women suffer a double privation: being excluded from the library and being prevented on grounds of propriety from visibly waiting for visitors in the street or even in the garden. They thus have reduced access to space both outdoors and indoors. This confinement too chimes with the experience of living in lockdown, when many women have felt as though they have been forced back into the nineteen fifties (Jacobs and Noonan); if we are confined to houses, it seems that women are still assumed to be inherently the more domesticated sex.

The constraints of domestic space certainly press heavily on the female characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, but men may feel them too. When Elizabeth first meets Darcy, the phrases "the room" and "in the room" run throughout the description of the encounter and through various characters' subsequent reflections on it, occurring twelve times in four pages in ways that cumulatively build up a sense of claustrophobia. Although there is a disquieting rumor that Mr. Bingley will be accompanied by five sisters, "when the party entered the assembly room, it consisted of only five altogether" (58); "Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room" (58); "Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room" (58); "Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room" (59).[1] As soon as the Bingley party enters the room they are on display; thereafter they are like actors on a stage, a situation that pleases Mr. Bingley but horrifies Darcy, whose constant walking about the room suggests an animal trapped in a cage. The same phenomenon occurs when the Netherfield ball is described. Again Darcy is a sufferer when Mr. Collins, very excited to learn "'that there is now in the room a near relation of my patroness'" (96), accosts him and speaks "so loud as to be heard by half the room" (101).[2] The recurrent use of the word hammers home the idea that these people must live their lives within preordained surroundings. It is this sense of confinement within a particular environment that Charlotte Brontë objected to in *Pride and Prejudice,* but for Austen's admirers it is one of her strengths that she makes us so aware of the restraints that circumscribe her characters' lives. She uses rooms as metaphors to do this.

Although men may suffer in ballrooms, domestic surroundings weigh particularly heavily on women in one respect: because houses are an index of status, for girls they affect their position in the marriage mart. When Mr. Collins pays his first visit to Longbourn, he responds to the house as if it were an extension of its inhabitants: "the girls smiled on each other. They were not the only objects of Mr. Collins's admiration. The hall, the dining-room, and all its furniture were examined and praised" (65). When the girls then take him to visit their aunt, there is a slight but revealing *contretemps* in Mrs. Philips's drawing-room:

> Mr. Collins was at leisure to look around him and admire, and he was so much struck with the size and furniture of the apartment, that he declared he might almost have supposed himself in the smaller summer breakfast parlour at Rosings; a comparison that did not at first convey much gratification; but when Mrs. Philips understood from him what Rosings was, and who was its proprietor, when she had listened to the description of only one of Lady Catherine's drawing-rooms, and found that the chimney-piece alone had cost eight hundred pounds, she felt all the force of the compliment, and would hardly have resented a comparison with the housekeeper's room. (75)

Mrs. Philips is gratified, but she has also been metaphorically as well as literally put in her place: the fact that her best room is the equivalent of one of Lady Catherine's small and less significant rooms neatly nails her to a much lower rung on the social scale.

As well as showing how houses frame (and potentially market) women, Austen also draws her readers' attention to how women's experience of houses may differ from men's. Mr. Bingley "was tempted by an accidental recommendation to look at Netherfield House. He did look at it and into it for half an hour, was pleased with the situation and the principal rooms, satisfied with what the owner said in its praise, and took it immediately" (16). Bingley concerns himself only with the principal rooms because it will be those he will be using; Mrs. Bennet, by contrast, though foolish, understands that houses need to be fit for a variety of purposes. Imagining Lydia and Wickham's residence in the neighborhood, she says, "'Haye-Park might do . . . if the Gouldings would quit it, or the great house at Stoke, if the drawing-room were larger; but Ashworth is too far off! I could not bear to have her ten miles from me; and as for Purvis Lodge, the attics are dreadful'" (310). The point was neatly made in the 1995 BBC adaptation written by Andrew Davies and directed by Simon Langton, where, in the opening episode, the title sequence showing needlework was immediately followed by horses' hooves, and we then saw Mr. Bingley surveying Netherfield from the outside and deciding to take it. Women's lives are figured as concentrated on the tiny detail of stitches; men's, as characterized by the freedom to ride, to move, and to look. Mr. Bingley views a house and decides to acquire it; women must live in houses and concern themselves with household things.

Another aspect of men's and women's different experiences of houses is their different relationship to the drawing-room, to which the women must repair after dinner while the men remain in the dining-room to drink port. The interval that passes before the men join the women can often be a difficult one: at Rosings "[w]hen the ladies returned to the drawing room, there was little to be done but to hear Lady Catherine talk" (163); when Colonel Fitzwilliam arrives, "Elizabeth had never been half so well entertained in that room before" (172). There can also be tedium on other occasions when there are only women in the room. When the Bennet sisters take Mr. Collins to visit their aunt, they are glad that the officers are to come in but find the wait for them tedious: "To the girls, who could not listen to their cousin, and who had nothing to do but wish for an instrument, and examine their own indifferent imitations of china on the mantelpiece, the interval of waiting appeared very long" (75–76). This wearisomely familiar space needs men to enliven it.

Elizabeth finds female company in the domestic setting oppressive at other times too. After Darcy's first proposal, "She continued in very agitating reflections till the sound of Lady Catherine's carriage made her feel how unequal she was to encounter Charlotte's observation, and hurried her away to her room" (194); Charlotte is her friend, but nevertheless Elizabeth flees from her, because Charlotte might notice her mood in a way that Mr. Collins never would. Even back at Longbourn, Elizabeth is still burdened by the presence of other women: when Lydia and Wickham visit, "to avoid a family circle was even more desirable to such as did think, than such as did not" (318); when Darcy and Bingley return to Netherfield and dine with the Bennets, "the period which passed in the drawing-room, before the gentlemen came, was wearisome and dull to a degree, that almost made her uncivil" (341). In the room the women come, but they cannot go, and they do not talk of Michelangelo.

Even for men, though, houses can be claustrophobic. Mr. Bingley declares, "'I do not know a more aweful object than Darcy, on particular occasions, and in particular places; at his own house especially, and of a Sunday evening when he has nothing to do" (50–51). At Rosings, "[w]ithin doors there was Lady Catherine, books, and a billiard table, but gentlemen cannot be always within doors" (180). When Mr. Darcy makes his first proposal, he is obviously constrained by his surroundings in Hunsford parsonage: “to her utter amazement, she saw Mr. Darcy walk into the room. In an hurried manner he immediately began an enquiry after her health. . . . She answered him with cold civility. He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up walked about the room” (188–89). Four chapters later this scene is parodied as Mr. Collins speaks of Lady Catherine’s attentions to him: “Words were insufficient for the elevation of his feelings; and he was obliged to walk about the room” (216). Mr. Collins’s feelings and Mr. Darcy’s are certainly very different, but both manifest themselves in an impatience with domestic space. Most strikingly, Mr. Bennet under stress finds that even his beloved library is not congenial and is driven outdoors. When Jane and Elizabeth hear that a letter has come from Mr. Gardiner, they

> ran through the vestibule into the breakfast room; from thence to the library;—their father was in neither; and they were on the point of seeking him up stairs with their mother, when they were met by the butler, who said,
>
> “If you are looking for my master, ma’am, he is walking towards the little copse.” (301)

Under the pressure of strong emotion, the walls of the house press down.

It is therefore not surprising that confinement to the house is more bearable if there is a choice of rooms to go to. One important question is whether a room has a fire. When Mr. Bingley joins the ladies in the drawing room while Jane is ill at Netherfield, he shows particular sensitivity in this respect: “The first half hour was spent in piling up the fire, lest she should suffer from the change of room” (54). Mr. Bingley’s solicitude in this respect is of course a mark of his feeling for Jane, but it also draws attention to a practical consideration: as Fanny Price is well aware, it is unpleasant to sit in a cold room, so the ability to afford fires in multiple rooms makes a significant contribution to the comfort of the inhabitants. There is also a clear divide between houses in which rooms have to fulfill multiple purposes and houses that are so large that there can be dedicated or occasional rooms. That Netherfield has a room large enough to allow dancing and that it has separate rooms for separate meals add to Mr. Bingley's consequence and eligibility. When Elizabeth arrives to visit the sick Jane, she "was shewn into the breakfast-parlour, where all but Jane were assembled" (32); the use of this room is emphasized later when Mr. Bingley remarks, "'I thought Miss Elizabeth Bennet looked remarkably well, when she came into the room this morning'" (36). Later other rooms are used: Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst "repaired to [Jane's] room on leaving the dining-parlour, and sat with her till summoned to coffee"; Elizabeth stays with Jane until later and then comes down into the drawing-room, where "she found the whole party at loo" (37). Again the point is nicely made in the 1995 adaptation: Elizabeth, descending from Jane's room, looks about to see where she should go; a servant tells her, but she still gets the wrong door, inadvertently disturbing Mr. Darcy at billiards. This is a house in which there is a choice of which room to enter.

One reason that different rooms are needed for breakfast and dinner is the direction of the light. When Lady Catherine de Bourgh visits Longbourn, she remarks, "'This must be a most inconvenient sitting room for the evening, in summer; the windows are full west.'" Mrs. Bennet understands at least part of her meaning and "assured her that they never sat there after dinner" (352). Lady Catherine does concede that the rest of the house is acceptable: "As they passed through the hall, Lady Catherine opened the doors into the dining-parlour and drawing-room, and pronouncing them, after a short survey, to be decent looking rooms, walked on" (352–53). Unlike the rooms at Netherfield, however, those at Longbourn must serve multiple purposes. The so-called breakfast-room is, in fact, a kind of family living-room. As Mr. Bennet goes to his library to answer Mr. Gardiner's letter about the arrangements for Lydia's marriage to Wickham, "the girls walk[ ] into the breakfast-room" (304); later, when Lydia and Wickham arrive, "[t]he family were assembled in the breakfast room, to receive them" (315), where Lydia "looked eagerly round the room, took notice of some little alteration in it, and observed, with a laugh, that it was a great while since she had been there" (315). The breakfast-room is a space dear and familiar to Lydia, and she is clearly not surprised to find it being used as a reception room rather than simply to eat breakfast in.

It is a sign of the Bennets' less affluent circumstances that their rooms need to be used for multiple purposes, but there is an exception: the library. Miss Bingley is hypocritical in declaring, "'When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library'" (55), as attested by the fact that almost immediately she "yawned again, threw aside her book, and cast her eyes round the room in search of some amusement" (55). For Mr. Bennet, however, the library is the center of his existence, and it is a source of discomfort that Mr. Collins, as a man and a guest, is licensed to follow him there: "By tea-time . . . the dose had been enough, and Mr. Bennet was glad to take his guest into the drawing-room again, and when tea was over, glad to invite him to read aloud to the ladies" (68). Subsequently Mr. Bennet is keen to pack Mr. Collins off outside as soon as he can:

> Lydia's intention of walking to Meryton was not forgotten; every sister except Mary agreed to go with her; and Mr. Collins was to attend them, at the request of Mr. Bennet, who was most anxious to get rid of him, and have his library to himself; for thither Mr. Collins had followed him after breakfast, and there he would continue, nominally engaged with one of the largest folios in the collection, but really talking to Mr. Bennet, with little cessation, of his house and garden at Hunsford. Such doings discomposed Mr. Bennet exceedingly. In his library he had been always sure of leisure and tranquillity; and though prepared, as he told Elizabeth, to meet with folly and conceit in every other room in the house, he was used to be free from them there. (71)

He makes the same point after Mr. Collins's proposal to Elizabeth, when Mrs. Bennet, "hurrying instantly to her husband, called out as she entered the library" (111), and he responds, "'I have two small favours to request. First, that you will allow me the free use of my understanding on the present occasion; and secondly, of my room. I shall be glad to have the library to myself as soon as may be'" (112). In effect Mr. Bennet identifies himself with the library; when Mrs. Bennet takes to her room after the news of Lydia's elopement, requiring everyone else to visit her there, Mr. Bennet mockingly threatens to imitate her: "'Another day I will do the same; I will sit in my library, in my night cap and powdering gown, and give as much trouble as I can'" (299–300). In the 1995 adaptation, Mr. Bennet returning home after failing to find Lydia, says, "'Not now, Jane. Not now, Lizzy,'" and then goes into the library and closes the door. He is the only person in the house who could guarantee solitude in this way; for the others, there is no room to which they could go and be sure of peace.

A particular desideratum in a house with five marriageable daughters would be a room in which proposals could be made. In the absence of such a space, the situation is always problematic. When Mrs. Bennet realizes that Mr. Collins is going to propose to Elizabeth, she says, "Come, Kitty, I want you up stairs'" (104). She wants to leave them alone, but she also wants to keep an eye on progress: "Mrs. Bennet, having dawdled about in the vestibule to watch for the end of the conference, no sooner saw Elizabeth open the door and with quick step pass her towards the staircase, than she entered the breakfast-room, and congratulated both him and herself in warm terms on the happy prospect of their nearer connection" (110). Since Elizabeth has rejected the proposal, the room becomes tainted by association: Mrs. Bennet explains to Mrs. Gardiner that Mr. Collins "'made her an offer in this very room, and she refused him'" (140).

When Bingley wishes to propose to Jane, the same problem obtains. Mrs. Bennet again leaves the room: "'We may as well leave them by themselves you know;' said her mother as soon as she was in the hall. 'Kitty and I are going up stairs to sit in my dressing room'" (345). Elizabeth apparently feels this shift is rather obvious and returns to the drawing room. The next day, however, her mother's schemes are again at work when Elizabeth leaves the drawing room:

> Elizabeth, who had a letter to write, went into the breakfast room for that purpose soon after tea; for as the others were all going to sit down to cards, she could not be wanted to counteract her mother's schemes.
>
> But on returning to the drawing room, when her letter was finished, she saw, to her infinite surprise, there was reason to fear that her mother had been too ingenious for her. On opening the door, she perceived her sister and Bingley standing together over the hearth, as if engaged in earnest conversation; and had this led to no suspicion, the faces of both as they hastily turned round, and moved away from each other, would have told it all. (346)

Elizabeth wants Bingley to propose to Jane, but not, it seems, to do it in the drawing room, because to leave him alone there with Jane both smacks of trapping him and entails the possibility of interruption. When she prompts Darcy to declare himself, she does it out of doors, because no room in the house offers a congenial and safe setting for such an event.

Another important aspect of rooms is the view (as E. M. Forster, often considered an heir of Jane Austen, was aware). When Mrs. Bennet visits Jane with Kitty and Lydia, "on Miss Bingley's appearance and invitation, the mother and three daughters all attended her into the breakfast parlour" (41), where Mrs. Bennet comments, "'You have a sweet room here, Mr. Bingley, and a charming prospect over that gravel walk'" (42). It is the question of view which makes the domestic arrangements at Hunsford remarkable: "The room in which the ladies sat was backwards. Elizabeth at first had rather wondered that Charlotte should not prefer the dining parlour for common use; it was a better sized room, and had a pleasanter aspect; but she soon saw that her friend had an excellent reason for what she did, for Mr. Collins would undoubtedly have been much less in his own apartment, had they sat in one equally lively" (168). Since Charlotte sells herself for a home, it is not surprising that the novel takes a particular interest in what that home is like, and the fact that she must sit in a less attractive room emblematizes the state of her marriage. (Perhaps too the fact that her literal view is impaired suggests something about the moral views that have brought her to Hunsford). Moreover, her new home is a house entirely configured and dominated by its relation to Rosings. For Mr. Collins it is presumably a perverse source of satisfaction that his house should be so inferior to its grand neighbor, since Rosings's superiority enables him to "instruc[t] them in what they might expect, that the sight of such rooms, so many servants, and so splendid a dinner might not wholly overpower them" (160). For Charlotte, however, the proximity to Rosings means that she risks being constantly on display: "Now and then, they were honoured with a call from her Ladyship, and nothing escaped her observation that was passing in the room during these visits" (169). There is nowhere to hide except a room that would normally be little used because it is small and at the back of the house.

Rosings itself is of course much bigger—even the entrance hall has "fine proportion and finished ornaments" (161)—and it does have spare rooms: Lady Catherine would be happy for Elizabeth to come and "'play on the piano forte in Mrs. Jenkinson's room'" because she "'would be in nobody's way, you know, in that part of the house'" (173). But Rosings too fails to be a comfortable home because there is nothing to do. Even the outside of the house is not reliably interesting—the view is "much better worth looking at in the summer" (162)—and inside there is only Lady Catherine. I have suggested elsewhere that Lady Catherine may be based on Bess of Hardwick and Rosings, with its extravagant glazing, on “Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall”; as visitors to Hardwick often remark, there is no library there, and there is no sign of one at Rosings either.

The compromised, deficient homes of Longbourn, Hunsford, and Rosings all prepare for, and contrast with, the ideal home of Pemberley. Pemberley, as Elizabeth recognizes, is in perfect dialogue with its surroundings. The housekeeper is “a respectable-looking, elderly woman, much less fine, and more civil, than [Elizabeth] had any notion of finding her.” The “dining-parlour . . . was a large, well-proportioned room, handsomely fitted up. Elizabeth, after slightly surveying it, went to a window to enjoy its prospect. The hill, crowned with wood, from which they had descended, was a beautiful object” (246). Unlike Hunsford, moreover, there is not just one room that enjoys the benefit of a view:

> As they passed into other rooms, these objects were taking different positions; but from every window there were beauties to be seen. The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings. (246)

When they call on Miss Darcy “they were shewn through the hall into the saloon, whose northern aspect rendered it delightful for summer. Its windows opening to the ground, admitted a most refreshing view of the high woody hills behind the house, and of the beautiful oaks and Spanish chestnuts which were scattered over the immediate lawn” (267).

Moreover, there are so many rooms that every member of the family can have one, even those who are dead: Mrs. Reynolds identifies “‘my late master’s favourite room,’” explaining that “‘these miniatures are just as they used to be then’” (247); later, “they were shewn into a very pretty sitting-room, lately fitted up with greater elegance and lightness than the apartments below; and were informed that it was but just done, to give pleasure to Miss

Darcy, who had taken a liking to the room, when last at Pemberley" (249–50). Of course Elizabeth does not see every room at Pemberley—"The picture gallery, and two or three of the principal bed-rooms, were all that remained to be shewn" (250)—and she cannot quite imagine how a man might make use of it: "Her thoughts were all fixed on that one spot of Pemberley House, wherever it might be, where Mr. Darcy then was" (253). Nevertheless she sees enough to understand that it is a house that could make its inhabitants happy.

It is suggestive that, after this introduction to his house, Elizabeth's next significant encounter with Darcy takes place on a threshold: "as she reached the door, it was opened by a servant, and Mr. Darcy appeared" (276). Again this detail is underlined by repetition: "her uncle's interference seemed of the utmost importance, and till he entered the room, the misery of her impatience was severe" (280). Elizabeth has already felt that she might be poised on the brink of a new chapter because of the new light Pemberley has cast on Darcy; now, although she does not know it, the journey on which he will set out when he leaves the inn at Lambton, in the course of which he rescues Lydia, will confirm her move to a new life and a new house.

This emphasis on thresholds and on the access to space they afford is picked up in the return to Longbourn at the novel's end. Rooms in Longbourn that we have not previously seen Elizabeth frequenting are brought into play after her acceptance of Darcy's second proposal: "In the evening, soon after Mr. Bennet withdrew to the library, she saw Mr. Darcy rise also and follow him" (375); after she too has visited the library, "Elizabeth's mind was now relieved from a very heavy weight; and, after half an hour's quiet reflection in her own room, she was able to join the others with tolerable composure" (377); and "[w]hen her mother went up to her dressing-room at night, she followed her, and made the important communication" (377). On the cusp of becoming a married woman, Elizabeth feels free of her parents' rooms, able to use them as settings from which to engineer her transition to a home of her own. And in opting for that home she has chosen wisely. As the coronavirus pandemic has so dramatically underlined, the thing about houses is that you have to live in them.

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Notes

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[1] The other instances are "'Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with'" (11); "'*You* are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room'" (11); "'Oh! my dear Mr. Bennet,' as she entered the room, 'we have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball'" (12); "'she was the only creature in the room that he asked a second time'" (13); "'He could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room'" (14); Mr. Bingley "had soon felt acquainted with all the room" (16).

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[2] Other uses of the word in connection with this second ball are “Till Elizabeth entered the drawing-room at Netherfield and looked in vain for Mr. Wickham among the cluster of red coats there assembled, a doubt of his being present had never occurred to her” (89); when she dances with Mr. Darcy, she says to him, “‘[Y]ou ought to make some kind of remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples’” (91); when Mr. Collins clings to Elizabeth, “[i]n vain did she entreat him to stand up with somebody else, and offer to introduce him to any young lady in the room” (102); finally Wickham explains that he stayed away from the ball because he thought “‘that I had better not meet Mr. Darcy;—that to be in the same room, the same party with him for so many hours together, might be more than I could bear, and that scenes might arise unpleasant to more than myself’” (115).