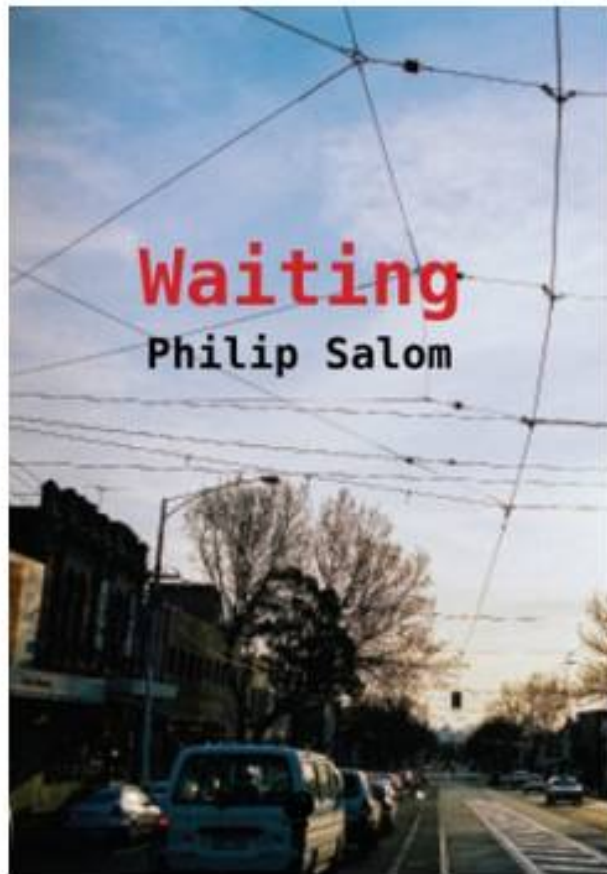


January 2018



This month we met to discuss [Waiting](#) by [Philip Salom](#), short listed for the [Miles Franklin Literary Award 2017](#). We mostly enjoyed the book, but there was a feeling that something was missing or not right – though we weren't sure what that was. We all liked the book's language, the author is a poet and it shows.

For Little's mother "It is an epiphany, as she waits there is the blue light with the windows open and the nursing home verandah bathed in the bliss of final decisions". Little's kidneys "are as dark and unhappy as a cruel poem, all present tense and no story and cold as snow." "Big is not a handsome man but when he is sniffing food his thin upper lip peaks in the middle ... like notes from a bird's

beak." We found the Big and Little story good enough and wondered if the fire story could be on its own.

Big and Little have a relationship and live a rooming house. Big is a big, loud, cross dressing autodidact who used to be a chef in a shearing gang. Little is little – quiet and timid – she has lupus and was a school teacher before it got too much for her.

Angus is a landscape designer – a cousin to Little. He becomes her defender insisting that Little should be the sole heir to her mother's home – not his mother and the ugly step-sisters. Jasmin works in the field of semiotics at a university. She meets Angus at a party commemorating the lives lost in a devastating bush fire. Angus used to build "fireproof" houses. The tragedy of Angus and the fire unfold slowly – "Something in him has been burnt, all the same."

The rooming house where Big and Little live is a symbol of reduced status – but a safe place all the same. Their eccentric housemates include the Sheriff, Dazza the spitter, Tourie (who has Tourette's), the former paedophile Tom and Coolie, the link to Angus and the tragic fire. These characters are different from most of us – “There are times one simply has to face oddities in oneself. ... Some of us are destined to be disliked without good cause, destined to be laughed at forever.. considered lesser or smellier, and without good cause.” Big and Little are so used to stares “they are almost a different kind of royalty”. When they are dismissed by the bank teller Big says “It is not her job to pass judgement on my character.”

Little is waiting to see if she will inherit her mother's house. She looks forward to the inheritance while Big is uncertain and fearful – “Do they leave the hostel which has been their home for so long, buy a house ... and with what consequences?” Big thinks about the inheritance arriving and about health departing – “waiting is not the black dog of depression but the grey hound of uncertainty.”

When they get news that Little's mum's health has improved Big says that it is a blessing. He says that having money would change everything. ...”This waiting will kill us. Best be sensible. Expect nothing.”

After all the waiting, things happen quickly at the end. At one moment Little's mother is better, and then she is dead and Little is inheriting.“ Little weeps and Big says “Oh Fuck.”

Ratings: Claudia 3, Di 3, Janet 3, Kim 3, Margie 3, Nicola 3.5 and Viv 3.

Next month we get together on the 12/02/18 at 6:30pm to discuss [Taboo](#) by [Kim Scott](#), at [Preece House, 50 Nerang St Bischof Pioneer Park, Nerang \(next to 54 Nerang St. shops\).](#)

Gold Coast Book Lovers

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Other Books We Read

January 2018

Our book of the month was [Waiting](#) by [Philip Salom](#), but we also read other books.

Maximum rating is 5.

[On the Road](#) by Jack Kerouac, 3.5

[Whip bird](#) by Robert Drewe, 2.5

[Salt Blood \(Essay\)](#) by Michael Adams, 4

[Tirra Lirra By The River](#) by Jessica Anderson, 5

[Anything Is Possible](#) by Elizabeth Strout, 4

[Alias Grace](#) by Margaret Atwood, 4

[Lincoln in the Bardo](#) by George Saunders, 2.5

[The Happiest Refugee](#) by Ahn Doh, 3

[The Gift of Anger](#) by Arun Ghandi, 3.5

[The Animators](#) by Kayla Rae Whitaker, 3

[The Earth Hums in B Flat](#) by Mari Strachan, 2.5

[The White Queen: One Nation and the Politics of Race](#) by David Marr, 3.5