

PAS DE DEUX
HOLLANDE AND
TRIERWEILER
ARRIVE AT A BOOK
FAIR IN BRIVE-
LA-GAILLARDE,
FRANCE, A FEW
WEEKS AFTER
HOLLANDE WON
HIS PARTY'S
NOMINATION.



"I DON'T THINK MY HUSBAND WILL MAKE UP MOST OF THE NEWS FOR 2012, BUT IF THAT WERE THE CASE, WE WOULD COVER IT"

DANGEROUS LIAISONS

Glamorous French reporters keep falling for the dashing politicians they cover. Is all fair in love and journalism? Chloe Malle investigates.



FRENCH CONNECTION
PULVAR AND MONTEBOURG ON THE EVENING OF THE 2011 SOCIALIST PRIMARY IN PARIS.

On the morning of January 23 at *Le Monde* headquarters in Paris, Anne Sinclair—celebrated journalist, art heiress, and wife of the most debated man of 2011, Dominique Strauss-Kahn—was all business. She and Arianna Huffington, seated side-by-side in matching corporate-looking black leather armchairs, were hosting a press conference to discuss Sinclair's recent appointment as editor of *Le Huffington Post*, the French offshoot of Huffington's namesake Web site.

All smiles and easy elegance in a white T-shirt and a black blazer, Sinclair answered questions about her new post from

more than 250 journalists in the crowded room. Asked whether her husband's political and legal difficulties would cause a conflict of interest, Sinclair answered smoothly, "Important news will be treated normally, as it would be treated elsewhere. Anything that should be on the front page will be on the front page." She pressed the French-manicured tips of her fingers together; she wore a cognac Hermès watch on her left wrist, but no wedding ring. "I don't think my husband will make up most of the news for 2012, but if that were the case, we would cover it."

Less than a month later, Strauss-Kahn was questioned regarding his alleged role in a local prostitution ring—and spent a night in a Lille jail. True to her word, Sinclair *lives* >122

Hollande and Trierweiler: PATRICK BERRHARDT/MAGNUM PHOTOS; PULVAR AND MONTEBOURG: MANN KREUZ/MAGNUM PHOTOS

ensured that *Le Huffington Post*, like every other French news outlet, ran a front-page story.

Of course, Sinclair is not the only journalist who has had to navigate the murky waters of covering a politician spouse. She is one of a handful of prominent French female journalists who share their life with a public official, forcing viewers, editors, and network chiefs to reevaluate the definition of unbiased reporting. With the two rounds of the French presidential election concluding on May 6, Sinclair's *Huffington Post* appointment only adds fuel to an already blazing media firestorm, which in the past eighteen months has come to be embodied by two faces: Valérie Trierweiler, a longtime journalist for *Paris Match* and the partner of François Hollande, the Socialist Party candidate for president; and Audrey Pulvar, a news celebrity whose partner, the politically radical, telegenic Arnaud Montebourg, surprised the nation with his strong showing at the Socialist primaries last fall.



relinquish her media role has been Christine Ockrent, perhaps France's best-known female television-news presenter. The longtime partner of Bernard Kouchner, former minister of foreign affairs and cofounder of Doctors Without Borders, Ockrent explains unapologetically, "When I met Bernard he was not in politics, he was a humanitarian. I was already anchoring the evening news. My career has had nothing to do with the course of his—why should I have been the one to step down?"

Both Pulvar and Trierweiler have attempted a similar approach, but their fights have ended, in both cases, in their forcible removal from their posts—the result of a shifting cultural climate where the delineation between *la vie privée* and *la vie publique*, a boundary long respected in France, is being challenged in an age of social media and the Americanization of Gallic mores. "We're not a tabloid culture—or, at least, we didn't used to be," explains Ockrent one afternoon in Paris. "But because of the DSK scandal the press has become more intrusive.

"I'M AN INDEPENDENT PERSON. I DON'T NECESSARILY THINK THE SAME THINGS AS MY COMPANION"

When Pulvar accompanied Montebourg onstage following that primary result, she incited a nationwide debate that, combined with Trierweiler's saucy Twitter quips and campaign-trail interview show, have proven too much for a public accustomed to women in their position either stepping down or discreetly separating their public and private profiles. Of course, American women do find themselves in such situations, but none of them have graced the cover of a national newsmagazine like *Le Monde*, as Pulvar has, or run the risk of becoming the country's First Lady. So why does this happen so regularly in France, and at such a high-profile level? How does one explain the amazing incidence of French politicians' falling for the journalists who interview them?

When Strauss-Kahn assumed the post of finance minister in 1997, Sinclair, with much fanfare, canceled her popular television program *7/7* to avoid any conflict of interest. She wouldn't be the last; less than a decade later Béatrice Schönberg and Marie Drucker, also media heavyweights with politician partners, were pressured to recuse themselves from their broadcasting jobs. The one woman who successfully resisted calls to



LA VIE PUBLIQUE
TOP: TRIERWEILER FOUND HERSELF THE UNEXPECTED SUBJECT OF A MARCH ISSUE OF PARIS MATCH. ABOVE: PULVAR IN PARIS.

It has become more acceptable to blur the line between public and private life."

A mid-March *Paris Match* featuring a photo of Trierweiler and Hollande is a case in point. The cover line, VALÉRIE, FRANÇOIS HOLLANDE'S LUCKY CHARM, THE STORY OF HOW THEIR LOVE WAS BORN, surprised and incensed Trierweiler, who remains on the weekly's masthead. She promptly issued an icy tweet: "What a shock to find yourself on the front page of your own paper. I'm angry to discover the use of photos with neither my consent nor my knowledge."

With her patrician cheekbones and the coiffure and sly charm of Lauren Bacall, it's no surprise that Trierweiler inspired Hollande to exclaim in the glossy pages of *Gala* (France's equivalent to *Us Weekly*), "Valérie is the love of my life." But it wasn't always so: Before falling in love with Trierweiler in 2005, Hollande shared 25 years and four children with Ségolène Royal. In 2007, as Royal was campaigning with Hollande for president, her Socialist Party minders tried to keep Hollande's affair with Trierweiler out of the public eye. Tricky, tricky. Trickier still was the fact that Trierweiler was married to a *Paris Match* colleague, editor Denis Trierweiler, who informed then editor in chief Alain Genestiar of his wife's affair with Hollande. "I had Valérie come into my office and we had a very personal discussion," says Genestiar, *lives* >124

PULVAR: PINCAL; CHEVALERIE: SETHEN; EDITOR: BRUNO FERRAZ; HAIR: HUGO BOUAF; MAKEUP: MARCANTONIO; STYLING: SERGE HADJIOANNIS; BILL: TIM HOUT; CLOTHING: SEE IN THIS ISSUE

"because I needed to find out if this was going to be a brief thing or something long-term." When she confirmed the latter, he told her she could no longer cover the Socialist Party. Later, when Hollande announced his presidential candidacy, Trierweiler was moved off politics altogether and given the role of literary critic—a consolation prize.

The magazine also worried that Trierweiler's presence at weekly editorial meetings could result in leaks to the Socialist Party, and so banned her from attending. "I felt punished, forced to stay home," she later told *Le Monde*. However, stories from other editors suggest there may have been reason to question her loyalties. Apparently, Trierweiler had raised eyebrows by angrily contacting journalist friends to contest negative press published about Hollande. Once, she e-mailed the editor in chief of a radio show that ran a story about the candidate dyeing his hair. She wanted a correction. "François does not dye his hair," she is said to have written.

In April 2011, Trierweiler defied expectations and began a political talk show

covering politics, it becomes clear that without her 1960s foray into political journalism, it is quite possible that many of the liaisons in question would not exist.

In 1968, wearing a miniskirt and white leather thigh-high boots, a then 24-year-old Nay entered the Assemblée Nationale. "Put a coat on," the bailiffs hissed with titillated indignation, though the politicians made no such demand. "Now I look back and think, How could I?" Nay says, laughing as she sips her noisette. Françoise Giroud, the cofounder and editor of the weekly newsmagazine *L'Express*, inspired a revolution that reshaped the way politics were covered in France by sending attractive young women into the Elysée rather than middle-aged men, Nay explains. By pure logic, the convergence of alluring reporters and the politicians they were sent to write about resulted in several unions, as Nay is the first to point out. "We didn't become journalists to sleep with politicians, but the fact is, you end up going to bed with the people you spend the most time with. That's why all the models



"YOU CAN'T COVER RACES THAT INVOLVE YOUR SPOUSE. IF YOU MEET THEM ON THE BEAT, YOU'VE GOT TO GET OFF THAT BEAT"

called *2012 Campaign Portraits*. The network's only restriction was that she could not interview Hollande. Of course, the show could last only so long—how many campaign portraits can you do before the absence of the main contender becomes the elephant in the room?

One morning in October, Trierweiler tweeted: "Little morning clarification: I am not a political wife. I am a journalist. But I am stopping *2012 Campaign Portraits* on Direct 8." She explained that she couldn't be involved in Hollande's campaign in an official way while also doing political interviews. She has since been given an office at party headquarters—though that transition has not been easy. As she told French *Elle*, "For over 20 years I was an observer, and now I find myself in the position of being observed. We don't change our way of life, or our personality, overnight."

Catherine Nay gave some thought to the prevalence of politico-journalistic trysts from the back banquettes of a café next door to the offices of Europe 1, the radio station where she hosts a political talk show. At 68, Nay is the epitome of elusive French elegance: A combination of Romy Schneider and Catherine Deneuve, she wears a charcoal tweed skirt suit, and her russet-colored hair is pinned back with symmetrically placed tortoiseshell combs. As she talks about her early years

date photographers. It's just how it is."

Across town in the Place de Clichy is the soundstage where they film *On N'est Pas Couché*, the weekly entertainment talk show in which Audrey Pulvar plays the combative leftist to the right-wing pundit Natacha Polony. Pulvar joined the show in September after her political talk show had been taken away from her. Since it is billed as an entertainment program, the show does not pose any ethical problems for Pulvar—on paper. However, in addition to various pop-culture figures, each week welcomes a different political guest, which many viewers have been quick to note raises important questions of bias as far as Pulvar is concerned.

A taxi driver near the studio offers his opinion of Pulvar. "Hmmp. She's a Socialist and she's with Montebourg. Bad and worse." Asked if he thinks it's a problem that she is still reporting on politics while dating a politician, the driver's answer is matter-of-fact. "She shouldn't have gone onstage with him," he grumbles. "That was not good." Clearly the spectacle at the Socialist primary—so zealously covered in newspaper editorials—had also reverberated with the average Parisian.

The dressing rooms line a narrow hallway parallel to the soundstage, and at 7:30, with only 30 minutes before taping begins, the area is a symphony of doors opening and *lives* >126



IN THE SPOTLIGHT
TOP: BROWN AND WIFE SCHULTZ EMBRACE OVER NEWS OF HIS 2006 SENATE WIN. ABOVE: SHRIVER AND SCHWARZENEGGER CELEBRATE HIS GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN 2003.

Brown and Schultz: JAMIE ROSE/Getty Images; Shriver and Schwarzenegger: MARIO TAMM/Getty Images



**VOGUE
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This limited-edition D. Porthault cotton terry beach towel, generously sized at 120 x 180 cm, was commissioned by *Vogue* to celebrate 120 years in publication. The iconic illustration by Eduardo Garcia Benito graced *Vogue's* July 15, 1926, cover and is one of many archival images on view with a subscription to the *Vogue Archive* (VogueArchive.com).

On sale now at the Condé Nast Store.

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closing with young production aides scurrying by, carrying photocopies and Coca-Cola Light. Inside her room, Pulvar studies a mess of papers on the dressing table—cum—desk in front of her. Her hair is freshly blown out, and a makeup artist touches up the raspberry tint on her lips. Despite her signature oversize glasses, Pulvar looks glamorous in a black-and-cobalt color-blocked sheath dress and black platform stilettos with little leather bows at the toe.

Following nearly a decade of working as a broadcaster and reporter in her native Martinique, Pulvar came to Paris in 2002 and swiftly climbed the ranks at France 3, becoming the first woman of color to anchor the evening news. After five years as the country's Katie Couric, she started hosting a nightly political talk show, until her relationship with Montebourg (which began after she interviewed him) forced the network to cancel it. She is left doing a 6:00 A.M. radio broadcast—too early for serious political coverage—and her weekly appearance on *On N'est Pas Couché*.

Earlier that day—at 5:59 A.M. to be exact—Pulvar had slipped on a large pair of headphones as she took her seat in front of the microphone in Studio 72 of the Radio France building. In a voice that had transitioned seamlessly from easy conversation in the hallway to that of a smooth announcer, Pulvar talked about eggs. The average French person consumes 231 eggs per year, she said, and as of the end of March, French eggs will be labeled with a tricolor stamp announcing, EGGS LAID IN FRANCE. Such is the content of Pulvar's 6:00 A.M. newscast—a discussion of egg labeling, last night's soccer scores; and, later, the candidacy of Rahul Gandhi, Nehru's great-grandson, in India. The journalist who once hosted the prime-time news and left Sarkozy speechless after asking a particularly cutting question about immigration has accepted that the landscape of her job has changed—though she is not giving up without a fight. "I'm an independent person," Pulvar says. "I don't necessarily think the same things as my companion. I have a professional rigor, and I don't see why I shouldn't be able to continue doing my job."

American women in the media partnered with politicians tend to see the issue in starker terms. As Connie Schultz,

columnist for *The Plain Dealer* and wife of Ohio senator Sherrod Brown, puts it, "You can't cover races that involve your spouse or your significant other. If you meet them on the beat, you've got to get off that beat. If you fall in love with the county commissioner, you're done covering the county commissioner." The Pulitzer Prize winner adds, "That would be like me covering the Senate race right now in Ohio." Brown is running for a second term as Democratic senator from Ohio, and as she did in 2006, Schultz will take a leave of absence from her political column for the duration of the campaign.

Two other American women journalists—Claire Shipman, correspondent for ABC News and wife of Jay Carney, President Obama's current White House press secretary; and Michele Norris, former cohort of NPR's *All Things Considered*, whose husband, Broderick Johnson, recently joined Obama's reelection campaign as senior adviser—have stepped down from their political-reporting duties as well. Norris, who took a sabbatical from the program last fall, says the decision was clear. "I miss the show every day," she says. "But how can I consider all things when there were a host of things I couldn't consider because of my husband?"

Which isn't to say it was an easy choice to make. Balancing public and private lives can be agonizing in this country, too. Schultz, who penned the campaign-trail memoir... *And His Lovely Wife* after Brown's 2006 senate run, admits that her decision to leave *The Plain Dealer* wasn't without moments of doubt. "I'm embarrassed to say this, but back then I wrote in my journal, 'What is to become of me?' I really wasn't sure where I was going to end up."

She continues with a sigh, "The only precedent was one I didn't want to follow." Schultz means Maria Shriver, who left NBC News after Arnold Schwarzenegger became governor of California. "She called me," Schultz says. "I didn't know her, but she called me the day I returned to *The Plain Dealer* in 2007 and said, 'Please don't leave your career.' I thought it spoke volumes to how she was feeling about having left hers. And I really appreciated that phone call that day." □