



Denver Center
Theatre Company

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Photo by Gary Isaacs

Boston Marriage

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ANNA: Ah, yes we suffer for our sins; we suffer for them.

CLAIRE: But not before we have made others suffer for them.

—*Boston Marriage*

Anna and Claire are two bantering, calculating ladies of fashion who have long lived together on the fringes of upper-class society. Anna has just become the mistress of a wealthy man, from whom she has received an enormous emerald and an income to match. Claire, meanwhile, is infatuated with a respectable young lady and wants to enlist the jealous Anna's help for an assignation. As the two women exchange barbs and take turns taunting Anna's hapless maid, Claire's hope-to-be beloved suddenly appears, setting off a crisis that puts the valuable emerald at risk and threatens the women's future.

In revenge and in love woman is more barbarous than man.

—Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900). *Beyond Good and Evil*

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INTERLINK

The Playwright

A Selected Chronology of the Life and Works of David Mamet 1976

- Receives a Children's Theatre Grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

1947 • David Mamet is born on November 30 in Chicago, Illinois, son of attorney Bernard Morris and teacher Lenore June Mamet.

- Receives a Rockefeller Grant

- Awarded a Columbia Broadcasting System fellowship in creative writing.

1963-65 • Works at *Second City*, an improvisational comedy troupe in Chicago, as a busboy, while in high school.

- Teaching fellow at the School of Drama, Yale University.

1968-69 • Attends the Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theater studying acting as a part of a residency component of his college degree.

- Marries actress Lindsay Crouse, whom he later divorces.

1968 • Writes his first play, *Camel*, for his thesis requirement in English.

1977

- *Dark Pony* and *Reunion*, two one-acts often produced together.

1969 • Graduates from Goddard College in Vermont, earning a BA in English Literature.

- *All Men are Whores*.

- *A Life in the Theatre*.

1970 • *Lakeboat*, a one-act. (The play will be produced as a film in 2000)

- Writes and directs *The Woods*.

- *The Water Engine: An American Fable*, first produced as a radio play, is later adapted for the stage.

1971-73 • Artist-in-residence at Goddard College.

- Outer Critics' Circle Award for contributions to the American Theatre.

1972 • *Duck Variations*, a one-act.

- *Mr. Happiness*.

1973 • Finds an acting ensemble, the St. Nicholas Theater Company, in Chicago, and serves as its artistic director through 1976. During his time there Mamet also acts as a playwright, screenwriter, director and producer.

1978

- Associate Artistic Director of the Goodman Theatre in Chicago.

1974 • *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. (The play will earn an Obie award for Best New American Play and a Joseph Jefferson Award.)

- *The Lone Canoe or The Explorer*, a musical, with music and lyrics by Alaric Jans.

1975 • *American Buffalo* (The play will earn the Joseph Jefferson Award, an Obie award for Best New American Play and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play.)

1978-79 • *The Sanctity of Marriage*, a one-act.

1979

- *Shoeshine*, a one-act.

- *A Sermon*, a one-act.

- *Donny March*.

The Playwright

C O N T I N U E D

- 1981 • *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, a screenplay adaptation of the novel by James M. Cain.
- *Edmond*. (The play later earns an Obie award for playwriting.)
 - *The Verdict*, a screenplay adaptation of the novel by Barry Reed. (The film is nominated for an Academy Award, in the category of Best Adapted Screenplay.)
- 1983 • Society for West End Theatre award.
- *The Disappearance of the Jews*, a one-act.
 - *The Dog*.
 - *Film Crew*.
 - *4 A.M.*
 - *Glengarry Glen Ross*. (The play earns the New York Critics' Circle Award in the category of Best American Play, the Joseph Dintenfuss Award, the Elizabeth Hull-Warriner Award, A Dramatist Guild Award and is nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play.)
- 1984 • Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Glengarry Glen Ross*.
- *American Buffalo* earns a Tony Award in the category of Best Reproduction of a Play.
 - *Vermont Sketches: Pint's a Pound the Word Around, Deer Dogs, Conversations with the Spirit World and Dowsing*.
 - *Warm and Cold*, a children's picture-book.
- 1985 • *The Shawl*.
- *Prairie du Chien*.
 - *Vint*, a one-act based on a short story by Anton Chekhov. Originally produced with six other one-acts based on Chekhov's short works.
- 1986 • *Three Children's Plays: The Poet and the Rent: A Play for Kids Seven to 8:15, The Revenge of Space Pandas or Blinky Rudich and the Two Speed-Clock, and The Frog Prince*.
- American and Institute of Arts and Letters Award for Literature.
- 1987 • *Writing in Restaurants*, a collection of Mamet's essays.
- Writes the screenplay for and directs the film *House of Games*. (The film is nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay.)
 - *The Untouchables*, a screenplay based on the television series. (The film is nominated for a Writers' Guild Award for Best Screenplay based on material from another medium.)
 - *The Owl*, a children's book.
- 1988 • *Speed-the-Plow*. (The play earns a Tony Award for Best Play.)
- *Where Were You When It Went Down?*
 - Associate Professor of Film at Columbia University.
 - *Things Change*, a screenplay.
- 1989 • *We're No Angels*, a screenplay.
- 1990 • *Five Television Plays: A Waitress in Yellowstone, Bradford, The Museum of Science and Industry Story, A Waster Weekend, and We Will Take You There*.
- *The Hero Pony*, A book of poems.
- 1991 • Marries actress Rebecca Pidgeon.
- *Oleanna*.
 - *Homicide*, a screenplay.

The Playwright

C O N T I N U E D

- 1992 • *Hoffa*, a screenplay.
- *On Directing Film*, a book.
 - *Glengarry Glen Ross* screenplay adaptation of his own play.
- 1993 • Produces the motion picture of his play *A Life in the Theatre*.
- 1994 • *A Life with No Joy in It, and Other Plays and Pieces*, a collection including *Almost Done*, *Nonologue*, *Two Enthusiasts*, *Sunday Afternoon*, *The Joke Code*, *A Scene*, *Fish*, *A Perfect Mermaid*, *L.A. Sketches*, *Joseph Dintenfass*, and *No One Will be Immune*.
- *Oleanna*, a screenplay adaptation of his own play.
 - *The Village*, a novel.
- 1995 • *The Cryptogram*. (The play earns an Obie Award for best new play.)
- *Passover*, a children's book.
- 1996 • *American Buffalo*, a screenplay adaptation of his own play.
- *The Duck and the Goat*, a children's book.
 - *Make-Believe Town: Essays and Remembrances*, a collection of Mamet's writings.
- 1997 • *Wag the Dog*, a screenplay based on the novel *American Hero*, by Larry Beinhart. (The film is nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay.)
- *The Old Religion*, a novel.
 - *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, a collection of Mamet's essays.
- 1998 • *The Old Neighborhood: Three Plays: The Disappearance of Jews, Jolly and Deeny*.
- *Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama*.
- 1999 • *Boston Marriage*. The play is commissioned by and premieres at the American Repertory Theatre. The production is directed by Mamet and stars his wife, Rebecca Pidgeon, as Claire.
- *The Chinaman*, poems.
 - *Henrietta*, juvenile fiction.
 - *Jafsie and John Henry*, essays.
 - *The Spanish Prisoner*, original screenplay.
 - *The Winslow Boy*, screenplay adaptation of a 1946 Terrence Rattigan play.
 - *On Acting*.
- 2000 • Writes the screenplay and directs the film *State and Main*.
- *Lakeboat*, a screenplay, based on his 1970 one-act of the same name.
 - He writes the screenplay and directs the film *Heist*.
 - He writes *Wilson: A Consideration of Three Sources*, a futuristic, fictional documentary.
- 2001 • *Hannibal*, a screenplay.
- 2003 • *Diary of a Young London Physician*, a screenplay.
- Note: The titles in this chronology are plays unless otherwise noted.*

The Term “Boston Marriage”

**Will you be my friend, my
friend of friends, beyond
everyone, everything, forever
and forever?**

—Olive in *The Bostonians*

The term “Boston marriage” was used in late 19th-century New England to describe a long term monogamous relationship between two otherwise unmarried women. As described by Bostonian Mark De Wolfe Howe, a 19th-century *Atlantic Monthly* editor who had social contact with a number of these women (including Sarah Orne Jewett who had a Boston marriage with Annie Fields), their relationship was, in every sense “a union... there is no truer word for it.”¹

Whether these unions sometimes or often included a sexual relationship was not always known, but it is clear these women spent their lives primarily with other women. They would probably see themselves as “women-identified women” and today would be labeled lesbians.²

Henry James intended his novel *The Bostonians* (1885) to be a study of just such a relationship. Briefly, the novel concerns Olive Chancellor, a wealthy young feminist, who sees in Verena Tarrant, a charismatic personality whose public speaking abilities could enhance the Women’s Cause. Olive, in tutoring Verena and her oratorical gift, forms a passionate attachment to her; Verena, for her part,

is more passive in the relationship. But Olive’s love is thwarted when her handsome Southern cousin, Basil Ransom, comes on the scene. He is very interested in Verena and it is he who woos and wins her.

In his treatment of the relationship between Olive and Verena, Henry James is describing a Boston marriage. Olive feels she is complete with Verena by her side; Verena blooms when she is in Olive’s company; their efforts together in the Women’s Cause are energetic and fruitful. When Basil carries Verena off, James is not suggesting he is rescuing her from a terrible fate; instead he is implying that another selfish, manipulative man will force a woman into the role of obedient wife. At the end of the novel, Verena is in tears, and James concludes:

**It is to be feared that with the
union, so far from brilliant,
into which she was about to
enter, these were not the last
she was destined to shed.**

—Henry James, *The Bostonians*

The City of Boston Circa 1890s

Boston was a family—a club—and is so still. Some people resent the family atmosphere of Boston, but I always liked it.

—John Jay Chapman,

Boston may not necessarily be the setting of *Boston Marriage*, but some aspects of the city relate to the era of the play. In 1880 Boston celebrated its 250th anniversary. Called “The Hub of the Universe,” the city in the last two decades of the 19th century was a curious mix of people and places.

The North End of the city was the first place of settlement for the poorest immigrants who lived in filthy, overcrowded tenement houses. Dominated by lofts, sweatshops and factories, the North End was more a business center than a dwelling place and it attracted gamblers, pimps, prostitutes and human wrecks of one kind or another. Whereas the North End was squalid, the South End was dreary. This was the home of the immigrants on the way up the economic ladder, still overcrowded and unhygienic in some areas. The neighborhood was known for the monotony and dinginess of its red-bricked houses stretching endlessly from lower Roxbury to the city.

In contrast to the slums of the North and South Ends, the Back Bay and Beacon Hill regions displayed the airs of Victorian prosperity and gentility. “Brownstone-front private houses made their appearance in the 1880s; Romanesque came to dominate in the 1890s” and the broad genteel streets and their moneyed inhabitants attracted the best architects of

the day.¹ At spacious Copley Square and with-in sight of the historic Commons were McKim, Mead and White’s Public Library; Henry Hobson Richardson’s Trinity Church; the Museum of Fine Arts by Sturgis and Brigham, and the New Old South Church (Cummings and Sears). Culturally, the city established a symphony orchestra, gave birth to painters (Winslow Homer); composers (the Boston Classicists, including John Knowles Paine, George Chadwick, Mrs. H. H. A. Beach) and nourished writers and thinkers (William Dean Howells, Henry and Brooks Adams, Hamlin Garland, William James, Julia Ward Howe). Enormous energies (and wealth) sustained colleges such as Boston University, Boston College, MIT and Harvard.

Despite the cultural, architectural and educational progress, Boston did little about social reform. Liberals such as Edward Everett Hale, Edward Bellamy and Thomas Wentworth Higginson attacked the problem with 19th century enthusiasm. However, Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone and women like them, with education and cultural standing, were leading the movement for the New Woman and their desire for self-determination. Still, many other proper Bostonians, “despaired of directing society and withdrew into themselves to shut out a world in which they refused to live.”²

I have just returned from Boston. It is the only sane thing to do if you find yourself up there.

—Fred Allen, comedian. (letter to Groucho Marx). June 12, 1953.

Oscar Wilde / David Mamet

**The world is a stage, but the
play is badly cast.**

—Oscar Wilde

Boston *Marriage* has been compared to the witty drawing room comedies of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) in its setting and style. Wilde; author, speaker and playwright of the 19th century, wrote such comic melodramas as *Lady Windemere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, *A Woman of No Importance* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In all these plays Wilde attacked the British establishment and their rigid behavior which covered intense feelings. Wilde's characters use language as a ruse; the more intensely they feel, the more outrageous the language becomes. This is especially evident in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The characters have a highly developed sense of their own importance and they wish to conduct themselves with decorum. But everyone wears a mask: Algernon has a secret life; Jack has invented a necessary sick "friend" Ernest, who is never around, but whom he must run off to see; Gwendolyn is submissive to her mother, but is intent on getting her own way; demure Cecily hides passionate longings, and the redoubtable Lady Bracknell is a woman with a past. Wilde was also a master of the epigram, a short, pointed and witty saying. Epigrams demand immense knowledge and a demonstration of a mastery of the language, history and ideas. They are always brief, memorable and include familiar ideas that make them all the more powerful. In Wilde's case, they are often repeated. For example, this quotation is from *A Woman of No Importance* (Act II).

LORD ILLINGWORTH: *All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy.*

MRS. ALLONBY: *No man does. That is his.*

We see the repetition in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Act I) when Algernon says: *All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.*

Wilde's characters are adept at epigrams because they are hiding some secret beneath a witty, flippant remark.

The ladies in *Boston Marriage* are also very witty and extremely intelligent. They "use language to create their own reality and to annihilate Victorian pretensions and hypocrisies."¹ But these women are in a unique position: as single women and lesbians, they are in rebellion against gender restrictions, class rules and proprieties. As a result, we do not see them in a social milieu, but in a drawing room, verbally sparring with each other or tormenting the maid.

The play was commissioned by The American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the company urged Mamet, to go in a different direction—to depict females, write of a another century, etc. But the play still contains Mamet's style of discourse—sometimes termed "mametspeak"—and defined as "terse, cryptic dialogue marked by staccato rhythms and tough, often profane, language."² We see Mamet's sharp, rhythmic, strategically crude speech in the refined ladies of *Boston Marriage*, but without the machismo of *American Buffalo* or *Glengary Glen Ross*.

We also see two of Mamet's favorite themes, deception and communication. In the play Anna is deceiving Claire by having a heterosexual affair; Claire is carrying on with a

Oscar Wilde/ David Mamet

C O N T I N U E D

younger woman, and both are deceiving and defying conventional society in the way they live. In Act III they hope to outwit Anna's lover and family by holding a séance.

Mamet's second theme is voiced by Douglas Mercer, director of the play at the Guthrie Theatre: "How do we communicate in relationships; how do we negotiate.... How do the characters of *Boston Marriage* get what they want out of the other?... Their tool, their weapon is language."³ Anna and Claire are seeking a balance to secure their own interests in a sexually repressed Victorian society that does not condone their relationship. In addition, they have no professions or jobs and as females in a strict society, they must rely on

ruses to obtain financial security and live in a manner to which they have become accustomed. Thus, two very smart, sexy, seductive women portray Mamet's own words: "everybody uses language for his or her own purpose."⁴

**We live in an extraordinary
debauched, interesting sav-
age world, where things
really don't come out even.**

**—David Mamet. *Three Uses of
the Knife*, 1998.**

Woman + Woman

A Brief History of Lesbianism

**I do not wish them [women]
to have power over men, but
over themselves.**

—Mary Wollstonecraft. *A
Vindication of the Rights of
Women.* (1792)

Like women's history in general, lesbian history suffers from the fact that most societies around the world have accorded women less importance than men. Furthermore, women have been less educated and were more likely to be illiterate; if they were lesbian, they probably destroyed any traces lest they be confronted by hostile outsiders. The first known mention of a lesbian is in Ovid's poem "Epistle of Sappho to Phaon". Sappho, a Greek female poet, lived about 600 B.C. in the town of Mitylene on the island of Lesbos where she led a circle of young women who were her disciples. Though Plato called her "the Tenth Muse," very little of Sappho's poetry survives.

In the Renaissance, writers cultivated an interest in Plato who wrote of the importance of the soul over the body. Thus, the significance of friendship between males was emphasized (for example, Antonio and Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*). Although literary examples of intense friendships between women are not as numerous as those between men, those that exist suggest

women were permitted emotional attachments as strong as those between men. This attitude continued into the 17th century when these friendships between women were viewed as a union of souls. "Perhaps it was assumed that what appeared to be sensual was merely an inevitable overflow of the spiritual and that the overwhelming importance of the spiritual would keep eroticism in check."¹

Such views were carried over into the 18th century. Elizabeth Mavor, author of *The Ladies of Llangollen* suggests the term "romantic friendships" to define a love relationship between two women. The English, particularly, prized sensibility, faithfulness and devotion in a woman but forbade significant contact with a man before she was wed. It apparently was believed young women could practice these sentiments on each other to prepare themselves for marriage, an arrangement that gained male approval. Such friendships also were permitted between married women because divorce was virtually impossible and a woman rejected by her husband might find comfort in a female friend without causing gossip. It is probable that many romantic friends, while open in expressing and demonstrating emotional and spiritual love, repressed any sexual inclination. Moreover, after the Renaissance, men believed they could not share honesty with women, and, for their part, women seemed convinced of the same idea.

The mutual distrust between men and women "is not surprising in view of the homo-

Woman + Woman

A Brief History of Lesbianism

C O N T I N U E D

social societies in which they lived during the Renaissance and subsequent centuries.”² By the mid-18th century, romantic friendships were recognized in most of Europe and America, too. No such labels as “lesbian” or the slang word “dyke” were applied to these attachments, because what romantic friends wanted was to share their lives, confide in, trust and depend on each other.

In the 19th century women bonded together against men who wished to deny them a greater share of the world. What males saw was a picture of two sweet females uplifting each other, but still entirely dependent on men. What they did not see was how female relationships could sustain a woman intellectually and make her strong enough to struggle for more of a voice in the world. But men also did not suspect—any more than the women did—that such an emotional and physical closeness was “lesbian,” at least in a 20th-century view.

Men saw women as something other than human; particularly the American male. He could not be distracted from his quest for prosperity by the softness and seductiveness of a female. However, female chastity took on even greater importance in the 19th century. If a woman responded to the sexual advances of a male, she was not considered proper. In this way, women were taught to deny any heterosexual urges which carried over into marriage.

Outside of the necessity of raising a family, there was little that united the sexes. But with another woman, a female could be trusting and unrestrained—kindred spirits, so to speak. Henry David Thoreau was speaking for his time when in his mid-19th-century essay,

Friendship, he observed that intimacy was more possible “between two of the same sex” than “between the sexes.”³ Thus, love between women was allowed to flourish in the 19th century, “because the fact of the New Woman and her revolutionary potential for forming a permanent bond with another woman had not yet been widely impressed upon the popular imagination.”⁴

In the late 19th century conditions for women began to change. The rise of the middle class gave opportunities for more education and jobs; a woman could now reject traditions and old ideals and make a living on her own. In addition, there was a shortage of men; the great loss of American males was caused by the Civil War, while in England young men immigrated to areas of the growing Empire. Finally, the birth of humanitarian and betterment movements such as abolitionism, socialism and other “isms,” convinced strong women that they could better themselves by joining forces in a feminist movement.

The first such attempt in America was the Seneca Falls convention in 1848. The Woman’s Movement now provided a platform to articulate the inequality of male-female relationships and the expanded work opportunities gave them the possibility of economic independence.

In 1869 Carl von Westphal, a German psychiatrist, published a case study of a young woman who from childhood preferred to dress as a boy, played boys’ games and was attracted to other women. Westphal named her a “congenital invert” and gave fodder to those opposed to women’s growing independence.

+ Woman + Woman

A Brief History of Lesbianism CONTINUED

The two most influential disciples of Westphal were Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. Both men considered love between two women to be morbid and very near insanity. In their sexology writings an “invert” was one who rejected a traditional woman’s role; she rejected that role because she found it distasteful; therefore, she was not really a woman, but a member of a “third sex.” “Hence, the sexologists’ theories frightened women away from feminism and from loving other women by demonstrating they both were abnormal.”⁵

Only by the end of World War I and the passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote did the status of females change. Romantic friendships and kindred spirits were seen in a new light, not entirely

favorable. It was not until the 1970s that love between women became more acceptable and lesbians reclaimed their identity from the medical profession.

No government has the right to tell its citizens when or whom to love. The only queer people are those who don’t love anybody.

—Rita Mae Brown at the Gay Olympics, 1982.

Boston Marriage: Select Glossary of Words and Phrases

He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb: a Basque proverb. “The good shepherd tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.”

Mercantile: of or relating to merchants or traders.

Kickshaws: something dainty or elegant, but unsubstantial or comparatively valueless.

Punjab: the name of an extensive region of the Indian sub-continent, so called from its five rivers, now divided between India and Pakistan.

Bonne bouche: French for “a pleasing taste in the mouth,” but in England taken for “dainty mouthful or morsel.”

One must follow the buffalo herd: Native American peoples would follow the herd to hunt.

You return, not unlike Prometheus. Who brought fire to the gods: In Greek mythology, Prometheus was the Titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans, along with all the human arts and civilization. He was also regarded as the creator of man from clay.

Bridey: common nickname for Bridget in Ireland.

We shall have cakes and sweetmeats. The piquant and the sweet: Sweet food, as sugared cakes or pastry, preserved or candied fruits, sugared nuts, etc.

Home Rule: the name given to the process of allowing Ireland more say in how it was governed, freeing the Irish people from the rule of London.

Kings who strode five miles of lighted streets in Liffey, whilst the English dwelt in Caves: possibly a reference to the Northern Irish tradition of parading, which traditionally includes royal pageantry, lights and fireworks, and possibly refers to the victory parade in Dublin of King William of Orange. Under the reign of this Protestant king, English Catholics often had conceal their religious practices by holding mass in caves and other secluded areas.

Orkney Islands: an archipelago of 70 islands off the north coast of Scotland. The Orkneys most amazing feature is the number of prehistoric sites that can be found there.

Henry, the navigator: Born in Portugal in 1394. Prince Henry the Navigator (Dom Henrique) is most famous for the voyage of discovery that he organized and financed which eventually led to the rounding of the southern tip of Africa and the establishment of sea routes to the Indies.

The German Sea: the sea to the east of Great Britain, the North Sea.

Pray let me but bind myself to the mast: a reference to the Greek hero Odysseus who had himself bound to the mast so that he could hear the Sirens’ enticing songs.

Chintz: a name for the painted or stained calicoes imported from India; now a name for cotton clothes with floral designs in a number of colors.

Boston Marriage: A Select Glossary of Words and Phrases C O N T I N U E D

Escoffier: Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935), a French chef known for his culinary innovations.

Primogeniture: the right of succession or inheritance belonging to the first born child.

Take your *congé*: *Congé* is a French term meaning vacation or time off from work; a ceremonious dismissal and leave-taking.

Tell it to the Marines: a phrase used when people respond to a story that they have heard and don't believe.

Faugh: an exclamation of abhorrence or disgust.

You want me to be your beard: slang for a male escort posing as a boyfriend, lover or husband, often in the case of a lesbian's "official" partner.

Duenna: any elderly woman whose duty it is to watch over a young person; a chaperone.

Keening: to utter in a shrill wailing tone; mourning.

Pull your socks up: slang for get to work; get busy.

Fantods: a state of extreme nervousness or restlessness.

Risible: having the faculty or power of laughing; inclined or given to laughter.

I ripoisted: to reply or retaliate; to answer.

Hard cheese: slang for bad luck.

Freebooters: one who goes about in search of plunder; esp. a pirate or adventurer.

Patrimony: property, or an estate, inherited from one's father or ancestors.

Malversation: corrupt behavior in a commission, office, employment or position of trust.

Tribade: a woman who engages in sexual activity with other women; a lesbian.

Paramour: an illicit or clandestine lover or mistress taking the place, but without the rights, of a husband or wife.

Geopolitics: the influence of geography on the political character of states, their history, institutions and relations with other states.

Burning glass: a large convex lens which can focus the sun's rays on a small area and so ignite materials.

Cooze: vulgar slang for vagina or lesbian.

Short rations: slang for money in short supply.

Land of Goshen: Goodness gracious! Exclamatory expression.

Rich as Croesus: refers to the legendary wealth of the king who reigned from 560 to 546 BC over Lydia in western Asia Minor.

Boston A Marriage: Select Glossary of Words and Phrases C O N T I N U E D

Knock into a cocked hat: to destroy or overcome something completely.

Ricinus plant: a genus of plants, of which the castor oil plant is one.

Reticule: a small bag, usually made of some woven material, for carrying on the arm or in the hand, used by ladies as a pocket or workbag.

Poseur: one who practices an affected mental or social attitude; an affected person. Taken from the French.

Étagère: Shelf in French; in English it is a piece of furniture with open shelves for small ornaments.

Spiv: one who lives by her wits without regular employment.

Arcturus: the brightest star in the constellation Bootes.

Barrow: a mountain, mount, hill or hillock.

Lapidary: one concerned with stones. An artificer who cuts, polishes or engraves gems and precious stones.

Preceptor: one who instructs; a teacher or tutor.

Visigoth: an uncivilized or barbarous person.

'Tis not your ox was gored: one's point of view may be influenced by the degree of personal loss or suffering one has suffered.

Morning room: a room used as a sitting room during the morning or early part of the day.

Tarsier: one of the smallest primates.

Byzantine: belonging to Byzantium or Constantinople. In the spirit of Byzantine politics, it would be intricate, complicated, inflexible and unyielding.

Rodomontade: a term for boastful, extravagant or bragging speech.

Ukase: Russian word for proclamation or decree.

Euclidian: pertaining to the principles of Euclid who laid down the axioms for geometry.

Parturition: childbirth.

Sussed out: British slang for found out.

Fulcrum: the support at which something is balanced or the point at which a lever turns.

Have her on the hip: to have or get the advantage of.

Tendentiousness: having a purposed tendency or aim.

Michelmas: the feast of St. Michael on September 29.

Writing in purple ink: In Roman law, rescripts were answers returned by the emperor or the Pope written in purple ink. These rescripts constituted one of the important sources of the law.

Boston
A Marriage:
Select Glossary
of Words and Phrases
C O N T I N U E D

Cabal: any tradition or special private interpretation; a secret.

Infamia: public disgrace or loss of character. Taken from the Italian.

Brown kerseymere: a twilled fine woolen cloth of a peculiar nature, one third of the warp being always above and two thirds below each shoot of the weft.

Ancient Régime: Old régime; from the French, meaning the system of government in France before the Revolution of 1789; the old system or style of doing things.

Top hole: British slang for first rate, excellent.

Bibliography

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| pgs. 2-4 | S O U R C E S | pgs. 7-8 | N O T E S & S O U R C E S |
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