Sexual Equality in an Integrated Europe, Virtual Equality, R. Amy Elman (New York/Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, ISBN 9781403982759); xx+206pp., np hb.

I should start by mentioning that this book review has been written by a lawyer, and not a political scientist, which accounts to some extent for the perspective taken and comments produced. Amy Elman proposes in this work a highly critical analysis of the politics surrounding gender equality in the EU. The book is structured in eight main chapters: in chapters 2 and 3 the author sets the background to, and presents a chronological account of, the topic at stake; in chapter 4 she makes a first assessment of the policies in question; in chapter 5 she focuses on the intersection between political participation and gender; in chapter 6 the role of male violence is examined; in chapter 7 the programmes Stop and Daphne are assessed; chapter 8 debates the process of politicisation of (mostly female lesbian) sexuality; and chapter 9 concentrates on the right of same-sex couples to marry. The book chiefly concludes that the EU's role in this field has primarily been one of maintaining gender inequality, rather than diminishing it.

This book presents interesting insights drawing from significant data from various EU Member States. Examples of this pertain to the author's stand on the value and risks of making claims at the EU, instead of national, level, as well as to the anti-discrimination comparator model. Moreover, the initial discussion on the European institutional setting and on the history surrounding (ex-)Article 119 EC and the *Defrenne* cases render the reading of the book much more accessible to those not familiar with these essential background issues. However, the author's eagerness to criticise the elements of and initiatives within the EU gender equality policy risks rendering some arguments less persuasive. This is noticeable in chapter 7, where the author's approach towards the potential beneficiaries of the Stop and Daphne programmes is to a certain extent disconcerting. Such 'healthy skepticism' (*sic*), although academically essential, becomes difficult to fully sustain when it (partially) relies on what appears as biased interpretations.

Detrimental to the central argumentation are some rather poorly founded arguments. This is particularly the case in regard to the considerations on the workings of the ECJ, some of its jurisprudence, the sources of EU law, the interpretation of certain EU legislation, and the institution of EU citizenship. Also detrimental to the overall solidity of the final result are the assumptions made to the effect that: (a) gender politics should only be concerned with protecting women (namely lesbians and black women) from discrimination, thus ignoring for the most part men who are equally harmed by gender stereotypes and by white, Christian, heterosexual, socially privileged male domination; and that (b) pornography and prostitution are equal to sexual violence against women, thus both ignoring the often recognised voluntary character of some female prostitution and pornography, and further turning a blind eye on the growing gay porn and male prostitution industry.

Many of the issues raised by the author concern general issues of implementation, effectiveness, legal redress and competence in law-making in the EU,

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and further in national jurisdictions. Nonetheless, overall this book provides an interesting and encompassing account and critique of the past and present of gender equality in the EU. Most of all, it duly alerts us to the fact that the lack of legal and political redress in the field of gender equality is pervasive in the system of EU governance. The cry for true ‘relief’ instead of the ‘rhetoric of market liberalisation’ is undoubtedly valid and urgent.

NUNO FERREIRA

School of Law, The University of Manchester