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Abstract

Claire Beaugrand-Champagne was 27 years-old when she completed her first assignment for *Le Jour*—a new, young, independentist and left-leaning daily newspaper in Montreal. The year was 1974, and she was by all historical accounts the first woman to photograph the news in Quebec. Relatively few women in the province have followed in her footsteps since. Globally, women continue to be vastly underrepresented among staff and freelance news photographers. This essay examines, from a sociohistorical angle, some of the gender-specific challenges women photojournalists face in newsrooms, as well as how they have been able to overcome or bypass the barriers to their integration. It draws from existing, but relatively thin research in the field of journalism, which tends to examine women news photographers in the context of the United States. As such, it attempts to make a contribution by extending focus around the emergence of women photographers in the sociopolitical context of Quebec, through the case study of Claire Beaugrand-Champagne.

Introduction

Women photographers¹ are widely underrepresented among newsrooms' staff around the world. They are less likely to be employed by large media companies, they apply less frequently to photography competitions and are underrepresented among winners. They tend to earn a fraction of their male colleagues' yearly income, despite being on average more educated, more engaged on social media, and having a wider set of skills (World Press Photo, 2015; 2018). Even when women see their work featured in the news, it is much less likely to be published in its most important spots. The U.S.-based non-profit Women Photograph estimates that, although about 75 percent of photography graduates are women, their bylines represent around 20 percent of front-page photos published in top newspapers in North America and Europe (Women Photograph, 2021).

Although the women who photograph the news have always been marginal in numbers, their presence in the field dates back to the early days of the camera. Since its invention, women have contributed to both the technological advancements and the production of a corpus within every genre and discipline of photography, including photojournalism (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 7).

The lack of representativeness in the production of news bears consequences for democratic values (Geertsema, 2009, p. 151; Gallagher, 2002, p. 27), and though diversity remains an issue in nearly every sphere of the media industry, few specializations lack equal representation of gender as blatantly as does news photography (Campbell and Critcher, 2017, p. 1542). Though feminist scholars have sought to document and reclaim women's contributions in photojournalism, few inquiries have been made to investigate the challenges

¹ The term 'women' is meant to refer to all individuals who identify as such. Issues discussed in this essay may also concern non-binary photographers who remain vastly understudied.

women photographers have and continue to face in a male-dominated field (Campbell & Critcher, 2017. p. 1541; Somerstein, 2021 p. 670; Hadland and Barnett, 2018b: p. 2012). Virtually no academic studies have investigated how gender disparities affect photojournalists and the production of news in the Canadian context, despite the pervasive evidence of inequality and lack of diversity, in terms of both gender and race.

In Quebec, the subject has similarly received little attention in both scholarly and grey literature. Women's contribution to photojournalism is not monitored, but it is occasionally the subject of articles published in news outlets, which themselves employ few women photographers among their staff. They tend to aim at celebrating exceptionalism rather than investigating an enduring issue in the industry. Despite their apparent and persistent minority status, women's involvement in photojournalism goes back nearly five decades.

Claire Beaugrand-Champagne was 27 years old when she landed her first assignment for *Le Jour*—a small, nascent publication with a separatist agenda in Quebec. The year was 1974, and she was, by all historical accounts, the first woman to work as a news photographer in the province (Delgado, 2013 ; *Musée des beaux-arts du Canada*, 2016 ; Lafontaine, 2019, p. 73). She photographed pivotal events such as the Olympic games of 1976 and the *Commission d'enquête sur le crime organisé* (CECO), as well as celebrities such as Leonard Cohen (Lafontaine, 2019, p. 73). Though her work was most recently featured in exhibitions at the McCord Museum in 2014 and 2022, Beaugrand-Champagne remains a mostly unknown figure of Quebec's media history, as are the women who followed in her footsteps.

Lafontaine's thesis (2019) is the latest and by far the most complete piece of literature that examines the artistic contribution of Quebec women photographers. It documents and analyzes the work and legacy of 13 Quebec women photographers, including Beaugrand-Campagne, providing valuable insight into her professional evolution in both the news and the

arts, and the circumambient sociohistorical context. In contrast, this essay will attempt to firmly situate Beaugrand-Champagne's contribution as a press photographer within the realm of journalism studies. It will also outline global trends in women's integration of newsrooms as photojournalists since the early 20th century. In doing so, it will seek to observe earlier case studies and draw parallels between the industry women press photographers have and continue to face in the industry. A sociohistorical lens will be adopted to highlight both changes in the media landscape that might have impacted women's experiences in photojournalism, and continuities in the barriers women news photographers face in Quebec to this day, both in their access to and their development within the profession.

For this exercise, the terms news photography and photojournalism will be used interchangeably and understood broadly as photographic work subscribing to visual journalistic standards on newsworthy stories, created and published in the media through journalistic methods and for journalistic purposes. Distinctions between journalistic photography uses and genres are not clearly established in the literature "and the meaning ascribed to them, are constantly in flux, repositioned and reoriented to conform to the larger discourses which engender them" (Solomon-Godeau, 1991, pp. 169–170). Likewise, the categorization of photography practices like documentary and news may not be useful to examine photographers, who tend to move fluidly between them, but all face similar challenges within the media industry.

As such, this essay will include documentary photography, which typically refers to long-term projects, focused on human issues tied to political activism (Wylie, 2012, p. 16). It played an instrumental role in shaping public opinion in Quebec over the '70s, on humanizing refugees for instance, through her images of camps in Vietnam and Cambodia which were published in *La Presse*. This essay will, however, strictly limit itself to the domain of

journalism studies and will therefore ignore bodies of work created without intent to document live events and published to artistic or commercial ends.

The first chapter will outline a global review of gender dynamics in the field of photojournalism. In its second chapter, this essay will examine the expansion of women's contribution to news photography over the course of the Women's Movement in the United States and in Quebec. The third and last chapter of this essay is dedicated to examining Claire Beaugrand-Champagne's contribution as well as the social factors that allowed and restrained her career as a photojournalist.

Chapter I. Jumping the Fence: Global Sociohistorical Perspectives on Gender in Photojournalism

Few studies examine women's professional trajectories as photojournalists, nor how their underrepresentation in the field impacts the portrayal of women in news stories (Sommerstein, 2021; Thomas, 2007; Sultze 2003; Bissell, 2000). Feminist photographers and scholars have argued that gender bears little impact on the way one photographs, from a technical point of view, while defending that gender may very well shape what and why photographers choose as a subject or an angle (Campbell and Critcher, 2017, p. 1550).

Qualitative research has often demonstrated how women photographers are reluctant to be defined by their gender(s) (Campbell & Critcher, 2017, p. 1550). This could be interpreted as an acceptance of *status quo* perceptions of gender, resulting in the absorption of male norm whereby inequality is normalized (Lobo et al., 2015, p. 1161). In other words, in order to integrate a patriarchal work environment, some women news photographers may accept, minimize or reproduce male norms, despite those being disadvantageous to them. This could explain findings portraying how gendered biases are perpetuated, for instance, by women photo editors in distributing assignments and picking images (Bissell, 2000, p. 10).

At the same time, it might be both incorrect and harmful to define women's approaches to photojournalism as more "emotional" or "soft-angled," which depoliticizes and simplifies their work by examining it with the gendered bias already prevalent in a resolutely patriarchal field (Assaf & Bock 2021, p. 86; North, 2016, p. 365). The production of meaning through imagery should instead be understood as an amalgam of "the identity characteristics of those who produce the image, those who are represented in the frame and those who receive it," (Campbell & Critcher, 2018, p. 1557) within a given socialized context.

In this sense, being a woman, alike any declination of identity and its intersections, may provide a unique ability to access certain communities and groups, notably by facilitating trust and establishing a rapport with certain subjects. Women photographers have been especially effective in documenting children as well as other women, for instance, in conservative communities where their interaction with men photographers would be prohibited or considered suspicious. They might also be able to ask more sensitive or intimate questions by virtue of being perceived as non-threatening (Fremson, 2015; Caballero, 2001). These relative strengths have been used to legitimize and defend women photojournalists, but it may not be useful to generalize them as inherent to “femininity” or “womanhood,” which is an oversimplification and may wrongfully limit women to a corresponding type of reporting. Rather, identity-derived skills and strengths might be better understood as stemming from varying and multifaceted gendered socialization(s).

In journalism studies, more research inquiries were made around women’s roles as journalists broadly, which offer valuable insights into women’s experiences in newsrooms. Earlier feminist scholarship had, for one, documented the sexist representation of women in the news, whereby they were most often described as victims. More recent research has found these trends to be persistent (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020, p. 53), while also observing that women journalists tend to report on the news with different angles and quote more diverse sources than their male colleagues (Harp et al., 2018, p. 274).

Meanwhile, other studies show how stories focusing on women-based experiences or perspectives continue to be seen as less important (Lough & Mortensen 2022; North 2014; Bissell 2000). For Ross & Carter, newsworthiness continues to be “based on masculine conceptions of the world and what is important in it,” whereby journalistic norms and values tacitly enforced in newsrooms “masquerade as professional routines to which all journalists are

expected to subscribe” (Ross & Carter 2011, p. 1149). For Allan (2010), this is partly due to the gendered socialization operating within newsrooms where traditional journalistic values tend to discourage gender reporting, which is framed as inherently biased and therefore below journalistic standards.

The underrepresentation of women journalists in “hard” news is a long-standing issue, which has very tangible effects on how women are presented *in* the news. It has been starkly visible in the stereotyping of women politicians, in particular of women of colour during the 2020 U.S. presidential election (Gibbons, 2022). The concept of “symbolic annihilation,” developed by Tuchman (1978) encompasses both the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women in the news. It implies, as many others have argued thereafter (Merskin, 1998), that the underrepresentation of women in the news would symbolically signal their lesser value and vice versa, an emphasis on masculinity as a synonym of importance and newsworthiness.

In photojournalism scholarship more specifically, recent research indicates that, while images of women in political settings are simultaneously less visible compared with men’s, women photographers tend to report on other women in vastly higher proportions than their male colleagues (Gibbons, 2022, p. 114). Because reporting done by women often produces a different coverage, the underrepresentation of (especially diverse) women among published photojournalists, denies the audience more complete and nuanced information (Gallagher, 2002, p. 27). To achieve balance, feminist scholars have argued that more complete and representative coverage, closer to the ideal of “objective” coverage, depends on the employment of equal numbers of diverse men and women in newsrooms (Allan, 2010, p. 149).

But beyond the value-added of the journalism they produce, women’s slim presence in the field reflects deeper systemic issues within the news industry. Recent research has

attempted to document experiences of sexism which had until then been anecdotally discussed in newspaper articles (e.i. Estrin, 2017; Booth, 2016; Femson, 2015; Demers, 2015) and in the biographies or profiles of early women news photographers. This provided insight into the gender-specific socioeconomic challenges affecting women in the industry. It has shown that women photojournalists are disproportionately affected by the industry's changes in the digital era, a trend that is expected to continue, thereby depleting the number of women in the field, and affecting the scope of the photojournalism published (Hadland and Barnett 2018b: 2018a). Women press photographers who had expected these gender dynamics to change over time generally tend to acknowledge they haven't (Booth, 2016), despite a slowly growing number of women integrating the field in the last 20 years.

Women photojournalists have also reported embodied acts of discrimination, varying from sexual harassment to sabotage (Sommerstein, 2021, p. 677). They continue to earn less than their male colleagues (Hadland and Barnett 2018a: 22). They are more likely to earn under \$USD 9,999 annually (44% of women are situated in this bracket, compared with 33% men) (Hadland and Barnett 2018b: 2016) and tend to diversify their sources of income, often by working outside the journalism industry (Hadland and Barnett, 2018b: 2016). They are underrepresented in bylines of front-page photos (Women Photograph, 2019; 2020; 2021). Women shot only 16.9 percent of photos which appeared on the front page of *The Globe and Mail* in 2021 (Women Photograph 2021). They are also underrepresented in year-end photo round-ups (Sommerstein, 2021, p. 670) as well as in photography competitions (Hadland and Barnett, 2018a: 21). The proportion of women among the winners of the reputed World Press Photo has, for one, only minimally increased by 7.6% since the '50s (Campbell & Critcher, 2018, p. 1545).

Somerstein points out that hard-news beats associated with masculinity such as war, politics, and terrorism are considered more valuable and worth winning prizes, and remain dominated by men (2021, p. 671). Meanwhile, women are more often given lifestyle or soft-news assignments (North, 2014, p. 363), or sensitive stories about women, “which men might find challenging” (Darian-Smith, 2016, p. 53). These might be assignments that require the photographer to develop a higher level of trust over time with the individuals being photographed. While renewed interest for human-driven stories has a positive impact for women reporters, it has come at the cost of a contradiction: “On the one hand they have to show that despite being women they are good journalists, but, on the other hand, they have to show that despite being journalists they are still real women too” (Van Zoonen, 1998, p. 45).

The gendering of beats (Hadland & Barnett 2018b; Ross & Carter 2011) and the perceived “femaleness” of women photographers “shape the assignments they are sent to do, those withheld from them, and their encounters in the field” (Somerstein, 2021, p. 670). The literature also shows discrimination in hiring, pay as well as the attribution of assignments (Kyser & Mortensen, 2022, p. 15; Campbell & Critcher, 2018, p. 1543) whereby women have been barred from “dangerous” assignments for being pregnant, mothers, or simply because of their gender (Somerstein 2021, 681; Thomas, 2007, p. 81; Hadlin & Shain, 2005).

To compete in an industry that values so-called masculine beats while preventing women from accessing them, Djerf-Pierre (2007) suggests women have sought to assimilate male-dominated environment by acquiring the social capital valued in it, or to specialize in feminine or yet-to-be-gendered beats. Women photographers have also reported strategically downplaying or emphasizing their femininity for different reasons in different contexts (Somerstein, 2021, pp. 677–678).

Scholarly inquiries in photojournalism and gender have almost exclusively focused on the West, despite wire agencies increased reliance on geographically diverse images often captured by local photographers. Mitra et al. (2021) consider how economic distribution in the North-South divide affects gender dynamics in the profession, leaving women photographers in the Global South in a state of financial precarity, while also feeling isolated and vulnerable on the job (pp. 154–158). The authors also signal that women photographers often feel overlooked and “*deprofessionalized*” [*sic*] on the basis of their gender and ethnicity (Mitra et al., 2021, pp. 159–161). This relative invisibility of women in photojournalism, though widely prevalent across the profession, “is most evident when considering intersections of race, gender, and age” (Sommerstein, 2021 p. 676).

The omission of women scholars’ contributions in photography anthologies, such as Burgin’s *Thinking Photography* (1982), reflects a greater dismissal of feminist contributions to the field (Klorman-Eraqi, 2019, p. 3). When their work is referenced in other comparable bodies of work, it is to a lesser extent than that of men, and complete examination and recognition of the role it played in the development of modern photography did not come until relatively recently. Even today, anthologies dedicated to reclaiming women’s contribution to the medium, such as Naomi Rosenblum’s *A History of Women Photographers*, first published in 1995, are rare (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 8), leaving the legacy of women photographers relatively unknown, even among current women press photographers (Thomas, 2007, p. 30).

The scholarly movement which began reclaiming women’s photographic contributions during the Women’s Movement of the ’60s and the ’70s (Sultze, 2003, p. 275) has mostly focused on the artistic photographic corpus and seldom sought to do the same in the field of photojournalism specifically. This can be partly explained by the fact that women’s integration was slower and more arduous in photojournalism, compared with other genres of photography

(Rosenblum 2010:188). Studies of gender and photojournalism have mostly focused on case studies of individual photographers who are often described as pioneers and are geographically bound to the United States and Europe (Flamiano, 2016; Lont, 2005; Smith, 1994).

Among them is Margareth Bourke-White, who created images of war for *Life*, where she was also the first women staff photographer. Other outstanding examples include Gerda Taro (though she is less known than her partner, Robert Capa, whose name was used to sell her work) or Dorothea Lange who is known for documenting the Great Depression in the U.S. and an image entitled *Migrant Mother*. These women are often considered to be trailblazers in the field, at a moment when their presence was unlikely. Rosenblum (2010, p. 181) estimates that there were 10,000 women working as professional photographers at the time, a number that boomed in 1944 when the United States' implication in the Second World War and conscription were enforced. Women specializing in photojournalism were a minority, of which a smaller group still became known for its striking images of wars and their repercussions.

More recently, feminist inquiries have attempted to highlight lesser-known cases, like Hansel Mieth, who first entered the offices of *Life* in 1937 as the magazine's second women staff photographer, or Elizabeth "Tex" Williams, who worked as a military photographer for the U.S. Army in 1944 at the age of 20 and was one of very few African American women to photograph the American military efforts during the Second World War (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 182). The American photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston, who was active as early as the 1860s and is considered by some to be the mother of photojournalism, had received little attention until the '90s and early 2000s (Berch, 2000; Lont, 2005). Similarly, Dickey Chapelle gained recognition during the same period, though her photography, which dates back to the '40s and the '50s, when she went to great lengths to report on conflicts. She notably risked

imprisonment, parachuted along special forces, and infamously became the first woman press photographer to be killed in Vietnam (Smith, 1994, p. 6).

They are just a few of the numerous women whose work had been mostly ignored in the documentation of earlier versions of photography and media history (Lont, 2005, p. 240), which has been mostly focused on American photographers. Many more still have been overlooked, so much so that, today, their work and stories are hardly traceable (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 188). Women photojournalists at the time would have been part of a relatively small group who made its debut before the Women's Movement of the '60s and the '70s, when women's presence in the news-production process was marginal (Harp et al., 2018, p. 266; Beasley & Gibbons, 2003). This meant that they would have almost exclusively worked with men throughout the publication process and would have seldom encountered other women on assignments.

Feminist photography historians have outlined how women photographers were then subjected to blatant misogyny and intense competition with male photographers, some even going as far as destroying, stealing, or sabotaging the work of their women colleagues (Rosenblum, 2010, pp. 188–189; Lont, 2005, pp. 243–244). Women have also reported being held to higher, less forgiving standards and earning considerably less than male photojournalists for a comparable assignment. They historically found more support within smaller, regional, or non-mainstream publications where they accounted for a higher percentage of staff photographers and reported a feeling of camaraderie and support. African American press photographer Vera Jackson, for instance, began her career in 1944 at the *California Eagle (1879–1964)*, a relatively small publication owned and edited by the civil rights activist Charlotta Bass.

In mainstream media, however, they were often confined to “women topics” and deemed too frail to carry the heavy cameras typically used for news photography (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 188, 207, 230). Employment offers for photographers at the time were often found under the men’s section in many American newspapers until ads, which were only desegregated in the ’70s. (Pedriana & Abraham, 2006; Somerstein, 2021, p. 672.) Not only did early women photographers integrate a line of work that was particularly difficult to access and where they had to prove themselves to their mostly male colleagues, but they also had to conciliate their unpredictable schedules and travels with their personal lives where they might have been expected to play stricter gender roles. At the same time, their jobs might have brought them freedom and opportunities otherwise impossible to experience. Borrowing the words of photographer Sabine Weiss, Rosenblum explains how photojournalism might have been something of an alibi for women, through which they could “see everything, get everywhere, talk to everybody” (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 185).

Chapter II. Photography, Newsrooms, and the Women's Movement

The Women's Movement of the '60s and the '70s represented fertile grounds for debuting feminist photographers, offering an intimate outlook on a historic moment (Thomas, 2007, p. 33) as well as a space to publish their work, outside restrictive, traditional, and male-dominated institutions such as academia, museums, and galleries (Klorman-Eraqi, 2019, p. 93; Lafontaine, 2019:47). The Movement and its political ripples gave lieu to multiple photography exhibitions, books, and events, which celebrated and centred women's perceptions of the world as well as of their own bodies. Published by a collective of American women photographers like Jill Krementz, Inge Morath, and Jodi Cobb, *Women See Woman* (1976) is among the first visual collections bringing forth women's perspectives of womanhood. Feminist photographers were at the time "focused on finding ways of employing photography to articulate feminist arguments and define a woman-based identity and outlook" (Klorman-Eraqi, 2019, p. 99), notably to combat the objectification to which they had been subjected by men working in the media (Rosenblum, 2010, p. 263). Although they may not have thought of themselves as such, many feminist photographers by all likes acted as photojournalists when they took part in documenting the Movement and its main events, and in doing so, they also defied the gender norms that had kept women away from the profession. They used photography on one hand, as a political tool to articulate feminist arguments in society, and on the other, as means to assert their presence a male-dominated field.

At the same time, more women had begun integrating the industry as journalists, TV anchors, or radio hosts and fulfilled editing as well as producing roles. Research examining this period found that women photographers' entryway into news photography at times relied on other women who were employed in different sections of the newsroom (Darian Smith, 2016, p. 50), and this trend only grew as some women ascended to positions of management (Lemon, 2008). But while, for some, integration into the newsroom was the result of organic newsroom

culture change, others relied on affirmative action policies set in place in the aftermath of the Women's Movement (Thomas, 2007, p. 117).

Although more women were hired within photography departments, they were still marginal throughout the '70s, especially compared to their growing numbers among photojournalism students (Thomas, 2007, p. 112). It is during this period that many local newspapers hired their very first women photographers (Darian-Smith, 2016, pp. 48–49), who would work almost exclusively with men, isolated from other women and immersed in a pervasive *boys club* culture. This was, of course, visible in professional interactions, but also and more directly in the gendering of spaces within the newsrooms. It was for instance apparent in the dark rooms used to develop film, over which male photographers had dominion and privacy, so much so that when some of the first women photographers stepped in, pornography was still visible on the walls (Thomas, 2007, pp. 113–114). Darkrooms also represented a space where sexual harassment and assault would go unnoticed and where women often felt unsafe (Thomas 2007, p. 37, 98; Darian-Smith, 2018, p. 52), thereby obstructing their access to the mentoring sessions which would occur in it (Darian-Smith 2018:50).

While the Women's Movement positively reshaped the concepts of work and family, as well as women's roles within them, its impacts on gendered discrimination within workplaces were limited. To this effect, Thomas notes the prevalence of outward gendered discrimination in American newsrooms over women photographers, well into the 1990s (2007, p. 7, 27). Pay rate discrepancies between genders for similar tenure, termination of employment at pregnancy, and hiring discrimination on the basis of gender or motherhood are highlighted as some of the common issues still faced by women, thereby demonstrating that social change did not uniformly permeate the media industry. By virtue of having few role models, little employment security, and lower professional capital than their male colleagues while being a

minority among an all-male staff, women photographers had little, if any agency within newsrooms to push back against discrimination and advocate for better working conditions (Thomas, 2007, p. 169). Many had to negotiate and measure their careers against their personal lives, forcing some to choose one or the other. As a result, many decided not to have children, to divorce, or renounce their professional lives. As outlined in the previous section, the dynamics set in place then are likely still at play at varying degrees within newsrooms today.

In Quebec, the Women's Movement begins in the '70s, and coincides with a period of social change arising from the reforms of the Quiet Revolution in the '60s (Lavallée, 2018). The Women's Movement, energized by the activities of second-wave feminists in the United States, as well as by the rejection of the Catholic Church and associated conservative values in the province, experiences a revival that continues into '80s. It is marked by a succession of feminist organizations and publications, instigated with the intent to further women's rights in both private and public spheres.

For instance, the *Front de libération des femmes du Québec*, founded in 1969, advocated for the "total liberation of women," which it deemed indispensable to the liberation of the province (Mills, 2004, p. 189). Although short-lived, the organization morphed into the Centre des femmes in 1971, which played a central role in advocating for access to cost-free abortions and the restructuring of gender norms. Very quickly, it shifted away from the nationalist movement, which began presenting a traditional discourse on family affairs through the *Parti Québécois* (Mills 2004:184).

With the Women's Movement, an argument questioning photography (Lamoureux, 2007) and journalistic practices (Émond, 1989; Pelletier 1989) is also articulated in Quebec. Feminism, and more precisely, the visual representation of women, becomes an important and recurrent theme in the work of women photographers (Lafontaine 2019, p. 42; Allaire, 1995,

p. 173), some of which are directly involved with the Movement (Lafontaine, 2019, p. 49). For instance, Clara Gutsche was an active contributor for the *Centre des femmes* publication, *Québécoise deboutte!*, considered to be the first printed publication steaming from the radical feminist movement in Quebec (Bergeron, 2012). Advocating in favour of a radical discourse, it is seen by its founders as a means to generate a social conscience and build a movement (Bergeron, 2011, p. 4). The magazine is succeeded by *Pluri-elles* (1977–1978), *Têtes de pioches* (1976–1979) and culminates in *La Vie en Rose* (1980-87), which garnered a readership of about 60,000 people.

Many of its founders were members of the *Comité de lutte pour l'avortement libre et gratuit*, active between 1974 and 1978, and the magazine continued to be a vessel for similar ideas, firmly anchoring itself in the public debate on the matter. With a clear feminist mandate, it establishes itself as a space to promote women's leadership (Bergeron, 2011. p. 115), with a style of journalism that Lamont (1984) describes as combative, or adversarial (p. 102). At times, its journalists directly targeted mainstream media, which the writers perceived to be complicit in the oppression of women and perpetuation of harmful gender norms.

Though writers and photographers of the Movement did not always identify as journalists, it could be argued that by advocating for the actualization of then-current journalistic practices and embodying alternative forms of reporting, they directly intervened in the development of the field. Meanwhile, by providing visibility to women as media content producers, they represented both an incarnation of change and a force for it. Some leveraged their relevance and reputation within the media, which they eventually integrated as self-identified journalists. Notable examples include Arianne Émond and Francine Pelletier, who were founding members of *La Vie en Rose*, and went on to work within mainstream media.

For Bergeron, these publications provided feminists with a space to challenge the narrative put forward by mainstream media, while inserting themselves in a media landscape otherwise void of feminist coverage (2011, p. 3). As such, they do not claim to abide by traditional journalistic standards of objectivity, and instead deliberately associate themselves with the Movement by revealing their agenda in their writing. Though none were solely dedicated to photography, they provided a platform more readily accessible for women to publish their work as photographers. For one, the publishing house Les Éditions du *Remue-Ménage* played an important role in cataloguing the work of women photographers, including Claire Beaugrand-Champagne. These contributions are indicative of a clear association with the Women's Movement. Other women photographers who made their debut in the media at the time are Louise Abbott and Anne de Guise (Lafontaine, 2017, p. 72, 75).

Parallel to this, the '70s also coincided with the legitimization and institutionalization of photography as a medium in Quebec. It is at this time, that it is recognized for its value as an artform, through the creation of various spaces and initiatives dedicated to it (Bujold, 2004, pp. 2–3). Photography academic and training programs, which quickly gained importance, are then launched, both in CEGEPs and universities. This marks the beginning of a documentary photography practice that is developed through collectives, with many groups of both professional and amateur photographers organizing workshops events, and sharing spaces where they discussed their work, but also partnered for exhibitions and venues at local galleries (Lafontaine, 2017, p. 18)

Photography also gained more relevance and interest as a medium in the media around that time. Sections or pages dedicated to photography are inaugurated in newspapers and magazines, including the *Perspectives* section in *La Presse*, and *Imagerie* in *Le Jour* (Lafontaine, 2017, p. 18). Similarly, photojournalism and documentary photography appear in

publications previously reserved for artistic uses of the medium. Publications that navigate this editorial intersection insert themselves as both artistic and journalistic platform to inform readers on social issues. They conversely allow more freedom for photographers who can move fluidly between different uses of the medium. This is the case of *OVO magazine*, which under the direction of photographers Jorge Guerra and Denyse Gérin-Lajoie, adopted a decidedly pro-social and leftist angle, exploring themes like workers' rights, feminism, and immigration (Remigio, 2016).

At the same time, emerging women photographers in the province are seen gathering in women only collectives. Arbour (2003) notes that these provided a much-needed space through which women could showcase their work and acquire recognition. Many of them tended to display their images through non-institutionalized spaces such as Montreal restaurants and cafes, which were more accessible to debuting photographers and offered greater creative freedom than traditional galleries (Van Djik, 1980; Lafontaine, 2019).

International Women's Year, in 1975, and the focus it generated for women's rights and experiences globally, is the catalyst of more institutionalized exhibitions in Montreal offering an unprecedented opportunity for women photographers to gain visibility. Among them is *The Female Eye*, presented at the National Film Board of Canada, in which Beaugrand-Champagne takes part, along with six other women photographers. In addition to increasing both visibility and recognition for women photographers, these events presented an outlook on the representation of women which contributed to deconstructing stereotypes and tackling of gender roles (Lafontaine, 2019, pp. 49–52). Bujold (2004), also highlights the dominance of social documentary photography practices at the time, which eventually expanded toward a “plurality” of uses in the '80s, notably in the art world. Over the '70s, however, the influence of documentary practices on feminist movements played a central role, “not only to the creation

and affirmation of a women's collective but also to positively reinforce women's experience, by deconstructing gender stereotypes as well as the cultural belonging to social roles" (Lafontaine, 2019, 52). For Lafontaine, this development led to the constitution of a new and singular feminist documentary photography, which she outlines as a genre in its own right (2017, 42).

The Women's Movement also influenced demographics in the newsroom in Quebec, where more women are seen working as journalists across various mediums. Notably, it is during that same period that Beaugrand-Champagne's younger sister, Paule, begins her own career as a press reporter, first by doing freelance work for *MacLeans*, in 1963, then at *La Presse*, in 1965 (Collard, 2022). She would become an important figure in Quebec's media landscape and was the first woman to preside over the Quebec Press Council, from 2014 to 2022 (Roulot-Ganzmann, 2014, Desrosier, 2022). It is also during the '60s that the first women journalists become members of the Québec Parliamentary Press Gallery and begin reporting on parliamentary affairs (Saint-Pierre & Martel 2012, p. 119).

Women's representation efforts in the media culminated in the *Women and Information* conference organized by the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) in 1981. Among the participants were many of the women who were involved in the Women's Movement and the feminist publications outlined above. The founder of *La Vie en Rose*, Ariane Émond, wrote of the event that it "cruelly brought to light the different faces of ordinary discrimination experienced by female journalists" (1989, p. 65). The conclusions drawn from the conference highlighted the shortcomings of the industry in its lack of gender representativeness and made demands for better-adapted working conditions. Women journalists also criticized the masculine values limiting the concept of objectivity and purging journalistic work of intimacy and emotion (Émond, 1989, p. 64).

The criticisms and arguments Quebec feminists outlined are representative of the social change operating within the media industry at a time of particular interest in Beaugrand-Champagne's career, which will be examined further in the next section. Those who continued to monitor women journalists' integration over the '80s noted a clear progress in television and broadcasting, where women appeared as news anchors and foreign correspondents. Interestingly, they noted that it was within regions, as opposed to urban centres, that women constituted a larger proportion of employed journalists (Pelletier et al., 1989, p. 96).

Despite these developments, however, progress toward gender parity in newsrooms continued to be slower in Quebec compared with other Canadian provinces between 1974 and 1994 (Pelletier & al., 1989, p. 95–96). Beyond representation, organizational structures and culture in newsrooms that frame, and guide journalists' work have largely been maintained. They tend to remain patriarchal in nature, with traditional notions of objectivity and to place higher value in hard news. Difficult and inflexible working conditions also continued to act as a major deterrent in the retention of women journalists, as they remain primary caretakers for their children (Émond, 1989, p. 68; Pelletier and al., 1989, p. 89). By the end of the '80s, few women were in managing positions in the Quebec newsrooms (Pelletier and al., 1989, pp. 82–85). This, combined with the *boys club* culture which persisted within photography departments, can begin to explain why, despite the emergence of early women photographers, women are still underrepresented in photojournalism.

Chapter III. Claire Beaugrand-Champagne and *Le Jour*

In Quebec, Beaugrand-Champagne's case is significant, not only because it represents the earliest instance of a woman photographer working in the press, but also because it speaks to the challenges women have encountered while attempting to enter the profession – some of which persist to this day. It can also highlight facilitating factors in women's integration of a male-dominated profession in the media, and further scholarly understanding of gendered experiences in photojournalism. Her contribution to the field is substantial and the body of work she generated deserves a broader recognition and a deeper analysis. Outlining a clearer timeline of her trajectory also aims to pursue the work of feminist scholars in documenting the legacy of women pioneers in an otherwise male-dominated historicity.

In 1975, at the age of 27, Beaugrand-Champagne gets her first job as a staff photographer for *Le Jour*, where she would work until the newspaper's dissolution in 1976. Short-lived, the newspaper emerges out of a need, pointed out by the leadership of the sovereigntist's movement, for a publication that would pursue similar ideals. Despite its clear sovereigntist and social democratic editorial line, it maintained its independence from political spheres. Its ownership was dispersed through 500 stockholders and its content is edited by journalists who have a veto over it. Inserted in a media context dominated by legacy mainstream competitors, *Le Jour* displays itself as an alternative, offering a different perspective while remaining in information reporting. Although the Parti Québécois and the Women's Movement did not always align on policy (Mills, 2014; Lamoureux, 1986), it is not so surprising that a young newspaper, subscribing to an alternative more militant vision of journalism, was the first to hire a woman among its staff photographers. It is interesting to note that *Le Jour* was affiliated with a leftist and sovereigntist agenda which had some links to the Women's movement.

Among the newspaper's management were relatively young journalists (Beaugrand-Champagne, 2021) who shared progressive values, including around gender equality. Women, like Paule Beaugrand-Champagne, were a part of its fabric—they were involved in its creation and took part in its administration. Evelyn Dumas, who had been the first parliamentary correspondent for *Le Devoir* in 1962, notably became its editor-in-chief in 1977, when the publication experienced a short revival in the form of a weekly magazine. Claire Beaugrand-Champagne also managed the newspaper's weekly column *Imagerie*, which focused exclusively on photography (Beaugrand-Champagne, 2022). Obtaining such editorial and professional responsibility within a news photography department would have been extremely rare for women at the time, even outside of Quebec and Canada—and can be partly explained by the publication's youth and alternative standpoint, both in its structure and editorial line.

Claire Beaugrand-Champagne's sister, Paule, was first employed by *Le Jour*. It is likely, although she has never commented on it herself, that Paule had an influence on Beaugrand-Champagne's integration. This would correlate with research indicating that women played a role in hiring other women in the newsroom through influence and advocacy, especially when the then hiring practices were outwardly or covertly barring their integration (Darian-Smith, 2016, p. 50). Paule continued to play an important role in Claire's career, notably during their reporting on refugees in Thailand and Malaysia, during which they would propose and publish stories as a writer-photographer duo.

As demonstrated elsewhere in the literature, it was not uncommon for early women news photographers to be inspired, supported, or see their entry into the profession facilitated by female family members who had integrated the media as press journalists (Lont, 2005, pp. 246–247). The term nepotism may also not be suited to characterize the allocation of support

to women in their integration to a field of work where gender dynamics are otherwise play against them and where their gender normally represents a barrier to their hiring.

Over a short period of time at *Le Jour*, Beaugrand-Champagne photographed numerous central public personalities such as singer Felix Leclerc, politicians René Levesque and Jean Drapeau and hockey player Guy Lafleur. Her portraits are strikingly original, intimate and evocative. Her representation of Ginette Reno, for one, where she is seen with her back to the camera, and almost anonymized to direct the viewer's attention to the group of photographers and journalists perched over her is particularly indicative of a non-traditional approach to photographing women. It shows a duality—between Reno's dark and aloof silhouette against a wall of men journalists entirely focused on her—whereby the gender power dynamics are momentarily reversed.

During her employment, Beaugrand-Champagne also photographed historical events and moments in Quebec such as the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, the *Commission d'enquête sur le crime organisé*, as well as natural disasters and meteorological events such as inundations, tornadoes, and record-breaking temperatures. Some of her photographs from that period, archived at the BANq in Montreal reveal photojournalistic practices of annotating images to indicate the relevance of subject, adding background and newsworthy information gathered while in the field.



Figure 1: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ

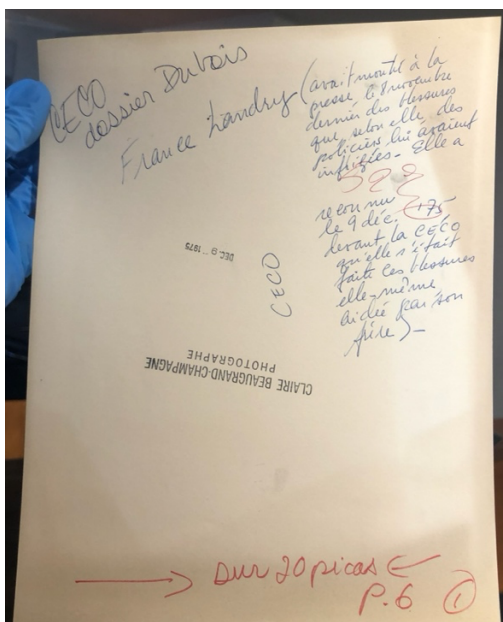


Figure 2 Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ

They are also infused with her original style, which is articulated in her perspective, the choice of the subjects, their expressions, the quality of the light.



Figure 3 : Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ



Figure 4: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ

She is often sent on assignments where women and children are centered sur as a nurses' protests, fashion shows and. Other times, she deliberately turns her lens towards the women in rooms full of men.



Figure 5: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ

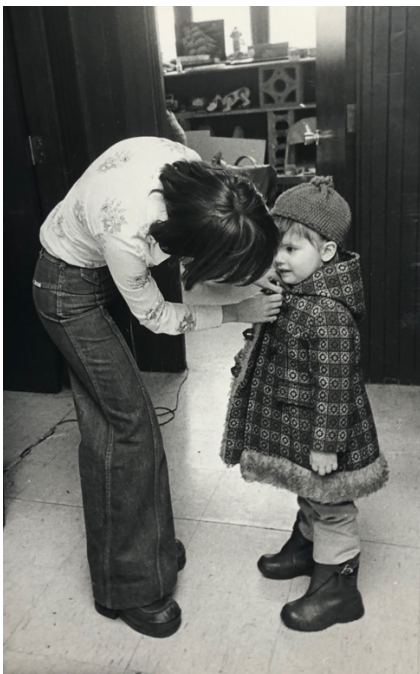


Figure 6: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ

Her images often depict hidden sides of the news. She for instance, photographed construction workers who built the Olympic Stadium while touring the site with city officials.



Figure 7: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ



Figure 8: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ



Figure 9: Photo by Claire Beaugrand-Champagne, Fonds journal Le Jour, BAnQ

The images she captured as a press photographer are infused with the social documentary approach which had guided her work before entering the media. This standpoint was already obvious in her very first project *Disraeli: Une expérience humaine de la photographie*, where she documented rural life in Chaudière-Appalaches, alongside fellow photographers Michel Campeau, Gabor Szilasi, Roger Charbonneau and Pierre Gaudard, who were all part of the *Groupe d'action photographique*, a collective dedicated to the practice of social documentary photography.

Published, among other places, at the National Film Board of Canada, the project was among the first to document Quebec's rural communities and is described as marking the beginning of documentary photography practices in Quebec (Jongué, 1990, p. 43). As such, it

is considered to be a landmark of photographic history in Quebec. It received renewed attention recently through a new exhibition at the McCord Museum, entitled *Disraeli Revisit  (2022)*, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the project. The curator, Zo  Tousignant, stresses the project’s historical importance in an interview with *Le Devoir* (Mavrikakis, 2022):

“The way we look at this work is not the same now. These images have become precious documents. There is no other documentation of this importance on a Quebec town or village from that period.”

Disraeli notably sparked a conversation around ethics of documentary photography and objectivity, which remains relevant today (McCord Museum, 2022; Mavrikakis 2022). Beaugrand-Champagne produced memorable portraits through this project, for which her subjects were directed to pose in environments that represented them. For her, this does not infringe on the ethics and standards of her documentary photography (Mavrikakis 2022).

For Allaire (1995), the social transformation operating over the Quiet Revolution and into the ’70s are linked to the pre-eminence of the genre, which continues to dominate the field until the ’80s. In Beaugrand-Champagne’s work, however, the documentary approach to her photography is prolonged well into the 2000s, as she continued to publish freelance work for *Le Devoir*, *La Presse*, *L’actualit *, the *Gazette des femmes*, *OVO*, *CROC*, among others (Beaugrand-Champagne, 2022).

Her images overwhelmingly focus on individuals, as opposed to innate objects, whom she often captures in their own spaces, where their environment gives away something about them that might otherwise be left unknown. Women especially are frequent subjects, manifesting in projects dedicated entirely or in part to feminine experiences, or more subtly in specific shots which portray women away from clich s and stereotypes. It is most obvious in *Des femmes de Montr al (1977–1995)*, a body of work that emphasises the diversity of

women's experiences in their day-to-day life. Many are seen in traditional roles: nursing, cooking, caring for their children; other images show a clear and decisive contrarian perspective. Women are portrayed in male-dominated professions: a firefighter, a metal worker, an entrepreneur, hockey players, military recruits; they are seen protesting, fighting, playing the violin. Other photos evoke subversive or controversial themes: sexual harassment and gendered violence, prison, childbirth, and lesbian motherhood.

Beaugrand-Champagne's documentary approach is perhaps best exemplified in her images of refugees, showing the repercussions of war on the lives of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese families, and which were published in *La Presse* in the '80s. In a recent interview, Beaugrand-Champagne states that the intent behind her reporting was to go beyond traditional coverage of the crisis at the time in the hopes of rendering a more human perspective (Beaugrand-Champagne, 2022). The images produced then shaped public perception of the conflict which was otherwise largely understood in geopolitical terms (Nguyen, 2022). They were also shown in exhibitions which garnered important attention, for years after the reporting, becoming a primary source of information for Quebec families who had decided to foster refugees and had otherwise little to no understanding of their living conditions in the refugee camps (Beaugrand-Champagne, 2022). Consistent with the *modus operandi* of documentary photography, Beaugrand-Champagne continued documenting the arrival and the day-to-day of two families over several years, keeping long-term relationships with them. This led to the production of a body of work entitled *Thien & Hung (1980–1995)*, which comprised touching images with a distinct intimate angle, often overlooked in traditional media.

Conclusion

It's only very recently that Beaugrand-Champagne was recognized as Quebec's first women press photographer. In an article published in 2013 by *Le Devoir*, she herself admits to previously ignoring the historical significance of her career until the early 2010s (Delgado, 2013). She documented historical events, social and political changes, as well as their ramifications on individuals, often recentring women's experiences, and always conveying singular emotions and intimacy with the people in her images. The way she framed women, who had often been overlooked by men news photographers, is historically important and merits closer attention. Although her work has been featured in multiple exhibitions over the years, examination, and analysis of her legacy as a photojournalist is scarce within both the media and scholarly research. She is far more often recognized as an artist. Quoted most recently in *Le Devoir*, she confesses to disliking having her work categorized. What she loves, in her own words is to "meet people and tell their stories. It is curiosity that brings [her] to create, not so much the definition of the photograph itself" (Mavrikakis, 2022).

Like multiple other women press photographer in North America and elsewhere, her career is contextualized through, supported by and synonym of the sociopolitical changes and feminist movements. It was also bridged and uplifted by other women, such as, in her case, her sister Paule, who quickly gained notoriety and ascended to the direction of multiple newsrooms over her career. Comparatively, Claire's legacy in journalism is still much less known, and despite having brought very tangible and important contributions to her own field, it never obtained the same level of acknowledgment.

Her case is, however, helpful in identifying factors that contributed to women's integration into male-dominated fields within the media in Quebec, and it inserts itself in a global corpus of women press photographers who have made contributions to the field since

the 19th century. It also supports the hypothesis that women photographers' integration in the media industry was sometimes enabled by the presence of other women in newsrooms and the diversification of journalistic publications, with smaller alternative or regional newspapers representing more porous environment to women and other marginalized groups.

In addition to reclaiming Beaugrand-Champagne's journalistic contribution, this essay has attempted to bridge sociohistorical records of women photojournalists, and current gender dynamics in the field. However, more research examining women photographers' contribution in the media in Quebec is much needed. Because many, like Beaugrand-Champagne, alternated between publishing their work in journalistic outlets and museum or galleries, their contributions as photojournalists tend to be minimized and forgotten. Photographers such as Denyse Gérin-Lajoie, Louise Abbott and Clara Gusche, despite often identifying themselves as artists, have all made photojournalistic contributions in the media, which would require more attention and research.

There is also great need for research into the experiences and working conditions of photojournalists in Quebec and in the Canadian context more broadly, which remains to this day resolutely homogenous. This essay was only able to extrapolate from existing research done in various other geographical contexts, from which it could only articulate a handful of possible explanations and offer context to situate Beaugrand-Champagne's trajectory.

Recent data shows that whatever pushes women away from the profession takes place between the moment they graduate from photography school and securely enter the workforce. More research looking into the barriers affecting women's entry into the field, or their ability to maintain their careers is greatly needed both for its scholarly value and to formulate solutions for a more representative and inclusive industry.

Most notably absent from the academic corpus on visual journalism is the intersectionality of gender and race, for which little data has insofar been collected. Experiences of news photographers who are from ethnic and gender minorities are currently not recorded, which represents a substantial gap. There is a need to monitor changes affecting women and minorities in a rapidly shifting industry, where numbers of staff photographers are decreasing, pushing many toward freelance work. Such research could likely highlight discrimination and different structural obstacles and further our understanding of the working culture of visual journalists as well as of the industry at large.

As discussed in this essay, some recent scholarships targeting different geographies offer clues as to how the underrepresentation of women among visual journalists results in the underrepresentation and misrepresentation in the content produced and published. While some studies have begun to outline barriers to women's participation in the field, there is, however, a need for more studies extending findings beyond the United States.

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