

“There’s Zelenskiy,” says Patrikarakos, “and then there’s this Botoxed Bond villain who won’t sit at a table with other people. All that’s missing is a trapdoor and a pool of sharks.”

Guardian 25 March 2022

A body language expert has revealed that Russian President Vladimir Putin oozes the “understated menace” you would see from watching a villain in a James Bond movie

Daily Star, 25 February 2022

One might wonder why Vladimir Putin has not yet appropriated an extinct volcano for himself as his lair. After all, Monday’s meeting of his Security Council saw him in full Blofeld mode, lacking only a white cat and a pool of piranhas to channel his inner Bond villain.

Daily Telegraph, 23 February 2022

Ernst Blofeld.... gazed slowly round the faces of his twenty men, and looked for eyes that didn't squarely meet his. Blofeld's own eyes were deep black pools surrounded – totally surrounded, as Mussolini's were – by very clear whites ... they stripped the guilty or the false and made him feel transparent – as transparent as a fishbowl through whose sides Blofeld examined, with only the most casual curiosity, the few solid fish, the grains of truth, suspended in the void of deceit or attempted obscurity.

Ian Fleming, *Thunderball* (1961) Ch. 5

As for my selfe, I walke abroad a nights
And kill sicke people groaning under walls:
Sometimes I goe about and poyson wells ...
...Being young I studied Physicke, and began
To practice first upon the Italian;
There I enrich'd the Priests with burials,
And alwayes kept the Sexton's armes in ure
With digging graves and ringing dead mens keels:
And after that I was an Engineere,
And in the warres 'twixt France and Germanie,
Under presence of helping Charles the fifth,
Slew friend and enemy with my stratagemms ...

Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta* (1590) Act 2, Sc. 3

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other:

Shakespeare, *Richard III* (1592?) Act 1, Sc. 1

Cassio's a proper man: let me see now:
To get his place and to plume up my will
In double knavery—How, how? Let's see:—
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.
I have't. It is engender'd. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

Shakespeare, *Othello* (1603) Act 1, Sc. 3

He was very tall and strong, with a face as big as a ham—plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling. Indeed, he seemed in the most cheerful spirits, whistling as he moved about among the tables, with a merry word or a slap on the shoulder for the more favoured of his guests.

Now, to tell you the truth, from the very first mention of Long John in Squire Trelawney's letter I had taken a fear in my mind that he might prove to be the very one-legged sailor whom I had watched for so long at the old Benbow. But one look at the man before me was enough. I had seen the captain, and Black Dog, and the blind man, Pew, and I thought I knew what a buccaneer was like—a very different creature, according to me, from this clean and pleasant-tempered landlord.

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1881-20), Ch. VIII

“Right you are,” said Silver; “rough and ready. But mark you here, I’m an easy man—I’m quite the gentleman, says you; but this time it’s serious. Dooty is dooty, mates. I give my vote—death. When I’m in Parlyment and riding in my coach, I don’t want none of these sea-lawyers in the cabin a-coming home, unlooked for, like the devil at prayers. Wait is what I say; but when the time comes, why, let her rip!”

“John,” cries the coxswain, “you’re a man!”

“You’ll say so, Israel when you see,” said Silver. “Only one thing I claim—I claim Trelawney. I’ll wring his calf’s head off his body with these hands, Dick!”

Treasure Island, Ch. XI



Until by *matrimonial* or *equal* intimacies I have found her less than angel, it is impossible to think of any other. Then there are so many stimulatives to such a spirit as mine in this affair, besides love: such a field of stratagem and contrivance, which thou knowest to be the delight of my heart. Then the rewarding end of all—to carry off such a girl as this, in spite of all her watchful and implacable friends; and in spite of a prudence and reserve that I never met with in any of the sex. What a triumph!—What a triumph over the whole sex! And then such a revenge to gratify, which is only at present politically reined in, eventually to break forth with the greater fury. Is it possible, thinkest thou, that there can be room for a thought that is not *of* her, and devoted *to* her?

Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1747-8), Letter 31

I have a confounded mischievous one—by *nature* too, I think!—A good motion now and then rises from it: but it dies away presently—a love of intrigue!—an invention for mischief!—a triumph in subduing!—fortune encouraging and supporting!—and a constitution—What signifies palliating? But I believe I had been a rogue, had I been a plough-boy.

But the devil's in this sex! Eternal misguiders! Who, that has once trespassed ever recovered his virtue?

Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1747-8), Letter 34

Charming creature! thought I, (*but I charge thee, that thou let not any of the sex know my exultation,*¹) Is it so *soon* come to this?

¹ Mr. Lovelace might have spared this caution on this occasion, since many of the sex (we mention it with regret) who on the first publication had read thus far, and even to the lady's first escape, have been readier to censure her for over-niceness, as we have observed in a former note, (vol I, p. 501), than him for artifices and exultations not less cruel and ungrateful, than ungenerous and unmanly.

Clarissa, 3rd edition (1751), Vol. II, Letter X

What of the Count?

This in two words: He looks like a man who could tame anything. If he had married a tigress, instead of a woman, he would have tamed the tigress. If he had married me, I should have made his cigarettes, as his wife does—I should have held my tongue when he looked at me, as she holds hers.

I am almost afraid to confess it, even to these secret pages. The man has interested me, has attracted me, has forced me to like him. In two short days he has made his way straight into my favourable estimation, and how he has worked the miracle is more than I can tell.

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, The Second Epoch, II

He is a most remarkable likeness, on a large scale, of the great Napoleon. His features have Napoleon's magnificent regularity—his expression recalls the grandly calm, immovable power of the Great Soldier's face. This striking resemblance certainly impressed me, to begin with; but there is something in him besides the resemblance, which has impressed me more. I think the influence I am now trying to find is in his eyes. They are the most unfathomable grey eyes I ever saw, and they have at times a cold, clear, beautiful, irresistible glitter in them which forces me to look at him, and yet causes me sensations, when I do look, which I would rather not feel.

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, The Second Epoch, II

“He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the center of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organized.

Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Final Problem’, *Strand Magazine*, December 1893





"PROFESSOR MURPHY STOOD BEFORE ME."

He is a man of good birth and excellent education, endowed by nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty. At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise upon the Binomial Theorem, which has had a European vogue. On the strength of it he won the Mathematical Chair at one of our smaller universities, and had, to all appearances, a most brilliant career before him. But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers.

Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Final Problem', *Strand Magazine*, December 1893

... They have to let him go, for lack of evidence, because you can't make anything of a heap of ashes in the hearth.

Monmouth himself would be a heap of ashes, if Thomas More had his way. 'Not come to see us yet, Master Cromwell?' he says. 'Still breaking dry bread in cellars? Come now, my tongue is sharper than you deserve. We must be friends, you know.'

It sounds like a threat. More moves away, shaking his head: 'We must be friends.'

Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall* (2009) Part Two, II

Mr Carker was a gentleman thirty-eight or forty years old, of a florid complexion, and with two unbroken rows of glistening teeth, whose regularity and whiteness were quite distressing. It was impossible to escape the observation of them, for he showed them whenever he spoke; and bore so wide a smile upon his countenance (a smile, however, very rarely, indeed, extending beyond his mouth), that there was something in it like the snarl of a cat.

Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (1846-8), Ch. XIII

He affected a stiff white cravat, after the example of his principal, and was always closely buttoned up and tightly dressed. His manner towards Mr Dombey was deeply conceived and perfectly expressed. He was familiar with him, in the very extremity of his sense of the distance between them. “Mr Dombey, to a man in your position from a man in mine, there is no show of subservience compatible with the transaction of business between us, that I should think sufficient. I frankly tell you, Sir, I give it up altogether. I feel that I could not satisfy my own mind; and Heaven knows, Mr Dombey, you can afford to dispense with the endeavour.” If he had carried these words about with him printed on a placard, and had constantly offered it to Mr Dombey’s perusal on the breast of his coat, he could not have been more explicit than he was.

Dombey and Son, Ch. XIII

“Whoof! Almost as dull as the infernal old jail. Warmer, but almost as dismal. Wait till she comes back? Yes, certainly; but where is she gone, and how long will she be gone? No matter! Rigaud Lagnier Blandois, my amiable subject, you will get your money. You will enrich yourself. You have lived a gentleman; you will die a gentleman. You triumph, my little boy; but it is your character to triumph. Whoof!”

In the hour of his triumph, his moustache went up and his nose came down, as he ogled a great beam over his head with particular satisfaction.

Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (1855-7), Book the Second, Ch. XXX

‘Father and me was both brought up at a foundation school for boys; and mother, she was likewise brought up at a public, sort of charitable, establishment. They taught us all a deal of umbleness—not much else that I know of, from morning to night. We was to be umble to this person, and umble to that; and to pull off our caps here, and to make bows there; and always to know our place, and abase ourselves before our betters. And we had such a lot of betters! Father got the monitor-medal by being umble. So did I. Father got made a sexton by being umble. He had the character, among the gentlefolks, of being such a well-behaved man, that they were determined to bring him in. “Be umble, Uriah,” says father to me, “and you’ll get on. It was what was always being dinned into you and me at school; it’s what goes down best. Be umble,” says father, “and you’ll do!” And really it ain’t done bad!’

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1849-50) Ch. XXXIX

I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself!
I am a villain: yet I lie. I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Shakespeare, *Richard III* Act 5, Sc. 3

... a figure came forth from the dark triangular door of the tent. It was that of a tall young man, smoking.

He had an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips, badly moulded, though red and smooth, above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points, though his age could not be more than three-or four-and-twenty. Despite the touches of barbarism in his contours, there was a singular force in the gentleman's face, and in his bold rolling eye.

“Well, my Beauty, what can I do for you?” said he, coming forward.

Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), V

“The whole blame was mine—the whole unconventional business of our time at Trantridge. You, too, the real blood of which I am but the base imitation, what a blind young thing you were as to possibilities! I say in all earnestness that it is a shame for parents to bring up their girls in such dangerous ignorance of the gins and nets that the wicked may set for them, whether their motive be a good one or the result of simple indifference.”

Tess of the d'Urbervilles , XLVI