

John Hoadly

Olivia Delisle, Simon Fraser University

On 8 October 1711, in Broad Street, London, John Hoadly was born to Sarah Curtis and Bishop Benjamin Hoadly. Curtis was a portrait painter, and Bishop Hoadly was a Church of England priest of both celebrated and controversial reputation (Johnstone 27). While attending Henry Newcome's Academy in London, John Hoadly delivered a celebrated performance as Phocyas in John Hughes's *Siege of Damascus*, which served as the catalyst for a life-long love of theatre. Before graduating from Cambridge in 1735, Hoadly anonymously co-wrote his first play with his brother titled *The Contrast*. The play ran three nights at Lincoln Inn's Field in 1731 before being shut down. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, this premature closure was due to his Father's concern that the play's ridicule of living authors could harm his son's reputation. Four years later, Hoadly graduated from Cambridge. Shortly after his graduation, Hoadly became a clergyman to make use of his Father's rich patronage. He remained deeply involved with the church for many years, which garnered him a respected image and a multitude of impressive clerical titles. In 1736, Hoadly married Elizabeth Ashe, with whom he shared no children. Hoadly balanced his successful career in the church with his love for theatre, always encouraging friends to partake in impromptu performances acting out new scenes written by the playwright. While his plays did not bring him much notoriety, modern biographers praise his vast knowledge of the English theatrical world. He knew nearly every major figure in English theatre and is suspected to have read all the English plays that had been written during and before his lifetime.

This dedicated involvement in English theatre could have been what introduced Hoadly to Richard Warner (1713-1755), a Shakespeare scholar and botanist. While letter correspondence between the two men focused primarily on Warner's construction of a Shakespeare glossary, it is impossible to miss their deeply affectionate relationship. Hoadly's profound care for Warner is made evident in many ways, including devotional proclamations and repeated mention of wanting to spend time together, which in one instance is conveyed through his wish to "enjoy" Warner. The letters also demonstrate the incredible amount of care, energy, and time that Hoadly dedicated to examining Warner's written work (Johnstone 30, 44, 43). While their relationship stands out to modern readers as non-heteronormative, the truth is that this bond would not have been perceived

as entirely abnormal among their peers. During the period before the long eighteenth century, Montaigne's essay "On Friendship" popularized the notion that profound connections can only exist between men, as women are too emotionally weak. While Montaigne adamantly supported the importance of close bonds between men, he made it clear that they should not have sex. This period in England tolerated, and often encouraged, affectionate male connections (see Arab); however, heteronormative marriage ultimately remained the ideal for both men and women.

"On the Friendship of Two Young Ladies" is a lyric poem written in iambic tetrameter quatrains with a rhyme scheme of ABAB. It was published in Robert Dodsley's *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes. By Several Hands. Vol. V* in 1758. The poem begins by describing a strong platonic bond between two beautiful women who are depicted in the second stanza as the coupled doves who pull Venus's carriage. Their physical appearance continues to be the focus of the last two lines of this stanza, which describe the women's beauty as being so outstanding that their feathers are used for Cupid's arrows, the effect of which men are not able to resist. The third stanza states that the young women are not capable of having passion for both their friendship and heteronormative marriage: therefore, they must eventually separate. The poem's speaker advises the women to abandon their doomed companionship and turn their passion to their future husbands, with whom they will find both love and friendship.

Further Reading

- Harris, Amy. "'She Never Inclined to It': Childhood, Family Relationships, and Marital Choice in Eighteenth-Century England." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2019, pp. 179-98.
- Johnstone, H. Diack. "New Light on John Hoadly and His 'Poems Set to Music by Dr. Greene.'" *Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*, vol. 56, 2003, pp. 281-93.

References

- Arab, Ronda. *The Bonds of Love and Friendship in Early Modern English Literature*. SFU Publications, 2021.
- Aston, Nigel. "Hoadly, John (1711–1776), Poet and Playwright." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.
- Johnstone, H. Diack. "John Hoadly to Richard Warner: A Hitherto Unnoticed (and Mainly Theatrical) Correspondence of the Mid-Eighteenth Century." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2007.

On the Friendship of Two Young Ladies²⁰²

HAIL, beauteous pair, whom Friendship binds

In softest, yet in strongest ties,

Soft as the temper²⁰³ of your minds,

Strong as the lustre of your eyes!²⁰⁴

So Venus' doves in couples fly,

5

And friendly steer their equal course;²⁰⁵

Whose feathers Cupid's shafts²⁰⁶ supply,

And wing²⁰⁷ them with resistless force.

Thus as you move Love's tender flame,

Like that of Friendship, paler burns;

10

Both our divided passion claim,

And friends and rivals prove by turns.

Then ease yourselves and bless mankind,

Friendship so curst²⁰⁸ no more pursue:

In wedlock's rosy bow'r²⁰⁹ you'll find

15

The joys of Love and Friendship too.

²⁰² *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes. By Several Hands*, Vol. V, ed. R. and J. Dodsley, 1758, p. 275; *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*

²⁰³ *temper* temperament, state of mind

²⁰⁴ *the lustre of your eyes* brilliant and beautiful eyes that attract men

²⁰⁵ *steer their equal course* in Roman mythology, Venus's chariot was pulled through the air by doves

²⁰⁶ *shafts* arrows

²⁰⁷ *wing* make them fly

²⁰⁸ *curst* cursed

²⁰⁹ *bow'r* a space enclosed by arched greenery



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