



## Gentlemen Formerly Dressed

*Sulari Gentill*

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A Rowland Sinclair Novel (The fifth book in the Rowland Sinclair Mystery Series)

After narrowly escaping Nazi terror, Rowland Sinclair and his companions land in London, believing they are safe.

But they are wrong.

A bizarre murder plunges the hapless Australians into a queer world of British aristocracy, Fascist Blackshirts, illicit love, scandal and spies.

A world where gentlemen are not always what they are dressed up to be.

## Gentlemen Formerly Dressed Details

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Author : Sulari Gentill

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## From Reader Review Gentlemen Formerly Dressed for online ebook

### Joanne says

Ok, it's official, I'm in love with Rowland Sinclair- although he still has eyes only for Edna. Love the twists & turns, love that Rowly is just a little more physical on this outing, and love the increased, yet still subtle, humour. A great read.

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### Rebecca says

This series continues to delight and intrigue, revealing aspects of history that I had very little knowledge of before! I love the clever use of different settings and weaving in important historical details and figures. While there has been some character development, particularly for Rowly, it would be great to see more, particularly in the Rowly's excellent friends.

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### Karen says

The Rowland Sinclair series is up to book number five with the release of GENTLEMEN FORMERLY DRESSED, yet somehow it feels like there should be more of them. That could simply be wishful thinking.

There is much to be admired about these books. The plots are clever and believable. Whilst the subject matter can be sobering, it's delivered with a light touch, drawing out the amusing where appropriate. There is a very strong sense of place, and the time period in which the action occurs. In the case of GENTLEMEN FORMERLY DRESSED and the previous book PAVING THE NEW ROAD that is Europe in the Great Depression, with the rise of the Nazi's in Germany as the backdrop. In PAVING THE NEW ROAD, Rowly and his group had a frighteningly close encounter with the extremes of Fascism in Germany, the aftermath of which now plays itself out in England in GENTLEMEN FORMERLY DRESSED. As a side note, picking up the earlier books in any order would work just fine, but these two they really should be read in sequence.

All of the main characters are here - Edna Higgins, sculptress, love interest, deflector of royal attentions. 'Milton' Elias Isaacs, would be poet, reader and oft quoter of others, is fierce when fierce is required, and somewhat befuddled when confronted with a community of English eccentrics with more elaborate tastes in clothing than he. Clyde Watson Jones, fellow painter, the most down to earth member of Rowly's associates, willing to put his body on the line when the Blackshirts weigh in. Rowly's brother Wilfred, wife and boys are also in town, Wilfred ostensibly to attend the London Economic Conference. Providing a perfect way of introducing some well-known figures from history, and a starring role for the wife of an Australian ex-Prime Minister.

Some elements remain consistent throughout all of these books, Wilfred's swings between feeling protective towards his younger brother, and clearly fighting back a desire to strangle him. Rowly's love for Edna, kept in reserve by his concern at losing her friendship instead. Milton's quoting of other's poetic snippets. All of which adds up not to a sense of been there / done that, but a real connection with this group. Like time spent with good friends.

Gentill's storytelling ability is, as always, on display in GENTLEMEN FORMERLY DRESSED. Deftly combining the extremes of Fascism, and the cloud of the Great Depression with disquiet at the ease in which a couple of Communist Australian's can accept the services of a butler is not, one would assume, a skill that comes easily to many. It does to Gentill, as does her observational humour. The complications of tie's being knotted, the comedy inherent in a wax head in a hatbox, the rabbit in headlights effect of a full set of cutlery at a formal dinner. All the while building a clever murder plot, with Rowly and his team determined to right wrongs for the dis-empowered in a world where money and titles can influence outcomes.

Even if you think you're not a fan of historical crime, this is a series so well done it could change your mind. Even if you're not a fan of crime, then this is a series that is so elegantly done it could change your mind. This is a series that I've used to convince non-readers to change their minds.

<http://www.austcrimefiction.org/review/gentlemen-formerly-dressed>...

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### **Susan says**

Rowland, scion of a wealthy Australian family, is torn again between his conservative family and his political beliefs, fostered by his Bohemian friends. They've escaped Germany, where Rowland was almost killed by Hitler's henchmen, for the safety of London, but he finds another body there, and comes to the defense of the young woman suspected of the gruesome crime. Not only does he want to find the murderer, but he must defend himself after being targeted by fascists and other mysterious enemies.

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### **Andy says**

Standard Rowly Sinclair...shenanigans afoot, entertaining as always!!

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### **Debbie says**

"Gentlemen Formerly Dressed" is a mystery set in June and July 1933 in England. This is the fifth novel in a series. This story referred back to events that happened in previous books, especially the fourth book. The events that happened in Germany still impact the characters during this book, so I'd recommend reading that story before this one.

The main characters were interesting, caring people. Since an innocent girl was being accused of murder, they asked questions despite being warned off by people trying to hush up the crime. Since the murdered man was found in a woman's nightgown, they looked into a possible homosexual connection. There were enough clues that I could guess whodunit shortly before Rowley. The main characters also tried to warn people in Britain about Hitler and what's going on in Germany. Interesting historical details were woven into the story and touch on the crime.

There was some bad language (if you're American) to a fair amount of bad language (if you count British/Australia bad words). There were no sex scenes. Overall, I'd recommend this interesting novel.

I received a free ebook review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.

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### **Barb in Maryland says**

Another excellent entry in this series.

The blurb (from the back of the paperback edition) lays out the plot but skimps on the emotion.

While not as dark in tone and mood as the previous book ('Paving the New Road'), this story is steeped in the politics of the day.

It is now June 1933--Rowland and his friends have made it safely to London. All breathe a sigh of relief--but if they thought life would be calm and restful--no such luck. Rowland wants to talk to someone in the government about what they had seen in Germany and is steered to Lord Pierrepont. Rowland and his brother Wil (hi Wil, fancy meeting you in London!) arrive for their meeting, only to find Pierrepont very dead. So, of course, Rowland has to stick his nose in--especially when Pierrepont's young niece is arrested and it is obvious that Scotland Yard is not going to do a thorough investigation.

In the course of their stay in London, the gang crosses paths with several notable figures. H.G. Wells makes a cameo appearance, as do Evelyn Waugh and Winston Churchill. Rowland also manages to come to the attention of the British Union of Fascists, especially William Joyce (who is quite scary). Their stay is brightened by meeting Ethel Bruce, wife of the Australian Resident Minister to the UK. She rather gleefully agrees to help in their investigation into Pierrepont's murder. I do hope the real Mrs Bruce was as delightful as she is portrayed here. The author also drags in the very real Admiral Sir Hugh Paget Sinclair, at that time head of British Intelligence, making him a distant cousin of Wil and Roland. He is almost too interested in keeping an eye on Rowland--but why?

One of the threads running through the first part of the story involves Rowland's emotional state. He can't really sleep, has nightmares when he does manage to drift off--a rather natural reaction to being tortured and almost killed. We learn a little more about Edna's early life as she tries to help him cope with his demons. (I love Edna, I really do).

The mystery is finally solved, but not before the murderers try to kill Rowland. Poor Rowland!

I do hope that in the next book Rowland is injury-free; I think the author has subjected him to enough physical abuse to last for many years.

As always, I eagerly await the next book.

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### **Calzean says**

The author has her series bubbling along to a set formula. A murder, a lot of famous names, Rowland gets bashed/robbed/almost murdered, a narrow escape, simmering sexual tensions with Edna, a specific event of the 1930s and a murder solved.

This time the location is London, Ex-PM Stanley Bruce, HG Wells, Madame Tussards, Winston Churchill and the Prince of Wales/Wallis Simpson are all featured. The series is getting a little too predictable.

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## **Lynn Horton says**

I've enjoyed this series, but it's becoming formulaic, and I don't know if I'll read another book if the author releases it. The author is talented, her voice is original, and her writing is strong. But the characters haven't developed since book 1 (and I've read all five books), and the protagonist—Rowland Sinclair—is becoming a bit of a sap for his continued adoration of the unresponsive Edna.

I also have a minor problem with a technical detail in this book, something that confirms that the author might be running out of tricks and is resorting to things about which she knows little. In a dinner-table scene, a character pokes fun at her "brother" by saying that any bird (pheasant, I think) that he shoots will be full of buckshot, so diners need to be careful of their teeth. The "sister," rumored to be quite a markswoman, says that the right way to kill a bird is to shoot off its head.

As an avid upland gamebird hunter, I promise that NO ONE tries to shoot the head off a bird. It's simply not done. You shoot the bird, aiming a little high if it's flying away, a little low if it's one of the rare (stupid) birds that flies at your gun.

But it's details like this, plus the repetitive storyline and lack of character development, that make me think that the author's imagination might be spent.

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## **Elaine Tomasso says**

I would like to thank Netgalley and Poisoned Pen Press for a review copy of *Gentlemen Formerly Dressed*, the fifth novel to feature Australian painter Rowland Sinclair and his friends, Edna, Milton and Clyde.

Having barely escaped Nazi Germany with his life Rowlie and the gang are leaving Paris for London where he is determined to expose the Nazis' behaviour when they are almost caught. Once in London Rowlie is delighted for once to meet his brother, Wil, and enlist his help. Unfortunately the man Wil chooses to meet, Lord Pierrepont, is murdered before they can talk and it is they who find the body.

I thoroughly enjoyed *Gentlemen Formerly Dressed* which is another fine addition to a fascinating series. I love the mixture of historical detail and characters with an exciting adventure and the extracts from contemporary newspapers at the start of each chapter.

It is difficult to discuss the plot without issuing spoilers but it starts with a gory murder and widens into an adventure with a topical motive for the era. I admire the way Ms Gentill effortlessly weaves a very strong sense of era and the hot topics of the time into an exciting read. No reader can come away from the novel without a much better understanding of mid thirties Britain, the gossip, the politics, the economics and the thinking. The plot itself is faintly ridiculous to modern eyes with the liberal Rowlie tangling with the Right Wing in its many guises. I was glued to the pages as he slowly unravels Pierrepont's murder at some personal cost.

Much of the enjoyment in this series comes from the strong bond between Rowlie and his artistic friends, Edna, Milton and Clyde. It is rather muted in this novel as Rowlie is firmly centre stage, taking most of the action himself and leaving the others in a supporting role, except on one amusing occasion when Edna steps in.

Gentlemen Formerly Dressed is a good read which I have no hesitation in recommending.

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### **Helen Howerton says**

There's something about these books that is starting to annoy me. Don't get me wrong -- I enjoy the breadth of the author's research behind the plotting of her books, and the quality of the writing and characterization is superb. What's starting to grate is the growing expectation that Sinclair is going to get roughed up/then beat up/nearly killed in every single one. That's what certainly happened in the book before this, and what's happening to Rowly and his band of merry friends in this one, as he comes up against members of the "brown shirts," the Oswald Mosley group in Britain that advocated fascism and anti-Semitism -- and which might have succeeded if Hitler hadn't put a kibosh on those plans. This is all a sidebar to the murder of a socially prominent peer, found in a compromising position.

Certainly names are dropped again -- H.G. Wells, the aforementioned Mosley, his henchman William Joyce, the male members of the royal family, ergo of course Mrs. Wallis Simpson(!), Evelyn Waugh (whom the author seems to have taken a particular dislike to), even Winston Churchill. They all figure in one way or another to further the storyline -- which mentioning here would amount to a spoiler. Suffice it to say that the denouement of the reasons for the murder and its aftermath is rather distasteful, even if it has a basis in history. Much is explained in the epilogue and the author's afterword.

Thankfully, Sinclair and his friends are on their way back Down Under at the end of the book. Where he will no doubt find something else to nearly lose his life over.

Thanks to the publisher and NetGalley for the copy of this book, in exchange for this review.

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### **Heather says**

I don't know why I rated the others in this series 4 stars, because I really like them. I think my 4's and 5's are interchangeable, and it depends more on me on the day! Sulari has written a great cast of characters, blends in world (and Australian) history beautifully and includes a bit of the wilder and/or bohemian lifestyles every age is known for in some way. Set in the delectable 1930's, with the world leading up to WW2, eugenics is a popular subject worldwide and fascism is seen by many to be the way forward.  
Love your work, Sulari. You're right up there with my favourite authors.

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### **Cynthia Coghill says**

Rowland, Edna, Milton and Clyde are back in London biding their time before returning to Australia. Nothing can possibly go wrong. Claridge's Hotel becomes their home away from home and trouble soon follows. Woven through the story are snippets of social and international history. Sit down with a coffee and be taken into the world of the weird upper classes in Britain.

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## Alice says

### **Book 5, Jolly Old England**

Rowland and friends, battered but unsubdued, make their way into Paris with the Germans hot on their trail. Brother Wilfred again shows up at the crucial moment and handles things as they all manage to get to London. Somehow Rowland is determined to tell the influential men in British Government about what he experienced and saw in Fascist Germany, but few are interested and many are fascists themselves. In the middle of this, a murder of a prominent Lord occurs and as usual Rowland becomes involved. Fascists, spies, Madame Tussard waxworks, murder, eugenics, and old Oxford chums add to the mix which of course leads Rowland into more danger.

This is a great series. I love the history and the way famous figures are introduced into the story. Rowland is the ultimate gentleman, and his loyal friends continue to support him and keep him somewhat safe. Even more touching is his brother Wilfred, who obviously deeply cares about Rowland, but usually displays this with lectures and shouting. Yet when things are blackest Wil drops everything to rescue Rowly. Just beautiful.

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## Brona's Books says

Gentlemen Formerly Dressed is the fifth book in Gentill's Rowland Sinclair mystery series.

GFD picked up where Paving the New Road left off - with Rowly and his friends fleeing 1933 Germany to reach London, battered and bruised but alive to tell their tale.

However, London turns out to be not so safe after all. Fascists have infiltrated London society and a bizarre murder sees Rowland and his friends embroiled in intrigue and danger once again.

Full review here -  
<http://bronasbooks.blogspot.com.au/20...>

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