



ELIZABETH HANBURY

Wickedly Captivating Historical Romance

Behind the Scenes – *The Cinderella Debutante*

Warning!

In describing details from the book, I may ruin it for you by giving minor spoilers. Please don't read on if you don't want to be exposed to potential spoilers, such as plot points or romantic pairings!

- Molly houses. In **The Cinderella Debutante**, Sir Oswald Henlow is mentioned as visiting molly houses. A molly house in 19th-century England was a tavern or private room where homosexual and cross-dressing men could meet each other and possible sexual partners. Molly houses were one precursor to some types of gay bars.
- “Molly” referred to an effeminate usually homosexual male. The most famous molly house in Georgian London was Mother Clapp's .
- Given our more liberal modern viewpoint, it might be difficult to appreciate how Sir Oswald could be blackmailed because of his sexuality and that he feared death if discovered. But until relatively recently in England (the 1950s) homosexuality had to be kept secret for fear of punishment by law.
- This excerpt from the Old Bailey On Line site explains:

“For the eighteenth century, the Old Bailey proceedings provide vibrant and detailed evidence of the sophisticated worlds and subcultures of London's



homosexual communities. Until the 1780s trials provide extensive accounts of the otherwise hidden world of molly houses and homosexual prostitution. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century, however, the details of these trials are censored, and the Proceedings give only the barest facts of each case. From this period onwards, the best details of behaviour and attitudes within the Gay community can be found in trials for **blackmail**, and in the incidental accounts that emerge in trials for other crimes... Throughout the eighteenth century and up until 1861, all proven homosexual acts committed by men were punishable by death. Up until 1816 those convicted of attempted homosexual acts were frequently sentenced to stand in the pillory, where they were often subjected to merciless pelting from a hostile populace.”

So you can see why Sir Oswald would have been worried about blackmail and/or a one way trip to a hanging at Tyburn. Exile would have been his only remaining option.

For more information visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molly_house

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Gay.jsp>

- Vauxhall Gardens, from where Lucy and Belinda are abducted, were a famous London attraction. For nearly two hundred years, Vauxhall was the most celebrated pleasure garden in London and the most favoured *al fresco* entertainment haunt of Londoners. You can read much more about Vauxhall Gardens and their history on my blog by following this link.



<http://elizabethhanbury.blogspot.co.uk/2010/04/pleasure-gardens-part-2.html>

Happy Reading!