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, Woolooware,  
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 Sieglinde 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.

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.