Christopher Caldwell's *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* is the most recent of several books by Americans about Europe's challenges in dealing with its fast-growing and assertive Muslim minority. Unlike many of his forerunners however, Caldwell is no Euro-bashing polemicist or deliberately alarmist. The result is a nuanced and persuasive book by Caldwell, who writes for the *Financial Times* and has examined the Europe-Islam relationship for more than a decade. Unfortunately, Caldwell's credibility only makes his grim conclusions all the more disturbing.

The book starts with the premise that Western Europe became a multi-ethnic society in a `fit of absence of mind' when post-War governments decided to open their borders to a disparate Muslim population to fill short-term labour needs. By describing the jobs that migrants came to fill and the housing they moved in to, Caldwell illustrates how appallingly little consideration politicians gave to facilitating migrants' transition to or from Europe (initially, it was assumed the migrants would return).

The book's second premise is that once it became evident that the migration was permanent and assimilation would not occur automatically, post-colonial guilt and aversion to nationalism meant Europe's elites were ill-prepared to discuss, let alone demand, assimilation or respect from the new arrivals.

Caldwell devotes considerable attention to how politicians pinned their hopes on migration as the saviour of the European welfare model. These plans, unrealistic from the outset, were dashed with the disappearance of the jobs that the migrants came to fill. Migration continued nonetheless, but instead of contributing economically, statistics indicate migrants proved detrimental to the finances of the welfare state as welfare claims exceeded contributions. Rather than acknowledge the plan had failed, excuses were found to justify migration as the original economic benefits were erased.

Europeans' lack of confidence stands in contrast to Muslim assertiveness in terms of maintaining their cultural distinctness while taking advantage of European freedoms, such as freedom from religious vilification to silence those demanding reciprocity. Caldwell concludes that when an insecure, malleable and relativistic culture meets a culture that is anchored, confident and strengthened by common doctrines, it is generally the former that changes to suit the latter.

Caldwell's writing style includes a journalist's mix of statistics, anecdotes and quotes, taking the reader from French hip-hop culture to government reports to Lord Byron. This is done rather well more often than not, making the book highly readable. Reference is made to several West European countries' experiences of Muslim immigration, which, in spite of their specifics, are depressingly familiar in their inability to satisfy immigrants and hosts alike.

The book is usefully divided into three parts: Immigration, Islam, and the West. Within each part are several chapters each dealing with a topic, and chapters are subdivided into catchy sub-chapters, for example: Islam; Rules of Sex; Arranged Marriages.

The book's strength and its weakness is in Caldwell covering a lot of ground and his outsider's observant eye—he draws on examples from several European countries to substantiate broad conclusions, yet at times he clearly tailors the foot to fit the shoe, and his anecdotes describing European's sense of impotence lay it on a bit thick. Furthermore, while Caldwell's understanding of the topic shines, when it comes to hearing the Muslim voice, he remains, like most writers who have attempted to write on this issue, dependant on opinion polls and statements from community representatives and firebrand crackpots. Caldwell never attempts to directly ask the 'silent majority' of Muslims to discuss his book's central questions nor confirm his most disturbing claims: that Muslims feel no sense of admiration or responsibility towards the values of their European host countries.

Another shortcoming of *Reflections* is Caldwell's silence on the matter of any possible solution to the problems he outlines. Granted, the book never claims to address the issue of what can be done, but establishing credibility only to issue a disturbing diagnosis leaves him open to the charge of celebratory schadenfreude leveled at many of his compatriots who have written on the issue.

Caldwell's achievement is to write an intelligent book that does not pull any punches or demonise Muslims. As such, the book is best suited to those who wish the world the
best but still blissfully assume that somehow everything will work out.

Reviewed by Joel André Malan. He is an Australian now living in Copenhagen.

Up from the Mission: Selected Writings by Noel Pearson
Black Inc, 2009
$34.95, 400pp
ISBN 9781863954280

Noel Pearson has been described as one of Australia’s most influential intellectuals. He is known for both his work as a lawyer and lands rights activist as well as his social commentary on Indigenous issues. His essays on welfare have resonated with politicians from both sides of the political spectrum. And unlike most intellectuals, his ideas have actually made their way into government policies and legislation.

Up from the Mission: Selected Writings is his first book. It consists of speeches, essays and opinion editorials written over the last 21 years. Taken as whole, the book is not only a repository of Pearson’s work but a history of Australia’s Indigenous policies and politics.

However, the writings are not arranged chronologically. Speeches or essays have been chosen from various pieces written over the years to illustrate a theme. Although this lends the book a certain disjointedness, it proves his point that he has not moved closer to the Right or changed the substance of what he believes in over the years. ‘Reading again what I wrote as a 22-year-old, I am struck by how little my basic convictions have changed.’

Although Pearson disagrees that the Right have succeeded in a ‘cultural war’ over Indigenous policy, he has parted ways with the Left. In a section called ‘Challenging Old Friends,’ he describes how in the late 1990s he started to doubt whether the policies of Left and left-leaning organisations, parties and intellectuals actually serve Indigenous people. ‘The Left tends to support policies that can only waste more precious time: further research, rehabilitation, harm minimisation, improved service delivery and so on.’

The Left’s failure to see passive welfare as the cause of Indigenous disadvantage (not just a symptom of it) saw Pearson eventually conclude that the Left’s way of thinking was more guilty of keeping Indigenous people down than the Right’s. ‘The freedom to be irresponsible further weakens the weak.’

Pearson is not uncritical of those from the Right. He is fully aware of their failings too, in particular the lack of empathy that some conservative Australians show towards Aboriginal culture. Yet, ultimately he has found that the Right is more interested than the Left in exploring policies that deal with Indigenous people’s core social problems. It is this pragmatism that is a hallmark of Pearson’s career.

His reason for seeking support from conservative Australians was to help avoid the Left-versus-Right debate and, hopefully, lead to more widespread support for the aspirations of Indigenous Australians. To what extent this has happened is debatable. He hasn’t really avoided the Left-versus-Right conflict as many on the Left now see him aligned with the Right and abhor his views on welfare reform.

Pearson’s ideas have, however, made their way to the political centre. This is not to say that he is fence sitting or has found a middle-of-the-road compromise; instead, finding the ‘radical centre’ is his ultimate aim. It takes some re-reading to fully grasp what he means by radical centre because his language has all the clarity of conventional academic text and nothing of the searing prose he uses in his opinion pieces. ‘The radical centre may be defined as the intense resolution of the tensions between two opposing principles … a resolution that produces the synthesis of optimum policy.’

Further on, he describes some of the classical dialectical tensions, including idealism versus realism, rights versus responsibilities, social order versus liberty, structure versus behaviour, and opportunity versus choice. Here, he clarifies what being at the ‘radical centre’ entails.

The radical centre is not about securing a false compromise between two opposing points of view but about finding the apex where two sides meet. He uses a pyramid metaphor to talk about two qualities of leadership—idealism and realism. ‘The best leadership occurs at the point of highest tension between ideals and reality … The radical centre is achieved when both are strong.’

If one side of a dialectical struggle is weak and the other is strong, ‘skewering’ occurs. Pearson argues that this phenomenon is apparent today in Indigenous policy. The responsibility agenda has ascended but the rights agenda has receded. While Pearson and Warren Mundine have been championing the Indigenous responsibility agenda, there has been no effective rights leadership and advocacy. For