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Being “in want of a wife” and Universal Sexualities

The opening lines of *Pride & Prejudice* are so often quoted that they have become almost a cliché.¹ Yet rarely are the first two full paragraphs of *Pride & Prejudice* considered, with what they might indicate for the role of the universal, essential ideal of a heteronormative sexuality. Before moving too deeply into the subtleties of the text, it is useful to review the opening two paragraphs in full:

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

As we can see, there is far more to be discussed regarding the universality of heterosexual marriage instead of the universality of truth. . .

NATURE rarer uses yellow
Than another hue;
Saves she all of that for sunsets,—
Prodigal of blue,

Spending scarlet like a woman,
Yellow she affords
Only scanty and selectly,
Like a lover's words.

¹Famously even wrote that “No article in the popular press about Jane Austen can manage to begin other than with a variation on ‘It is a truth universally acknowledged.’ ”

Works Cited

- Austen, Jane. *Pride & Prejudice*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1931.
Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete Poems*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1924.