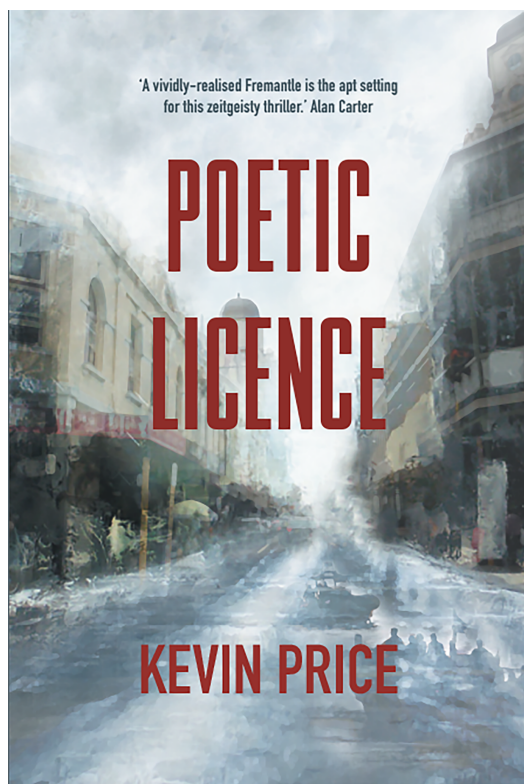


Poetic Licence by Kevin Price

Book club notes and questions.

Synopsis



On Fremantle's streets, in the dead of winter, a homeless man, an academic, a police detective and the agents of a wealthy businessman collide with explosive consequences. Murder, cover-ups, and corruption of unimaginable dimensions expose the politics of asylum-seeker boat arrivals and head-in-sand attitudes towards homelessness in a political contest with ever-more desperate combatants.

Art Lazaar is in the thick of it. He is a writer with a poetic licence that ties him to a past he can't escape and contracted to a mysterious government agency while doubling as an academic spying on his boss. In the week the election is announced, he receives a call from a figure connected to that same past. He must protect a young asylum seeker running from those who murdered her brother. It's not a request he can refuse.

Spellbinding, suspenseful, populated by complex characters in a world deeply etched in our psyches, this thrilling, propulsive story does not let the politics of truth and freedom rest easily.

Authorship

- What is 'poetic licence'? In what ways can Art Lazaar's 'poetic licence' be related to the author?

Metafiction

- Detective fiction is often described as having elements of metafiction – fiction about fiction – in that the solving of the crime within the novel mirrors our own desire for closure not only at the end of all novels, but also, it can be said, the closure we desire in our own lives. How is this so in *Poetic Licence*?

Narration

- The chapters of *Poetic Licence* alternate between two narrators – Art Lazaar and a third person narrator. Why do you think the author decided on this structural choice?
- How would you describe the third person narrator: intrusive, subjective, or objective? What evidence from the novel supports this? Does the technique work for you as a reader?

Politics

- How does the representation of current events – including the plight of refugees coming to Australia, homelessness, and political corruption – correlate with your own understanding of these issues?
- Within *Poetic Licence*, politicians are not named and are replaced with acronyms such as TAPM and LOTO. What do you think the purpose of this might be?
- Does the novel have a clear political agenda? If so, does this affect it as a work of literature?
- How deliberately selective was the topicality of the author's themes around asylum seekers, homelessness, and political bastardry?

Representation

- The primary setting of *Poetic Licence* is the city and streets of Fremantle. However, its noirish representation can be said to differ from our own experiences of Fremantle or from other representations of Fremantle, both fictional and non-fictional. Why might this be?
- Can 'place' in the novel also be defined as a character in the novel? How?
- Perth and WA are usually presented as hot and dry, and the beaches are often the centre of novels representing life in WA. *Poetic Licence* takes a much more wintry view. What effect does this have on the setting?

Australian Literature

- Besides the Australian setting of Fremantle, in what ways would *Poetic Licence* be considered a very Australian novel? Consider, for example, the language used and the novel's characterisation.
- How might *Poetic Licence* also defy some of the typical archetypes and tropes of Australian literature?

Kevin Price



Kevin Price is a West Australian author who lives on a rural property in the hills north of Perth. Poetic Licence is his second novel and first (therefore, best) thriller.