

## **Scathing book review of *The Dawn is at Hand* by Kath Walker 1967 by S.E. Lee**

“Kath Walker is undoubtedly the most aggressive and socially "involved" of the poets under review. Since her first book (*We Are Going*) appeared, Miss Walker has been given some good advice by James Devaney to the effect that "propaganda-like stuff which might be all right for my campaigning addresses on behalf of Aboriginal Advancement is not necessarily good in poetry". Obviously though Miss Walker is unable to understand this advice, as she thinks that only one poem of this kind ("Daisy Bindi") appears in the present volume, when the title-poem and verses about assimilation (No!), integration (Yes!) and dark unmarried mothers ("Fair game for lechers/Bosses and station hands") and some satiric quatrains are all crudely and rhetorically propagandist”...

“Craftsmanship-wise Miss Walker has much to learn: there is little sensitivity or precision in the vocabulary; crude thumping rhythms and insistent rhymes add to the stridency; and (worst of all) the verses talk (and shout) about abstractions like Injustice in generalized language instead of attempting their concrete embodiment in imaginative language. The verses about aboriginals and their legends (for example, "The Curlew Cried"), and the more personal inward-looking poems ("Artist Son" and "Understand, Old One") are more poetic in impulse and expression. These verses are of better quality but it is difficult to imagine their being considered for publication except for the accident that their author happens to be an aborigine passionately concerned about a very great social wrong that is currently troubling many consciences in the white community.”

Lee, SE. "Poetic fisticuffs" [Book Review]. *Southerly*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Mar 1967: 60-71.