



## **Book Club Book of the Month, January 2022**

### ***How To Shame The Devil, Ros Thomas (Night Parrot Press)***

#### **Summary**

Arthur Lambkin (better known as Art) has newly been confined to the Ashton Grange nursing home where he fights a constant battle against Parkinson's disease and old age. Though his days are repetitive, he finds joy in caring for his numerous houseplants and writing to the Letters Page of his local newspaper in an attempt to show off his wit and intelligence while also trying to remain relevant in a world that is trying to leave him behind.

Through flashbacks we see Art grow from a lustful young boy to a mildly inept young adult. He falls in love, has a couple of kids, yet for the most part finds himself altogether displeased with his life, which is usually everyone else's fault. Art often romanticises himself as the victim in his own story, yet when a woman from his long-ago past surfaces in the very column he found comfort in, she threatens to rewrite him as the villain in his own story.

#### **About the author**

Ros Thomas is a West Australian writer and former journalist currently living in Perth with her husband and three children.

Ros was the author of a long-running column in *the West Australian* newspaper and her works of flash fiction have been published by UWA Publishing and Night Parrot Press, many

winning international prizes. Her latest novella *How to Shame the Devil* was awarded an inaugural Writer-In-Residence Fellowship by the National Trust of Western Australia.

In her spare time Ros is also an ambassador for Alzheimer's WA and the Deputy Chair for Carers Advisory Council. She loves spending time with her children and husband, who affectionately calls her 'The Minister of War'.

### **Questions for discussion:**

1. How has the utilisation of the limited narrator moulded a specific depiction of Art?
2. Throughout the novel Art interacts with several female characters from his daughters to his nursing home crush. How does Art's objectification of each woman manifest through these different characters?
3. During Art's introduction to old age, he begins to discover that "young women no longer noticed him" (p 60). What does this say about Art's character and his evaluation of his own self-worth?
4. How have the depictions of settings and the use of nostalgia worked to authenticate and make relevant this story for a modern audience?
5. Art's relationship with his father is mentioned only briefly throughout the novella, but how do you think interactions with his father might have shaped him into the old man shown within the pages?
6. How has the manipulation of time been utilised in the novella to grant the story a sense of timelessness and also contemporary relevance?
7. How has Ros Thomas renewed conversations of the #MeToo movement by setting a story about rape through the perpetrator's perspective?
8. The novella uses both present and past perspectives in telling the story. How do you think the depiction of Art's childhood and early adulthood humanises and authenticates him as a character in today's society?
9. How do you think the resolution of the novella changed Art's character in the eyes of the reader?
10. In the book's final scene, do you think Art acts through an attempt at apology or through selfish motivations? Why?

### **If you liked this book, you might also like...**

- *Rhubarb* by Craig Silvey (Fremantle Press)

- Driving Stevie Fracasso by Barry Divola (HarperCollins)
- Eye of a Rook by Josephine Taylor (Fremantle Press)
- The Bodysurfers by Robert Drewe (Penguin Random House)
- Locust Summer by David Allan-Petale (Fremantle Press)