



A Decline in Prophets

Sulari Gentill

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In 1932, the R.M.S. Aquitania embodies all that is gracious and refined, in a world gripped by crisis and doubt.

Returning home on the luxury liner after months abroad, Rowland Sinclair and his companions dine with a suffragette, a Bishop and a retired World Prophet. The Church encounters less orthodox religion in the Aquitania's chandeliered ballroom, where men of God rub shoulders with mystics in dinner suits.

The elegant atmosphere on board is charged with tension but civility prevails...until people start to die. Then things get a bit awkward.

And Rowland Sinclair finds himself unwittingly in the centre of it all.

A Decline in Prophets Details

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From Reader Review A Decline in Prophets for online ebook

Pat says

Rowland Sinclair and his entourage of friends may be relaxing on their world cruise but the reader of this lively historical mystery certainly won't be. The action is in full flight from the beginning to the end of this romp from London to New York and on to Sydney where, if anything, the suspense just keeps mounting up. The 1930's come alive with wit and personality and the mystery is tantalising right to the end.

Lynn Horton says

First, a disclaimer. I've learned never to gobble one book after another by an author. It throws off my perspective as a reader, and I start to recognize passages where authors copy from themselves (Brad Thor), or a lack of progressive character development (Ms. Gentill's A Decline in Prophets). So—true confession—I read books 1 and 2 in this series back to back, and I'm sure that they would've been much better had I let time lapse between them. I own the series, so I'll spread the books out a little more in the future.

A Decline in Prophets is interesting. The story dabbles in Theosophy, and the characters are on an extended voyage while things settle down in Sydney after the escapades in book 1. Ms Gentill knows how to set a scene and a stage, and she writes in an engaging and interesting way about a place I've been, but about which I know little. She also captures the elegance and cabin distinctions on a Cunard ship very well, and I had to restrain myself from booking a cruise.

My issues with this book have to do with character development. Rowland is becoming increasingly bland and is beginning to appear weak to me, especially with regard to Edna. Edna is disinteresting because she's so amoral and vapid, and doesn't seem to be growing out of her flaws. Let's be honest: her beauty and talent are great in her youth, but only one survives old age—if she's lucky. Two lesser characters (Milton and a fellow artist with a hypehnnated name that escapes me right now) are becoming the stars of my show in Gentill's books. I hope that the author develops them into stronger characters in ensuing books of the series.

Generally recommended for lovers of historical mysteries.

Karen says

Fans of Australian writing (not just crime fiction) if you've not caught up yet with Rowly Sinclair and his wanderings through 1930's Sydney and beyond, where on earth have you been?

A DECLINE IN PROPHETS is the second book in the Rowland Sinclair series from Sulari Gentill and after dithering around for a week or so trying to come up with something that describes the book accurately. I'll just have to settle for my first reaction when I got to the last page. Blast - wonder when the next one will be out...

In my review of the first book - A FEW RIGHT THINKING MEN - I did comment something along the lines of there being just a little more history than mystery at points, but that balance has been elegantly sorted out in the second book. Not to say that the history suffers here either - the research that goes into the

background of these books is fantastic, but the story-telling is even better. In A DECLINE IN PROPHETS Roly and his band of supporting artists and bohemians have been off around the world, but the action of the book mostly takes place on the RMS Aquitania - giving a very believable closed room setting. Both on ship and on land, there's a good range of puzzles and mysteries, a good dose of the relationships between Roly and his friends, and as an added extra a lot of Roly and his family when the travellers eventually return home.

The great thing about these books is that you can really see them appealing to lots of different reader's preferences - the historical period is wonderfully evoked, the action is strong but there's no overt sense of thriller going on. The deaths are believable, but the scenes described with sufficient detail to give the reader a sense of what is happening, without any gore or sensationalism. There's a touch of romance, just the slightest bit of unrequited relationship between Roly and sculptor and companion Edna but not enough to make me throw my hands in the air and scream not again! There's also a great cast of the slightly eccentric through to flat out mad as a hatter types all of whom serve their part in the cast without raising any sneaking sense of affect.

What really sticks in my mind about A DECLINE IN PROPHETS is that it's just flat out, great story telling. Good characters, a believable plot, both of which transport the reader to a place and a time that just feels right. Regardless of your preference in crime fiction, lovers of cozies, procedurals, historical or current day settings, A DECLINE IN PROPHETS is just a fantastic book.

Rob Kitchin says

A Decline in Prophets has the feel of a golden age of crime fiction tale, with its focus on an upper class amateur detective and his small band of confidants, the setting on board a luxury liner in the early 1930s, and the form taking a classical style whodunnit. Gentill pulls off all three elements with aplomb, providing a gently paced, well observed tale of manners and the upper class lifestyle of the period, whilst tingeing the story with darker narrative and keeping the reader guessing as to who the killer is and their motives. A key ingredient is the character of Rowly Sinclair, a wealthy Australian dilettante with impeccable manners, who attracts trouble and trouble-makers, and his three working class, bohemian friends who live the high life on his tab. They're full of playful humour and joie de vivre, even when the chips seem set against them. They are complemented by their colourful fellow passengers, the rag-bag collection of Theosophists and the more serious Catholic bishop and accompanying priests. Gentill plays all three groups off against each other generating plenty of potential suspects and subplots. Back in Australia, Rowly's stiff upper class family are added to the mix, causing him yet more headaches. The result is an enjoyable sojourn across the Atlantic to New York then onto Sydney and its wealthy neighbourhoods.

Craig Ryan says

A good sequel to the first book. I have really enjoyed the character development, however starting to wonder how Rowly always finds himself in these situations!! I like how this series develops the storyline whilst negotiating actual events featuring actual people.

Calzean says

There is more than a touch of an Agatha Christie in this one. Australia's wealthiest bohemian Rowland Sinclair and his entourage return to Oz first class on board the latest liner in the Cunard fleet. Their fellow passengers include a bishop, heiresses, a retired prophet and a group from the Theosophical Society. Lots of people from the era show up, an early Cary Grant, Randolph Hearst, Marion Davis, Norman Lindsay, Archbishop Mannix. Catholics are the enemy of the upper class, the Masonic Lodge is where all the business happens and people are starting to fear what's happening in Germany. Amongst all of this is a bit of humour, a number of murders and a satisfactory ending.

Rebecca says

I probably enjoyed this one more than the first, as it was more about the characters and adventure, and less focussed on the setting and history. That being said, it had lots of fun settings and again introduced issues of the time that I had previously been unaware of. An interesting mystery with plenty of twists and turns!

Bundaberg Library Library says

Second in the Rowly Sinclair series this adventure allows the characters to develop. Murder on board a cruise liner allows the famous four the chance to detect as Rowly is suspected of murdering someone.

Rosalie says

I read this murder/melodramatic/thriller as a stand-alone novel and thoroughly enjoyed it without reading the first book in the Series. Rowland Sinclair is an amateur mystery solver who finds himself in extraordinary and sometimes humorous situations with unique, eccentric persons some of whom are murdered.

The book is set in the 1930's and Rowland Sinclair is the son of Australian landed gentry, the Sinclair family, who made their fortune from large rural properties near Yass (NSW) and have mansions in Sydney too. The sumptuous descriptions of voyaging on a luxury liner, the stylish partying with Oxford friends in New York and the depictions of living with permanent large numbers of household staff in Australia all serve to describe the affluent lifestyles enjoyed in a bygone era.

Rowland first appears on board the Cunard liner RMS Aquitania when he is returning home after a European jaunt with his bohemian friends. His affluence and general bonhomie is immediately apparent as he and his friends are travelling first class presumably at his expense. It is not long however before Rowland finds himself at the centre of a murder scene in which he is almost implicated and then he too becomes a target for a murderer.

Once back in Sydney, the murders continue and Rowland's involvement plus notoriety of the victims is an embarrassment to his genteel family. Rowland's elder brother Wilfred, is frustrated by Rowland's apparent irresponsible attitude and behaviour and would like him to settle down and assume some of the responsibility for the family enterprises and Masonic traditions.

This entertaining novel incorporates places, people and icons that typified the period. Some of these are the Rookwood Cemetery which used to have a railway station chapel, the actor Cary Grant, and Norman Lindsay and his property in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

attitude and behaviour and would like him to settle down and assume some of the family business'

responsibility and traditions such as his membership of the Masons.

Bronwyn Mcloughlin says

I don't like it when I have to be told what otherwise wooden characters are feeling ; it should be fairly obvious from the tone of their voice, their actions, their interactions. It all just seems a bit too contrived. As for the odd beliefs about the Scots I thought that the first of the series was promising, a bit unpolished, but with an interesting story about the New Guard and other movements in Depression era Sydney, but this one didn't cut it. I wanted to like it, because telling our stories with an Australian perspective and flavour is important to me. Maybe I just don't know about the upper echelons of Sydney life at the time, because my family were just plodding their way through the great depression, but there is something less than believable here that willing suspension of disbelief would not overcome. Or maybe I was just in the wrong mood!

Heather says

I've enjoyed this book, and the first in the series. I like the snippets of Australian social and political history of the period and the range and depth of the characters (right wing graziers, bohemian artists etc). They are well written, and I have the next in the series aired out and ready to go.

Phryne says

This book is a gem! I have already read the prequel and book one and enjoyed them but this one takes the series to another level! I loved the 1930s setting, the historical comments and the frequent references to famous people and events of the day.

I loved the characters too especially Rowland Sinclair, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but determined to be a painter and not follow the normal pattern for a person of his standing. He still manages to accept and use his wealth but his friends are all painters, sculptors or poets and they are a charming and outrageous bunch.

The story moves at a cracking pace beginning in England and crossing to Australia via New York on board the Cunard liner, RMS Aquitania. There are murders aplenty and Rowly manages to get involved in most of them. It is all good fun, highly entertaining and very nicely written. An easy five stars.

Pam Tickner says

This was an unexpected treat. It reminded me of Kerry Greenwood's Phryne Fisher books in the lavish descriptions of a golden age. There were other similarities in the colourful characters who did not conform to social expectations of the time, friendships between the aristocracy and working class, and a few murders to solve along the way. Set in Sydney, the references to real events and characters of the time contribute to a sense of authenticity.

Tien says

I seem to be entrenched in 1930s Australia! It began, of course, with the first book of the Rowland Sinclair series, *A Few Right Thinking Men*, *For Love of Country*, *The Big Smoke*, then *Razor: Tilly Devine*, *Kate Leigh and the Razor Gangs* and now, this book! I was excited though to see a couple of the Razor gangs crims showing up in *A Decline in Prophets* -it was within the right setting, of course, time and location wise. I guess I was a lot more excited because I've just finished the book, *Razor*, so they are very familiar historical personages.

This review is in relation of the second book in the Rowland Sinclair series but there won't be any spoilers from book 1

This novel opens with the return journey of Rowland Sinclair and his friends from abroad. They have been away for 8 months and are keen to return home to Sydney. This journey over the seas, though filled with interesting characters, was fraught with danger especially to Rowland. He found himself, yet again & again, implicated in matters that blacken his family name; to the displeasure of his older brother.

My first impression of this series was that it could've been a mix between Lord Peter Wimsey and Phryne Fisher. This series is set roughly around the same era (1930s) though in Sydney and there are familiar traits in characters etc however whilst Miss Fisher styled herself as an investigator, Rowland Sinclair just happened to have the knack of being at the wrong place at the wrong time at a criminal rate. He is rather an amateur sleuth which, at times, rather frustrated me as a reader. And being rather conservative myself, I'm leaning towards his brother and at times, just do not understand their chosen lifestyles which made it harder to sympathise with these characters. *I am not judging anybody their chosen lifestyles as I'm sure you'll wonder at my chosen lifestyle. However, I just want to be clear that this is the reason I like rather than love this novel, in that I found it hard to put myself in their perspectives.*

A most pleasant surprise, however, is the humour. I actually chuckled out loud a couple of times and this rarely ever happens with my reading. I don't recall the first book being this humorous. I think there were probably real historical personages in book 1 too except that I wasn't that familiar with political characters... but these 2 factors are what I enjoyed most so far in the series, the historical personages popping in and the humorous interaction between Rowland and his friends.

Vikki Petraitis says

Love Sulari Gentill's second book in the Rowly series. She transports you to the wonderful world of the 1930s with a delightful mix of real and fictional characters. A great read.
