Eva Gabrielsson worked with Stieg Larsson, author of the *Millennium* trilogy, for thirty-two years, and they lived together in Stockholm in a de facto relationship for thirty of them. Though she worked as an architect by day and he as a leftwing investigative journalist and writer, their shared social activism and hand-to-mouth circumstances meant their personal and work lives intertwined with unusual intimacy, and unfolded at a frantic pace that left no time for prudent management of personal health and legal affairs. This last circumstance set the scene for tragedy. In late 2004, aged fifty, Stieg died intestate of a sudden heart attack, having just delivered the trilogy manuscripts to the publisher.

As the trilogy became the phenomenon we know today, Eva found she’d inherited nothing, not even any influence over Stieg’s literary output. Swedish succession law was as bereft of provision for de factos as Stieg’s father and brother, the beneficiaries of his intestate estate, were of anything approaching basic human decency. They have continued to pocket all the royalties (estimated at US$15 million in 2010) and to allow publishers free rein to bowdlerise the texts in translation, thus blunting their political point, and to sell the film rights to the highest bidder. At various stages they even looked like seizing Stieg’s half of the flat Eva had shared with him. Their behaviour is all the more breathtaking given that their remoteness to him in life (Stieg grew up with his grandparents) is matched only by their cupiditly towards his earnings in death. As the prominent Swedish crime writer, Leif GW Persson, has commented, not even (the exorbitantly imaginative) Stieg Larsson could have come up with a plot like this.

To put it mildly, then, Eva Gabrielsson has a tale to tell. *Stieg & Me* makes an authoritative contribution to what has become Sweden’s and the publishing world’s scandal of the century. She enjoys massive public support, including from the dedicated Norwegian website [www.supporteva.com](http://www.supporteva.com), in the miscarriage of justice she has suffered. And it is a tale that is still unfolding. Prompted by the waves of public disapproval washing over them, Larsson père and frère make periodic limp gestures through intermediaries or media releases to ‘negotiate’ with Gabrielsson, the first item on their agenda being to gain custody of the vanished laptop on which Stieg was writing the fourth book in the *Millennium* series when he died. It was last seen in the offices of *Expo* (the real-life forerunner of the *Millennium* magazine of the series) which he and Eva had founded and where he worked.

She essentially co-wrote the first three books with him, she credibly contends, and she alone could complete the fourth book with any authorial integrity. It is not as if the Muse bestowed any special blessing on Stieg as a wordsmith; rather, the happy union of moral passion, the investigative journalist’s craft of hair-raising exposé, and racy revenge fantasy personified in the idiosyncratic feminist superhero Lisbeth Salander, has driven the trilogy towards unheard-of international popularity and stellar profitability. Presumably Eva alone could bring all these desiderata to the task of rounding out his (and her) unfinished work.
Sadly this English-language edition of her own book does not do her story justice. When my copy arrived I thought it had been self-published, such was the quality of the paper, the cover and the layout. I had to look twice to reassure myself that it really did carry Allen & Unwin’s imprint.

On working my way into it, I became more and more confused about the authorial voice. Eva ostensibly tells her story in the first person, but there are various indications that Marie-Françoise Colombani – a writer for the French fashion magazine *Elle* and author of a book of interviews with Ségolène Royal – is actually holding the pen. The text has then gone through a further process of translation, with the inevitable losses and gains, at the hands of an American French-English translator. Without access to the non-English antecedents, slippages cannot be identified, except in one glaring instance: Eva / Marie-Françoise relates (214) that she and Gunnar von Sydow last year published a book whose main title is given in the original as *Sambo* (literally ‘living together’). This is the normal modern Swedish word for de facto, one which plainly denotes Stieg and Eva’s standing with each other. Yet it is translated as ‘concubine’ – a category last heard of in imperial China. Allen & Unwin’s publicity release duly notes that Eva Gabrielsson has written ‘books on a variety of subjects including concubinage and architecture’. Such *bêtises* do little for one’s sense of resting in safe hands when reading a translated text.

But the sheer artlessness of the prose style turns out to be a redeeming feature. The story itself is a case of *res ipse loquitur* – the facts speak for themselves, and undue affect or embellishment would have weakened their impact. The reader thus gets a restrained (and therewith powerful) account of Eva and Stieg’s relationship over all those years, their shared feminist commitment, his specialisation in exposing far-right groups, the harassment and death threats this work attracted, the travails of establishing and sustaining *Expo*, his sudden death, and the appalling aftermath for her. Any reader who has also read the *Millennium* trilogy (especially the first book) will get an enticing sense of the autobiographical inputs they contain.

For this and many other reasons, this is a book for *Millennium* aficionados. More importantly, it is a reality check for anyone who believes gender equality has been achieved, even in Sweden.

Winton Higgins