

Welcome to the 21st century



Gavin ESLER

(born in 1953) is an award-winning television and radio broadcaster, novelist and journalist, who has interviewed world leaders and reported for news and documentary programmes across the world. He is also the author of five novels, and he wrote a book on American discontent, *The United States of Anger* (1998).



Warming up

Describe the picture briefly. What can you deduce about the two men from their attitude?
Use the title and the picture to imagine the subject of the text.

I heard the news late because I had my mobile phone switched off all day, working, and because I had a row with my client. This never happens. I am too polite for that kind of thing, but he was an up-himself New York corporate lawyer from a private equity firm¹ that was trying to buy up half of eastern Europe, and I was helping them. I'm not particularly proud of it, but there you are. Not many people in London speak fluent Czech, and they paid me five times my normal fee for a bit of translation and a bit of interpreting, and probably would have paid me twenty times if I'd had the nerve to ask. The New York lawyer and I finished going through the paperwork enabling his company to buy a sizeable slice of the Czech economy which he told me he intended to "remodel". He signed the contract as I spoke to his opposite number in Prague confirming the deal. At the same time he talked to his office in Manhattan... I could hear him gloating².

I was at the other end of the room but could still hear him yacking³. He told me to give him the thumbs up the moment I had confirmation the contract was signed in Prague. When I did so, he told New York, "It's done," and then put the phone down. He was beaming, as if he had just had sex. Maybe at that point he needed someone to boast to and I was the only one in the room. Whatever the reason he turned to me and said that in that one instant, in that one stroke of a pen, his company had made more than seven hundred million dollars. He personally had pocketed around thirteen million, and was going to find a club and what he called some "broadminded women" to celebrate with. I ran off at the mouth.

"You're celebrating putting thousands of Czech workers out of a job?"

25 He looked as if I had just hit him, then he laughed and started putting his papers into his attaché case.

30 "Interpret this, Harry: Welcome to globalization. Welcome to the world where you make dust or you eat dust. Welcome to the twenty-first century." Then he handed me my cheque with all the good grace of a client stuffing money into the bra⁴ of a lap dancer⁵.

35 "Your interpreting fee. A thousand. Don't spend it all at once." I wanted to hit him. He waved a finger at me.

"You wanna know why people like you don't like Americans, Harry? Because we're so goddamn successful in every field of human endeavour⁶." That angered me even more. It had nothing to do with his nationality. It had everything to do with his behaviour.

"I do like Americans," I protested. "Most of them. But some of you don't travel so well. The ones who have no values except what you can pay for. People like you."

Gavin ESLER, *A Scandalous Man* (2005)

1. société de capital / investissement
2. jubiler
3. jactancer
4. soutiens-gorge
5. strippeuse
6. /m'devol/ activité humaine

Understanding the text

1. Your Workbook will help you to understand the text.
2. Give a summary of the situation.

Going further

3. Draw the portrait of the New York corporate lawyer.
4. Analyse Harry's feelings in this passage. What does he think of the lawyer he works for?
5. Explain the sentence: "Welcome to the world where you make dust or you eat dust" (l. 27).
6. According to the lawyer, what are Americans criticized for? Does Harry agree with him?
7. Do you agree with the lawyer's vision of today's world?

Language training

1. Savoir prononcer 16-17
2. Les formes faibles 151-52

Pratiquer la grammaire

3. Les temps du récit
4. Quantificateurs, nombres

Expressing anger

- I've had enough of sb / sth V-ING...
- I'm fed up with sb / sth V-ING...
- It infuriates me (that + should)...
- Enough is enough...
- I can't stand him / V-ING...
- He drives me mad...
- I can't take it anymore...
- I'm sick and tired of sb / sth V-ING...

YOUR task

Write an e-mail about your meeting

Put yourself in the narrator's shoes. The next day, you write an e-mail to a friend about the meeting you had with the corporate lawyer.

ÉTHODOLOGIE
Écrire un courriel → p. 171

Nouns

- opportunist /'ɒpɔ:tju:nɪst/
- stereotype /'sti:təraɪp/

Adjectives

- frustrated /'frʌstrə'teɪd/; contrarié
- resentful /rɪ'zentʃəl/; plein de ressentiment
- ashamed
- cynical
- insensitive (to sb); insensible
- cold-hearted = heartless; implacable
- unmoved (by sth); indifferent (to)
- arrogant /'ærəɡənt/

Verbs & expressions

- bear /have a grudge /grʌdʒ/; against sb: en vouloir à qqn
- make a fortune /'fɔ:tju:n/
- roll in money: rouler sur l'or
- money talks: l'argent est roi
- be appalled /ə'pɔ:lɪd/ (at sb); être consterné
- hold back one's anger /'æŋɡə/; retenir sa colère
- betray (trahir) → stick to (one's) principles
- despise sb for sth /V-wis: mépriser