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*Reflected Light: La Trobe Essays* edited by Peter Beilharz and Robert Manne. Black Inc., 2006.

Reviewed by Gillian Dooley, *Adelaide Review* 19 January 2007, p. 19.

This is an unusually interesting set of essays, given that their only common feature is their authors' connection with La Trobe University. The essays – 25 of them, by 25 different authors – are aimed, according to the editors, not at 'fellow academic specialists but fellow citizens'. In some, this seems to have been an invitation to relax normal academic rigour, resulting in a rather self-indulgent nostalgia. The essays that stand out, however, have responded seriously to the challenge to combine clarity with complexity.

Inga Clendinnen's two essays, both quite personal in focus, sparkle with wit. Judith Brett, who also contributes two, writes about the politics of language, with reference to pride – and the backyard chook. There are different angles on similar topics, too. Robert Manne considers John Howard's pro-American sentiments, while Marilyn Lake reveals the Americophilia of an earlier leader, Alfred Deakin. John Carroll and John Hirst give their respective views on the nature of Australian culture, while John Morton challenges the taboo on a discourse of race in intellectual life. There are critiques of Windschuttle and Furedi, and of prisons as tourist attractions. This is a feast for the reader wanting something both challenging and readable.