

## Voyaging the Gap: Scandinavian Sagas of Migration to New Zealand, 1860–1890

*Session G4*

Recently, while looking for examples of Scandinavian themes and motifs in New Zealand literature, I encountered a cache of mostly out-of-print nonfiction books written about the voyages of these hardy settlers to New Zealand in the nineteenth century. I have a personal interest as part of my own family story is in one of these texts, *Johanna's World*, by Oystein Andressen.

In several of the books—some written for local rural New Zealand communities, others translated into English from Norwegian and Swedish, Danish and Finnish—the usual colonial themes of privation, struggle, poverty and hardship prevail. However, the books often go beyond historical record and the original documents and letters upon which they are based, to bridge the gap between history and imagination, as the authors articulate how their subjects feel and what motivates many of their decisions and responses—topics upon which most settlers had been stoically silent for a century. It is now over 40 years since Lee Gutkind gave us the term Creative Nonfiction, where writers immerse themselves in the field of research or write about their own experience, and yet these authors write about history subjectively, using documentation to recreate the ordinary lives of those who lived through historical events rather than making them.

This paper will consider the fictional devices, narratological and rhetorical, by which the texts cross the threshold between fiction and nonfiction.

**Biographical Note:** Gail Pittaway is Senior Lecturer in the School of Media Arts, Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton, New Zealand. A member of the New Zealand Communication Association, the Tertiary Writing Network and the New Zealand Society of Authors, Gail has also been the curator for the Readers and Writers section of the Hamilton Gardens Festival of the Arts since 2010. She is currently an advisory editor for *TEXT* journal and a founding co-editor of *Meniscus* literary magazine, having also been a member of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs executive committee since 2004. She has edited several anthologies of student writing, and a historical collection of writings associated with gardens, as well as regularly publishing poetry, papers and articles for *TEXT* and *Great Writing* journals.

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