

incoming tide  
content when cold and hungry, the  
mass that rolls with the current  
it never sleeps

Watson has a way of leading us back to our senses with irresistible lines that make the skin crawl and the hair stand on end in poems like "The Mosquito Room," "The Nun" and "1986." A taste from his description of mosquitoes "millions of micro-winged demons playing violins at break-neck speed." My only complaint—I would like to have heard a little more of the work of this poet.

The final piece "Nar-dha, Place of the Black Duck (Parts 1-6)" is another accomplished piece by Dionysius, a long narrative tracing the effects of the settlers on the Turrbul and the eventual loss of the Nar-dha. Again in the voice of the Turrbul people, it may prompt some to consider the important question of just when it is appropriate to take on the voice of one from another race.

What is clear is that this CD is long overdue, as both a literary, cultural and social landmark, not just for south-east Queensland but for the whole of Australia, and especially for the young who may find this fine production more palatable than a dry textbook.

Michelle Taylor

## MYTHIC, EROTIC, PARODIC

Hazel Smith, *Keys Round Her Tongue*.  
Soma Publications, Woollooware,  
2000.

What is poetry for? Perhaps that's like asking the scientist the point of science. Let's concede that the poem is the great experiment, driven by any number of things—ambition, desire to communicate, to discover, to perceive the world differently, perhaps an urge to create or a love of words. Language is added and taken away, melted down and burnt until the elements remain. The resulting crystal may come as a surprise, it may be worthless or precious (much of this depending on who you are).

These thoughts came to mind when reading Hazel Smith's *Keys Round Her Tongue*, and although this book is described as short prose, poems and performance texts, the feeling is of pieces inherently borne of poetry. That is, poetry located in the place that Margaret Atwood describes—"where the language is renewed, it's the heart of the language." Smith is tirelessly forging something new with her words, wanting language to grow and break free, and often the experiment produces a piece of writing which radiates with energy.

"Secret Places" is a very satisfying piece which brings into force a range

of influences on the writer. It was initially inspired by "Casuarina Woman," the artist Sieglende Karl's mythological impression of a woman made from casuarina needles. This piece echoes two other stories—that of a female survivor of the holocaust who retained a will to live even after losing her young daughter in front of her eyes, and Siberia's ice-maiden discovered in a frozen tomb 2500 years after her death.

As Smith puts it, "Secret Places" is a mix of "the mythic, the erotic and the parodic" and perhaps we could add to the list "emotive." An incredible tension is created as we skip between Casuarina as a child growing wings which her father lopped off, Cass with her love of comfort foods safely skimming the tragedies in the morning newspaper, to Casuarina's hilarious exploration of Freud and Jung and nudity, to the disturbing portrayal of love, loss and guilt in the holocaust.

This is a story of separation, but also  
a tale of threading lost needles.

Breaking to be, bleeding as healer.

This is a story of forests and  
flight-paths, songlines and  
shellfire, cross-pollination of  
time-warps and mind trails.

This is a story which speaks for itself  
through mummified skins,  
secrets as peeling.

"Returning the Angles" is a long  
piece where Smith's juxtaposition of

form, voices, places, time frames and  
cultures makes for layers of interest  
and meaning once again, and as  
with most of her writing there is a  
music here. This music is often  
percussive, and at times melodious  
and much of the writing begs to at  
least be read aloud.

the sisters peel away guilt-edged secrets  
the sisters skip through the loop of  
their childhood  
the sisters hang their past on a lifeline

And like those much-loved lines of  
songs we carry with us, I will take  
some wonderful lines away with me  
from *Keys Round Her Tongue* ...

Love is not illegal but it stands on  
trial

And the fabulous ...

I lock the poems in the boot of my car  
and smuggle myself over silent  
frontiers.

20