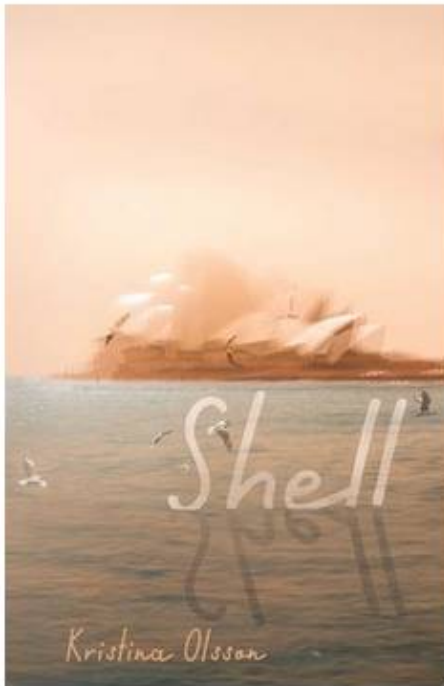


## March 2019



In March, we met to discuss [Shell](#) by [Kristina Olsson](#). The book is a fictional narrative of historical events in Australia during the mid-1960s, a time of global social change. In the Australian context, Olsson sets the story in Sydney during the construction of the now iconic, but then controversial, Sydney Opera House. There is also the divisive issue of military conscription for sending troops to the Vietnam War.

This countercultural upheaval is seen through the eyes of Shell's two protagonists. Pearl is a politically engaged Australian journalist, exiled to the women's pages after being photographed at an anti-war protest. She is also desperately seeking her two

younger brothers who ran away from their welfare system home and are eligible for conscription. Axil, the other protagonist, is a Swedish glass artist working on the Opera House

conscripted. Axel, the other protagonist, is a Swedish glass artist working on the Opera House and enduring the taunts of Australians who are suspicious of anyone with an accent. Sweden's neutral stance in WW2 also draws their ire.

The two protagonists reflect contrasting views of Australian life – one from within and one from outside. This dual perspective places the book at the intersection of multiple contrasts – Scandinavian and Australian, male and female; and the beauty of Art and the brutality of politics.

Our group enjoyed Olsson's beautiful writing and the mid-60s context which was interesting and relatable. However, there were a variety of responses to the book. Some thought the author attempted to deal with too many themes and this left them feeling there was too much going on in the book. Some found Pearl an annoying character. In contrast, some enjoyed the narrative, with its contrasting characters and reflection upon the complex social change of those times.

**Ratings:** Claudia 2, Di 3, Gail 3.5, Janet DNF, Kim DNF, Margie 3 and Pauline 3.

We will meet next on the 8/04/19 at 6:30PM at [Preece House, 50 Nerang St Bischof Pioneer Park, Nerang \(next to 54 Nerang St. shops\)](#) to discuss [Women and Power](#) by [Mary Beard](#).

# Gold Coast Book Lovers

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## Other Books We Read

### March 2019

*Commonwealth* by Anne Patchett, 4

*Killing Commendatore* by Haruki Murakami, 4

*Ines of my soul* by Isabel Allende, 3

*Blood* by Tony Birch, 3

*A Ladder to the Sky* by John Boyne, 3.5