

Professor Helena Forsås-Scott: An Obituary

It was with great sadness that we learned earlier this year of the death of our friend and colleague Helena Forsås-Scott. Helena had been a member of the Advisory Board of *Scandinavica* since 2005, and a Director of Norvik Press since 2009. In that capacity she had been actively engaged in editing, reviewing and promoting Scandinavian, and especially Swedish, literature until very shortly before her death. Among many other things, she took the initiative to begin a new authoritative edition in English translation of the works of the Nobel prize-winning novelist Selma Lagerlöf, for which she was successful in obtaining a number of grants, and which has recently published its seventh volume, with several more in the pipeline.

But her work with Norvik Press was only a small part of Helena's wide-ranging achievements. An academic with a first degree in Nordic languages and literature from the University of Gothenburg and a PhD in British drama from the University of Aberdeen, she devoted her career to teaching and mentoring generations of students, firstly in Aberdeen, then in Edinburgh, and finally – from 1994 – at UCL. She was made Professor of Swedish and Gender Studies at UCL, and later an Honorary Professor at the University of Edinburgh, with which she had retained close links and where she moved on her retirement in 2010. Although originally she had taught mainly Swedish language and literature, her teaching expanded with her interests to a much broader area of social studies, gender studies and European literature. She was well-known in academic circles in Britain, Scandinavia and the US, where she was always in demand as a lecturer, editor and conference organizer. She was editor-in-chief of a comprehensive Encyclopaedia of Nordic Culture, which unhappily she did not live to see in print.

Helena's main research interest, however, was in gender studies, and in particular in nineteenth and twentieth-century Swedish women's writing. She was a founder of UCL's MA in Gender Studies (2005-). She wrote a monograph on the pioneering feminist Elin Wägner, *Rewriting*

the Script: Gender and Community in Elin Wägner (2009) and was one of the editors of *Re-Mapping Lagerlöf* (2014), a book based on a conference on Selma Lagerlöf which she had organized at UCL. She also edited more general essays under the heading of *Gender-Power-Text: Nordic Culture in the Twentieth Century* (2004), and wrote *Swedish Women's Writing 1850-1995* (1997), as well as co-editing *A Century of Swedish Narrative* (1994), a tribute to her predecessor at UCL, Karin Petherick. In recent years, Helena had been working on a monograph which took an ecofeminist approach to the writing of Kerstin Ekman. Her contribution to disseminating knowledge of Swedish literature in the English-speaking world was recognised in 2014 by a special prize from the Swedish Academy.

Those of us who were privileged to work with Helena will miss more than her encyclopaedic knowledge and enviable capacity for work. She was a skilful and dedicated enthusiast who had a keen eye both for broader strategic planning and for the finer details of nuance in texts and in translation. But above all she was a generous and supportive colleague, whose influence will long be felt and whose presence will be sorely missed.

Janet Garton