

# Katherine Campbell

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For my senior project I will be conducting a thoughtful research-based analysis of what has infamously come to be remembered as “L’Affaire DSK.” My interest in this topic first arose during this past school year when I was living and studying abroad in Paris. I gained valuable knowledge about the way in which America responds to high-profile criminal cases and the blatant expulsion of ‘innocent until proven guilty’ principle. For example, in France it is illegal to be photographed in handcuffs before one is deemed guilty in a court of law. Comparing this with the United State’s routine ‘perp walk’ that takes place even before a sentence is reached is one defining aspect of the two country’s conflicting ideals.

Strauss-Kahn was stopped after having boarded a plane going to Paris at the John F. Kennedy airport. He was detained by police for further questioning on the charge of sexually assaulting a maid in New York City’s Sofitel Hotel. At this point, he was internationally renowned for his position as head of the International Monetary Fund and was highly considered to be the great contender for France’s upcoming Presidential elections. As one might imagine, when the story broke it spurred a highly reactive public to devour the media’s translation of the case. To exemplify this I will be gathering political cartoons, newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts from both countries’ top media sources. This will challenge me to see how the case was communicated in both English and French, observing how the two country’s reactions allude to a greater understanding of the way absolute truth is taken by the public despite being in the midst of wide-spread speculation.

With the examination of this case it is my intention to distinguish both country’s reactions to yet another case exemplifying masculine *jouissance* as a mind-set that spurs an illusion of utter domination of women, politics and law itself. For me this notion is crucial because it provides valuable insight about the way in which political figures’ transgressions are dealt with in a public sense though it is undeniable that certain agreements are made outside of the public’s interest or knowledge. I’m interested in knowing more about and how the language of scandal itself becomes reproduced and intensified or lessened through the magic of the general public’s., specifically through Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*. In so doing I will be exploring the line between violence and pleasure as it is presupposed in the context of a masculine dominated intellect.

A large part of my study is based on reacting to the way in which aristocratic entitlement spreads throughout the tiers of constructed social divisions. I can trace this all the way back to first reading Laclos’ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* from which I have continuously found myself in a position of inquiry about the evolution of body in political theory from the turn of the 19th century upwards toward a post-structuralist conception of the feminine and political.



*Camille Pissarro, The Hanged Millionaire, 1889*

Continuing this theme, in my project I would also to discuss the significance of libertinage that surfaced in France during the 18th and 19th centuries alongside the birth of ‘the democratic’ and mass politics. I will be focusing on two critical moments of political reorientation; the first being when political organizations began to be imagined as a body and as such were left open for the potential of erotic connotations to be made within them, the second when pornography ‘began to be separated as a category from the erotic.’ I’d like to work within these two themes and draw upon their comparisons to measure how the erotic’s influence within present power-structures regulated itself and the challenges its presence poses for today’s conception of political entitlement.

Drawing upon on the infamy of this story I would like to move forward in addressing the allure of sexual misconduct or *le prestige du mal* so obviously exemplified in the way the scandal began and continues to unfold. I hope this can be applied to a type of unveiling of America’s fascination with the now all-too-familiar public sex scandal, challenging the image of woman’s seductiveness as a means for social manipulation.