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**WHAT ARE THE TERMS NEEDED TO CREATE A THEATRE PLAY ABOUT THE
LEGENDARY MANAWATU OUTLAW JOSEPH PAWELKA THAT WILL
UNIVERSALISE HIS STORY AND MAKE IT RELEVANT FOR A
CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE?**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Creative Writing
in English
at Massey University, Manawatu,
New Zealand.**

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Abstract

I have always been intrigued by the story of the Manawatu outlaw and ‘Man Alone’ folk hero Joseph Pawelka. In planning this thesis I had two objectives. My first was to test the possibility that I could write a play centred on a historical figure such as Pawelka that would be both mythic and resonant for a modern audience. My second objective was to analyse and reflect upon the entire process of researching and writing this play.

My research for the play, *Smoke and Mirrors*, has been both literary and historical. In order to write with depth and accuracy I needed to research Joseph Pawelka’s life and times and my thesis essay has given an overview and an analysis of my findings. These were taken from books, folk memory, newspapers of the day, files in National Archives, and also from later secondary sources.

In literary terms, the thesis has charted the artistic and theatrical choices I made as I developed the play, *Smoke and Mirrors*, into a work of non-naturalistic theatre. As part of my literary research I explored three plays written in similarly non-naturalistic style – Frank Wedekind’s two (combined) *Lulu* plays, Bertolt Brecht’s opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, and Mervyn Thompson’s *Children of the Poor*. The finished version of my play *Smoke and Mirrors* contains theatrical elements and techniques taken from each of these three plays, and the thesis has recorded this process.

The thesis has also included an account of the first production of *Smoke and Mirrors* in October 2012 in Palmerston North and an overview of the various strengths and weaknesses of the play in performance.

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