

For this creative response I chose to create a work of historical fiction. To create this piece I took inspiration from the themes and techniques used in Charlotte Perkins Stetson's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) and Leo Tolstoy's *The Porcelain Doll* (1863). Each of their works focus on the real world contexts happening outside of the story. By researching these work's and the background behind their stories I was able to create my own historical work.

During the 1800s, Charlotte Perkins Stetson was one of the leading theorists of the US women's movement (The Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2022). As such, her work, in particular *The Yellow Wallpaper*, focuses on how women were treated at the time. This inspired the voice of the main character in *Not.A.Simple.Affair (N.A.S.A)*. Similar to the voice of Perkins Stetson's story, my character is placed in a situation where she is under the control of a man. To demonstrate this we both keep the name of the female main character unknown for a majority of our work whereas the male character's names are stated. This gives the male characters in our story a subtle level of power over the main characters. Whilst the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* is anonymous for the story's entirety, the protagonist's name is revealed at the very end of the story. This demonstrates the completion of Anastasia's character arc. As a name can be integral to a person's identity, by revealing her name, not a pet name like 'sweetheart', I reveal her true identity.

Leo Tolstoy's work was a starting point for researching how to portray Russian culture in literature without being cliché. In *The Porcelain Doll*, Tolstoy breaks the traditional rules of syntax, in particular brackets, to clearly display the character's inner thoughts. Brackets are traditionally used to give extra, not crucial, information to the reader. However, Tolstoy breaks this rule to cue the audience into the story's plot twist. Unlike Tolstoy, in *N.A.S.A*, I did not want to cue the audience into my plot twist. To do this I used a red herring with an extended metaphor. Throughout the course of the story the audience is led to believe that Anastasia's nervousness is due to her boss' assault on her. After this interaction she feels "like a soldier in a gruelling battlefield...I was stuck in no-man's-land". It is here that I used figurative language to transition from Anastasia's emotional internal monologue to a more factual voice. The fading of the battle metaphor allowed me to control my audience's focus, therefore their expectations about the plot elements to come.

Furthermore, the battlefield metaphor was a hint to Anastasia's true intentions and was inspired by the Russian saying "One is not a soldier in the battlefield" (Online Travel Guide, 2022). I interpreted this to mean that it takes more than one person to achieve success and no one can be excluded. Exclusion has been a common experience in the lives of women and is a prominent theme in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. During the 1970s, women's contributions to the workplace were overlooked. Underestimating Anastasia is what allowed her the opportunity to steal the document. It is also what allowed the Russians to perform one of the first accounts of online espionage when they stole shuttle plans from NASA during the 70's and 80's (Betz, 2016).

The red herring and Anastasia's subsequent seeking of comfort provided the momentum for the rest of the story. The audience's expectations regarding story structure lead them to believe that the assault was the conflict. This meant I could use each new setting to place a hint. For example, when Anastasia orders a Reuban sandwich, a popular American sandwich which traditionally has Russian dressing.

After setting myself the challenge of creating a story with a slowly revealed plot twist ending I used early readers to test if the structure of my story had the desired effect. Early readers have suggested a sequel from the boss's perspective. A tantalising idea.

## References:

Betz,E (2016) *Real-Life Rogue One: How the Soviets Stole NASA's Shuttle Plans*, Discover. Available at: <https://www.discovermagazine.com/the-sciences/real-life-rogue-one-how-the-soviets-stole-nasas-shuttle-plans> [Accessed 25 September 2022]

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