

The daily life of viticulture workers in the São Francisco valley: A photoethnographic study

Ianne Samara Bastos L. Barbosa¹, Edonilce da Rocha Barros²

¹Department of Technologies and Social Sciences, Bahia State University, Brazil

²Department of Human Sciences, Bahia State University, Brazil

Abstract— This study presents the strategies and tactics used by the female viticulture workers in the São Francisco River Valley, in the Northeast of Brazil, and the singularities of their everyday lives revealed in the narrative of the images of their work activities on grape farms. The theoretical basis made use of studies on gender questions and the inseparable relation between knowledge and power. Regarding methodology, the research followed the photoethnographic method, anchored in ethnography-inspired qualitative approaches. Concerning data analysis and interpretation, the work is based on Discourse Analysis (DA), of French inspiration, in which data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews of women who work on grape farms in the region and other social actors. The results indicate that the work of the women in the viticulture of the region has a significant representation, although it is not revealed in the statistics of the grape production system. The data also reveal the empowerment of female workers as they specialize in delicate fruit management, as required by international production protocols. This constitutes a space of power in the labor market in which women manage to obtain certain positions, sometimes of team leadership, which are also disputed by men, often resulting in conflict against their remaining in the activity.

Keywords— Everyday lives, gender, São Francisco River Valley, viticulture workers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Considered the “Brazilian California,” the lower-middle São Francisco Valley has become one of the most vigorous economic regions in the Brazilian Northeast, as a result of irrigated agriculture. This new scenario, however, represents a radical change. The lower-middle São Francisco Valley is situated in a semiarid biome and, as such, was once considered inhospitable and deprived of investments to stimulate development. In the meanwhile, starting in the early 1970’s, the reality started to change, originally due to strong support from the State, through developmental projects, especially those related to the construction of hydroelectric dams in the river, such as the Sobradinho Reservoir, in the State of Bahia, the implantation of irrigated perimeters in the Juazeiro, Bahia-Petrolina, Pernambuco nucleus, that integrated the region’s fruit production into the domestic market and into the country’s exportation agenda. By the late 1980’s, it had grown expressively in fruticulture (principally with mango and grape production) and by the end of the 1990’s in viticulture.

It is well known that, with the implantation of big irrigation in the Valley, the agricultural modus operandi was transformed. Nevertheless, there was a striking process of land restructuring which particularly affected family

farmers¹, who used to plant staple crops on their small properties. In order to meet the demands of this new market, the Valley fell into compliance with protocols and standards directed toward commercial production of quality grapes, created an increasing need for new technology, qualified labor, and specialized services, both in the production process and in post-harvest activities (Silva; Coelho, 2010). And, in the process, it became evident that female rural workers were more adept to take on these activities. Given that fruticulture demands specialization, viticulture will require skilled labor and this is where women come into the scenario as workers.

In this type of agriculture, the handling of grapes requires very specific treatment and, in phases of production such as harvesting and post-harvest processing, the workers are predominantly women. This notwithstanding, these women are understood as little more than anonymous figures, covered by clothing that helps protect their faces from the direct effects of the UV rays and their bodies from male harassment. On the everyday level, the work of these “invisible” women creates the tone, color, and taste of viticulture that projects the region forward into the world and attracts fruticulture entrepreneurs and businesses from all over Brazil and worldwide.

This article presents the results of research on the strategies and tactics used by female viticulture workers in the São Francisco Valley, in the Northeast of Brazil, and the singularities of their everyday lives as revealed in the narrative of images of their work activities on grape farms. The research questions were: what strategies and tactics do female viticulture workers in the lower-middle São Francisco Valley use to remain in this activity in the presence of male hegemony? What everyday singularities related to these women's labor activities in grape farms are revealed by the narratives drawn from photographs of female workers on the farms?

1.1 Everyday sociability and its relation to female viticulture workers in the Valley: theoretical conceptions

In seeking the everyday-life singularities of female viticulture workers, it first became necessary to know what everyday life we were talking about. According to Certeau (1998, p. 38), everyday life “cotidiano se inventa com mil maneiras de caça não autorizada”. For Certeau, everyday life is made of the “strategies” and “tactics” used by subjects in the social world, or the “arts of doing,” as he refers to them in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Certeau makes use of military language and treats “strategies” and “tactics” as viable methods for unveiling everyday life. The author distinguishes strategy as a space of force, power, and will. This is the base around which relations may freely rotate. Tactics, on the other hand, are movements and everyday practices are dynamic, seeing that they do not have a determined space in which to operate.

For this reason, Certeau considers tactic a “non-place,” as it makes use of occasions, and he claims that tactics are used by the weaker party (1998, p. 104). It is understood, in this context, that “weaker” means subordinate or subjugated, the working class, for example. Antagonist to this would be strategy, understood as a place, that of force, will, and power, thus, in the model of capitalism, force exerted over the weaker party. In this sense, Certeau calls strategy “the calculus (or manipulation) of force-relationships that becomes possible the moment that a subject of power or will (a company, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated” (Certeau, 1998, p. 99).

The author draws a distinction between “strategies” and “tactics,” pointing to what seems to present an initial scheme that is a more adequate way to think about everyday practices which, he claims, are inserted into the dependency of a large set which is difficult to delineate. Thus, Certeau suggests thinking of many everyday

practices (speaking, reading, walking, buying groceries, preparing meals, etc.) as tactics. In this sense, working is also a tactic and in this context it can be inferred that a company, the place of work, would be classified as a strategy.

Thus, the social entities in this study, or be it, the grape-production companies (farms), are considered strategies. But not the physical space. The strategies are the *modi operandi*, the workdays that begin well before the workers leave their houses, given that, before going to the place where the company bus will pick them up, they have to prepare many things. All meals (breakfast, lunch, and snacks), canteens filled with water, and the clothes they will use at work must all be prepared and placed in the bags which they will take to the place of work, where they will spend the entirety of their workday. The act of demanding that all this be done falls into the sphere of strategies, while doing, executing, or enacting these preparations are tactics.

At the workplace, strategies may also be understood as the rules and regulations to which workers are subjected. Strategy, according to Certeau, is the space of power and will. It is the ordering of productivity goals which must be fulfilled and the designation of activities that must be carried out, which are attributions of power. In this dense manner, everyday practices are tactics and what allows them their mobility is the condition of non-place. In relation to power (strategy), tactics are for the weaker party, as Certeau claims. In relation to capital, in the hierarchization, rural workers are the weaker party, because they have to obey and fulfill that which was established.

Tactics are understood as singularities which include, for instance, protecting the body, skin, and face, as well as individual dignity with clothes such as the shirts which, one on top of the other, become unrecognizable. This apparel, in conjunction with the covering of faces, makes it difficult to identify which workers are male and which are female, even though the women constitute a majority. When Certeau refers to tactics as belonging to the weaker, silenced party, which is dependent on power, he does not preclude them from having the astuteness to fight, to claim what is their and assert their rights, and to say no to abuse.

Within Certeau's architecture, it is understood that the everyday practices materialize within a dialectic movement, between strategies and tactics, amidst individual performance. Speech, interaction, walking, and even the everyday period, everything that is common contributes to this

construction of everyday practices. This occurs because, as the Brazilian sociologist José de Souza Martins explains, not everything in society is visible and not everything that is visible accounts for what society is. Simplified explanations cannot and will not account for what everyday life is. According to Martins (2014, p. 9)

A Sociologia da vida cotidiana não deve ser confundida com uma Sociologia minimalista e redutiva dos processos sociais aos componentes fenomênicos da vida social. Ao contrário, ela se propõe a investigar o visível e o aparente das ações e relações sociais cotidianas na mediação das estruturas sociais e dos processos históricos que lhes dão sentido, não raro o sentido do inesperado .

The nuances of life are revealed today, but, as Martins makes explicit (2014), it has always been this way. That which characterizes society today has already materialized before. “O foco e a temporalidade da observação sociológica deslocaram-se para a vida cotidiana, para os processos microssociais, para os que muitos consideram equivocadamente, o irrelevante” (p. 10). Martins highlights that society is characterized by a poverty in hope, which lives merely to live and which had once but has no more and, furthermore, that historical certainties and rational coherence of signification are have lost touch with imagination, creativity, and praxis. To err and to get things right are both part of the human condition and it is life, not power, that guides people to get things right. Unveiling the everyday singularities of female viticulture workers, as well, may return us to a notion of place, where strategy, as described by Certeau (1998), resides. It is the place of force over the weak. However, to allow oneself to be subordinated does not mean alienation. An individual's change in locus may also lead to alterations in his or her everyday life.

In focusing on an example from the reality of female viticulture workers in the lower-middle São Francisco Valley, which are fruit of the expropriation of the lands of family farmers, many of these women belong to a group of rural workers who reside in an urban region, others in rural communities. They are within the yoke of history and of destiny. In this sense, Martins (2014) reflects that our current moment is lost in the tangle of unresolved past issues and the uncertainty of our future. “São os silêncios presentes no mundo rural e nas sociedades agrícolas tradicionais.” This silencing which the author claims “deveria entrar no elenco da informação primária de que se vale a sociologia,” for those “cujo destino é a ausência de destino, porque condenados ao silêncio do não poder ou não saber dizer o que pode e o que precisa ser dito” (p. 128). The trajectory between being a farmer and becoming

a salaried worker follows a sociological trajectory. A job, according to Martins (2014, p. 213), is not reduced to an occupation or an employment contract, but also includes the results of what the job may involve and make possible. In his definition, being employed also means being in transit on the street, between the house and the workplace. When it comes to assimilating women into the workplace, what is referred to as a culture of employment has been achieved, liberating women from the domestic yoke and from direct forms of social control.

1.2 The sexual division of labor and the vulnerable conditions of working women

To speak about the sexual division of labor is to ratify its existence. It is to verify that after several revolutions which occurred in society over the last centuries, including the great landmark that was the first wave of feminism², which sought, amongst other objectives, to emancipate women; it is still necessary to combat historical prejudice regarding what would be considered as a “man's job” and a “woman's job.” It is, however, during the phase known as second-wave of feminism that gender studies emerge.

In creating a historical cross-section of women's empowerment movements that focuses on women occupying their place in the labor market, it cannot be overlooked that this event was strikingly defined within socialist thinking, which arose as a consequence of the industrial revolution (although one might argue that we live in a constant industrial revolution). This march was consistently allied to the struggle for the guarantee and the defense of women's rights, especially of women from lower social classes, meaning factory workers, rural workers, et al. For Saffioti (2011, p. 82), all socialism, “Todo socialismo, quer na sua forma utópica, quer na sua expressão científica, tentou mostrar à mulher os caminhos de sua libertação”. These ideas have been reverberating for 100 years, and yet the emancipation of women is not complete, especially the emancipation of women from less favored social classes. These paths to women's liberation, however, in contemporary times do also integrate the flags of gender equality within social relations. Scott (1995, p. 75) affirms that gender, as a constitutive element of social relations between men and women, “é uma construção social e histórica que define a masculinidade e a feminilidade e os padrões de comportamento, aceitáveis ou não, tanto para homens quanto para mulheres”. Working within this definition, Scott is unequivocal in treating the question of gender as a term that refers neither to sex nor to feminism, distinguishing the literal sense from the concept.

Ademais, o gênero é igualmente utilizado para designar as relações sociais entre os sexos. O seu uso rejeita explicitamente as explicações biológicas, como aquelas que encontram um denominador comum para várias formas de subordinação no fato de que as mulheres têm filhos e que os homens têm uma força muscular superior (Scott, 1995, p. 75)¹.

In Brazil, women, especially working class women such as factory and farm workers, still face conditions of vulnerability within the legacy of a patriarchal society from the Industrial Revolution which associated women with the sole function of taking care of family. And by family, it was understood that their work universe was limited to the household. Currently, working women work to attend to necessity. Their salaries are important and, in many cases, they are the main source of family income. It can be said that much has changed with respect to women's position in society, in comparison with the Industrial Revolution and the birth of socialist ideas. The conquests are undeniable. Transformations have occurred; family profiles have changed, and the laws the govern men's rights also govern women's rights. Nonetheless, written between the lines of the laws and within the cracks left by society, women still have a great deal for which to fight with respect to the sexual division tasks in the workplace.

The São Francisco Valley is an important fruticulture nucleus in Brazil. It has distinguished itself in grape and mango to the point of becoming the country's largest exporter of these products. Agriculture is thus the main growing vector of work and employment, and here a commonly used expression claims that mangos are "man's work" and grapes are "women's work," thus affirming a clear ideological sexual division of labor. Other functions occupied by men are attributed to strength, and, strength is understood and a discourse of "power." Oliveira (1998, p. 87) describes that, under the pretext that they are more dexterous, women have priority in being hired for the tasks of pruning, trimming, combing, removing stems from, picking, and packing grapes, although men do also perform these tasks. "It is seen an artisan's job, 'designer' work," that requires sensitivity and decision-making."

The formation of the fruticulture nucleus in the lower-middle São Francisco Valley was already structured with

modern equipment to promote the irrigation of semiarid lands. Together with this, the most up-to-date technology in the world has been brought to manage every step in the fruticulture production chain. And this has directly influenced employability which demands qualifications. At the same time that cultivation has aggregated technology to meet market demands, the work force has been drastically diminishing, owing to a reduction in the number of workers hired per hectare at the same time that the region has broadened its cultivated areas, with fewer and fewer contracted workers. With this increment of new technology, currently, each hiring results in two direct jobs and three indirect jobs created by viticulture per year. This aspect demonstrates a complex relation: more technology, fewer jobs. Thus, it can be inferred that the more automation and mechanization there is in agriculture, the fewer jobs there will be. On the other hand, this calculation reflects explicitly on employability of women, who constitute a majority in this activity³. The remaining job openings are ideologically attributed to men, under the pretext of strength and sexist division of labor.

The discourse of region's strength and development, which considers agribusiness as the solution to employability, does not contemplate alternatives for relocating these women in the job market as mechanization or chemical management reduces hiring to reduce costs of production. This is not a matter of fighting against technology, but of demanding answers as to what has been planned so that these women may remain in or be relocated within the labor market, since the State's investment in agribusiness was justified by the promise of returns in the form of employment and income for the population.

Even with the workforces that agribusiness promotes, the region has a low level of employment; the average of the five municipalities in the irrigated fruticulture nucleus is 13.06%. Petrolina, Pernambuco, at 21.3%, is the city with the highest employment rate, followed by Juazeiro, Bahia, with 16.4% of its population employed. The municipality with the lowest employment rate is Santa Maria da Boa Vista, Pernambuco, with 5.9% (IBGE, 2015). In these populations, the percentages of nominal monthly per capita incomes of less than half a minimum wage are also high.

The production of exportation grade fruit in this region of the Brazilian semiarid meets the demands of globalized international commerce. In order to follow the standards established by markets, companies that produce fruits (farms) are constantly adapting, aiming to meet diversified production protocols, as well as updates. This factor, in its turn, changes the dynamics of agriculture.

¹ In addition, gender is also used to designate social relations between the sexes. Its use explicitly rejects biological explanations, such as those that find a common denominator for diverse forms of subjugation in the facts that women have the capacity to give birth and men have greater muscular strength (SCOTT, 1995, p. 75).

According to Cavalcanti e Silva (1998, p. 283), some markets to which fruit production is destined, such as that of the United States, for example, “estão exigindo a redução dos toques manuais nas frutas e estimulando o uso de aparelhos mais sofisticados para controle eletrônico da qualidade dos produtos”. Producing to meet these demands, consequently, results in the reduction of human labor. At the same time, this reduction in contact with the use of machines is only possible during packaging, there are already machines on the market that minimize manual manipulation of bunches of grapes in packing houses. In the field of production, in the work on the plant, there are still no machines that replace this manual contact. The market here is adjusting to substitute with varieties that require less manual contact and less work with scissors. Another substitute to these practices involves the use of chemicals to decrease contact. Faced with this process, there is an emerging demand in the sector to amplify the discussion on this division of labor between the “weaker sex” and the “stronger sex.”

The Industrial Revolution started with agriculture and the sector has gone through constant transformations in terms of technology in order to guarantee greater efficiency. However, to reproduce the discourse that work with grapes is “woman’s work” on account of the delicacy is to ratify the discourse strategy that operating machines is “man’s work” because of the question of strength of force. In this context, force is understood as defined by Certeau (1998), as a space of power. The development of the viticulture production chain here becomes increasingly technologically updated with the aim of reducing production costs by reducing manual labor. Thus, machines are substituting people, shrinking workforces. The ideological model, as we may consider, of hiring woman for the cultivation of grapes, demonstrates the vulnerability to which women are subjected in facing the demands of production protocols in food for exportation. In decreasing manual labor in the pruning and packing phases, both of which are considered “women’s jobs,” the job openings left over are in automation and mechanization. These openings continue to be attributed, within the sexual division of labor, to men on account of their strength (power). And where will the women go? As we said before, as long as there is sexual division in labor, women and especially women from less favored social classes, will be affected most heavily. Notwithstanding the fact that movements for equal rights are not recent, women live in a constant struggle for their emancipation in work.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was guided by the photoethnographic method, referencing Achutti (2004), who attributes symbolic value to photography as the book where ethnographical researcher takes notes, relying on the images’ narrative force. The author does not attempt to define what photography would be within a narrative. He says that “photography is the reality reflected; the raw material of this photography is in the luminous reflections of reality selected by the photographer’s mind” (Achutti, 2004, p. 71). In convergence with this line of thinking, Roland Barthes (1980, p. 49) states that photography is unclassifiable and that it is a pure contingent that provides immediacy of “details” that constitute the very material of ethnological knowledge. Notwithstanding Achutti’s understanding of the power attributed to this research technique of photography applied in the field, he recognizes the challenges involved in its utilization, given the fact that “narrative constructions that use photography to ensure the diffusion of research results are scarcely used among anthropologists” (2004, p. 95). Achutti draws attention to the fact that photography “should never be used in an isolated manner, but it should be the object of constructions in the form of sequences of associations of images.” He reflects that the sequences aim to train the reader to practice other associations and significations.

This study presents a photographic series of female viticulture workers, produced in accordance with the photoethnographic conception, which is that of “building an ethnographic narrative and restoring a reality through the language of photography” (Achutti, 2004, p. 17). Faced with the results of the production of the photographs, which is characterized as an empirical research database, images were selected in a manner that could reconstruct singular everyday details of these women’s jobs and labor activities on the grape farm, through an image narrative. This study presents some of these images.

This study focuses on the everyday lives of female rural workers in the São Francisco Valley. The images “taken from reality,” in the words of Achutti (2014, p. 81), are placed and re-placed so that one may perceive a narrative construction which speaks about their everyday life and points out some paths to understanding the lives of men and women and their cultural characteristics. This study does not undertake an explanation of this everyday life through photographs; the challenge was, rather, to discover everyday singularities revealed in them. Faced with these visions, the use of the images proposes an understanding of photography as a language and a means that makes it possible to construct a narrative. In accordance with

Achutti (2004, p. 111), a photograph is a materialization of an act of seeing, a discourse of looking on.

III. EVERYDAY LIVES OF FEMALE VITICULTURE WORKERS IN THE SÃO FRANCISCO VALLEY: WHAT THE DATA REVEAL

The policies of development implemented in the region in the 1970's changed much more than the scenario of the São Francisco Valley. Means of agriculture production have also undergone adjustments and specializations. Pruning, stripping, tying, defoliation, opening, thinning/hanging, cleaning, harvesting and packaging are new terms utilized in handling treatment of grape cultures in the different production cycles in the viticulture in the Valley. It is basically on account of these activities that "grape women" are hired. These are meticulous tasks, filled with small details. They demand adeptness, delicacy, and dexterity. They are "designer" jobs, as defined by Oliveira (1998). Working with grapes is specialized work and as such has its specificities. The social costs of these policies were also high.

Having a job, being formally employed by contract, worries about retirement are latent questions present in the women's narratives. In the narratives of the women interviewed it becomes evident that formality of rural work made available by big agribusiness companies confers a greater sense of security in terms of livelihood, faced with the uncertainties involved in family production, when compared with agribusiness. To hold their places in this activity, they faced numerous workdays like the one described in this speech:

"I live in a hurry, because I get up early. When I get home I have to take care of the house, take care of my husband, children, grandchildren. Our life isn't easy, because we struggle a lot! [...] When we hit fifty-something, we're already really tired, with back problems, other illnesses and we lose our motivation because they want to take away our special retirement at age 55". (Field worker, age 49)

Thus, for these rural workers, who are often daughters of farmers, their work horizons are no longer within the unit of the family farm. In the field worker's relation, one perceives that being hired to work at a grape farm guarantees livelihood and freedom from depending on others. At the same time, the formally signed contract, for her, is a source of support, in conjunction with the workers' social benefits, guaranteed by Brazilian legislation, notwithstanding the current debates on retirement. It is also perceived that dealing with a

specialized activity confers upon these women a certain amount of status, empowerment, and self-assuredness, owing, also, to the fact that it is an activity which can be carried out by men. It continues to be a conquest, in the war of the sexes, within the space of the job market, or be it, outside of domestic space.

This giant circle in which women seek their place in the job market still has not liberated them from domestic work, as underlined by Saffioti (1997). In the rural workers' reports, we find words of empowerment when they say "it makes no difference being a man or a woman" in relation to carrying out agricultural tasks. They say this regarding the amplification of job openings in fruticulture, like in mangos, for example. Regarding domestic labor, on the other hand, female rural workers still have not liberated themselves and they are not on the same footing as men. Even so, women continue to work double, triple, and quadruple workdays. These are the roots of patriarchy, still alive in society, as can be inferred from this report:

"My workday starts when I wake up to make my 'lunchbox.' The workday starts the second we wake up. And when I get to the farm too. It's really good getting to the farm without any worries. But, to compensate, the anxiety... Ah! With the responsibility people pass on to us. And then I'm afraid of messing up, of doing that task and maybe something goes wrong, and I'll get chewed out..." (Field supervisor, age 35).

In these discourses, fears and worries are also implicit, making it possible to identify the oppression that work imposes on these women. In this report, the woman interviewed uses words strongly charged with ideology of subjection, like "worry," "responsibility," "afraid," and "chewed out." This is the power of the strong over the weak, as defined by Certeau (1998). In analogy with the word "strong," we understand ideologically the space of power, where the devices of work, with its goals, pressures, profits, and overcoming of limits in the search for productivity. And the weak, symbolically, is the working class, specifically, in this analysis the women who are subordinated to these rules.

Notwithstanding the many conquests women have made, we may still observe in the discourse of the rural workers interviewed, the fear of not being recognized, of their work not being validated, or of not corresponded to what is expected of them. There is also the fear of losing one's job to someone else. Once again, the fear of superiors' oppression is mediated by people from the same social class and by people from different social classes. In establishing a role of team leadership, we see threats from men who contest this place, this spot. These are the

strategies of the workplace, as referred to by Certeau (1998) while tactics are the struggle to keep one's place in the workplace, as can be observed in another worker's narrative:

"I've already faced [problems], not with the pawns, but with the supervisor [male]. He wouldn't accept me in the same position he was in. He wanted to get ahead, to cut in front of me in my area and give orders that were mine to give, because he thought that they wouldn't obey me, because I was a woman. That stressed me a lot". (Rural worker, age 45)

In this report, it is evident that, for them, work also means empowerment and that women are aware of their rights. On the other hand, the dispute for leadership roles also becomes evident. Producing exportation grade fruit is an activity full of international quality protocols, but, to compensate, the companies cannot employ workers informally. Within companies that produce grapes (farms), both entities from the employing class and workers admit that it is practically impossible for a big company to hire workers without a formal contract. But the quality control and the demands for a perfect fruit are, notoriously, an aspect of tension between workers, as in the following report:

"There are some [companies] that ask more of you than others. And there are some that are a bit more laid back. There are some where the owner is right there, on top of you, looking over your shoulder to see you don't make a mistake. Then they complains, don't they? That's the way it has to be! If it's wrong they call attention. But it's that... I don't get... I think they complain because they're right! It doesn't mean that it's because I'm a woman and he's a man". (Field supervisor, age 35)

In the meantime, competition, pressure, goals, and high productivity are all present in different professional activities and in the most varied work environments. In hearing the reports of the "grape women," we perceive the place of the oppressor and the oppressed; there is not always awareness on the part of the workers as is explicit in the report above, where we hear "I think they complain because they're right!" The oppressive reality, in constituting a quasi-mechanism of absorption in those within it, works as a force of immersion in their conscious (Freire, 1987, p. 19), which is tied to the process of domestication of women. In this sense, according to Freire (1987), such a reality is functionally domesticating. Freire's liberation pedagogy says that "only the oppressed, having liberated themselves, can liberate the oppressors" (p. 24). In following with this like of thinking, we may thus

affirm that liberty can be obtained with the annihilation of fear.

Not with standing these demonstrations of empowerment, these women still struggle against diverse problems, including moral and sexual harassment. According to the president of the Union of Salaried Rural Workers in Petrolina, Pernambuco, the main motive of claims filed among rural workers is sexual harassment. He explains that, while the entity does not possess registered statistical data, the sector of viticulture has the highest number of occurrences due to the fact that it concentrates the highest number of women in its workforce. Another great and serious problem, indicated by women as a work-related difficulty which makes the activity unhealthy, is exposure to pesticides. Notwithstanding all of this, they continue to affirm that they like what they do, seeing that it gives them a sense of liberty, principally in the financial sense.

3.1 The everyday singularities of female rural workers

Photo ethnography on the workday, in a farm that produces quality table grapes, is made of a series that presents the following sequence: employees arriving at work; preparations to begin the work activity; employees carrying out the activity; lunch break. It also shows another step in the activity, that of post-harvest; inside the packing house, the conclusion of their workday activities and the return home.

The "grape women" live in a semiarid region, bathed by the waters of the São Francisco River, which makes irrigation possible. They are, at the same time, from the woods and from the riverbanks. They are thus historically marked by the resistance and the force of women from the semiarid and by the changes in the configurations of means of agricultural production. They reaffirm their empowerment and accentuate, once again, that they have left their mark on this new way of doing agriculture. Even though they occupy space in different production modes throughout fruticulture's chain of production, it is specifically in viticulture that the activity was baptized as "feminine," as 70% of the workers it aggregates are women.

These women in the Brazilian semiarid region are known as "grape women" or "workingwomen of the grapes," ratifying the female appropriation of this sector. To know about their everyday life, it was necessary to dive into their work, to discover the socioeconomic aspects of the region, and their reports of their everyday lives, which are the most sensible and intangible part of this research. During the meeting with the female rural workers, in the determined moment of the interview, the

photoethnographic series were shown to them which, in addition to many aspects foreseen in the study, also characterized a symbolic devolution.

Regarding the singularities revealed in the photographs of female viticulture workers' everyday lives, an extremely wide variety of interpretations surfaced during the reports given when faced with the images. In this meeting, they were shown the photoethnographic series that showed their work in grape production. Their narratives have evident references to aspects related to the work environment and its relation to their everyday lives, the physical conditions required to develop the work activities and the multiple workdays which they face. The everyday singularities here revealed arise from the narratives about the images shown, as follow:

"All of us standing up. When we get to work in the field, no one sits down. If we start at 6:30, at 11:30 we go to the lunch hall. Five hours working in the morning, one hour for lunch, which isn't an hour sitting in the shade at the lunch hall, because the hour counts the time it takes us to get from the field to the lunch hall. We get there at 12:15 and we have to leave at 12:50 to get back in time. So it's pretty rushed."

"To me, this reveals good memories and also tough moments that we went through in the grape field."

"If working conditions could improve a bit more. When you spend the whole day with your arms lifted, it wears you out."

"I'm happy to be with all these people. I make lots of friends... for me it's a family."

"I always remember that working people have to use sunglasses, hats, boots... [...] That's the perfect protection, especially the glasses, because damaging your eyes is serious business."

"Some photos show good things, but others show how tired we get and that we don't feel very comfortable. It looks like they're working because they're forced to. But in some you see that they're happy, liking the work."

"Generally speaking, it brings good memories and moments of happiness, which is good. And what wasn't good and happy, I erase!"

"It was good! I just miss my coworkers. Today they aren't here, ya know... everyone looking for other companies".

Some of the singularities in the everyday lives of female viticulture workers in the São Francisco Valley were revealed during their reports of their own everyday

life, which we call self-narratives. Others are not present here and will be able to continue implicit. They are the legacy of a pseudo-development which leaves more doubts than certainties. Doubts as to whether the State did not consider how the lives of these people would be without their lands or as to whether the conditions to which they are subjected was foreseen in some nefarious architecture that planned on depriving a population of opportunities in order to guarantee that there would be no shortages of manual labor. The faces of these women show the genetics of the working *sertanejo* population which, notwithstanding the adversities, has lost neither the strength nor the courage to live. Bloch (1996) denounced agribusiness in this region with the epithet "bitter fruits." At the same time, we see that the invisibility of these female viticulture workers in business rankings and statistics, which move millions within the economy, guarantees, at least, the certainty of having a job that is, all too often, temporary, freeing them from the position of extreme poverty, as long as they are young, and disposable insofar as they will be substituted by younger woman who have the energy necessary to generate profits for agribusiness.

3.2 Photo ethnographic narrative: associations and significance under the seeing eye

In this part, we present the narrative of photoethnography-inspired images of a workday, which contributes to a collage of the everyday life of female viticulture workers in the São Francisco Valley, demonstrating the social conditions and the impacts of their work on the region through photographs. The narrative is presented in the form of a series of interrelated photos, in keeping with Achutti's definition from the point of view of composing a sequence of visual information. "Series of photos that should be offered to the eye alone, without any text in between that might distract the reader/spectator's attention" (2004, 109). In this manner, the interpretation occurs as a result of the photographs' narrative force, dispensing the use of texts or captions that characterize or that might attribute some oblique sense to the everyday lives depicted. They are organized in four series, as follows: Series I, which depicts the arrival at work; Series II, which depicts meals at work: the "Lunchbox"; Series III, which depicts the workday in grape production; and Series IV, which depicts the end of the workday, the return home.

3.2.1 Series I – Arriving at Work



Fig. 1: Women arriving at work

3.2.2 Series II – Meals at Work (“the Lunchbox”) – Breakfast



Fig. 2: breakfast at work



Fig. 3: The lunch at work

3.2.3 Series III – Workday on the Grape Farm



Fig 4: Women beginning working on the grape farm

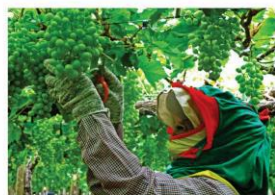


Fig 5: Workday on the grape farm

3.2.4 Series IV – End of the Workday, Returning Home



Fig 6: Women returning home

IV. CONCLUSION

The São Francisco Valley possesses 110,000 hectares of land destined for irrigation (SNA, 2016). This sector creates jobs and is, additionally, a national reference in the exportation of mangos and grapes. Furthermore, the region stands out in its production of wine and grape juice. In the viticulture sector, a demand for manual labor arises in which 70% of employees are women. With this local dynamism influencing the local economy, the Valley shows data that indicate underdevelopment. The marketing of development is not in tune with the results of indexes on living conditions among its populations.

All rural workers, male and female, in the region are the fruit of the expropriation of land which made this company model of agriculture viable, a destiny which was assigned to them by the plans of developers, who marked the determined the future of the people who live in this region. In discussing employment in the fruticulture sector and social aspects resulting from agribusiness, which, after 50 years, operates in an area where half of the population lives below the poverty line, and the female viticulture workers, to whom our research perspective is dedicated, are the protagonists of the scenario of inequality.

In their narratives, we were able to denominate as strategies, the social unit of this study, the companies that produce grapes (farms). But not the physical space. The strategies are the *modi operandi*, the workday that begins even before they leave home. The acts which are demanded of them are in the sphere of strategies, whereas doing, executing, enacting, or preparing these acts are tactics. The everyday singularities are their multiple forms of empowerment. Even though their living conditions are related to the legacy left by the negligence of public policies that might have provided assistance to populations victimized by the expropriation of their land, these women manage to find firm footing faced with this activity, which could also be carried out by men, leading an agricultural sector that is relevant and prominent in the region, namely, viticulture.

The female rural workers in the viticulture segment carry the legacy and the marks of the history of the semiarid region and, faced with adversity, used tactics to redraw their stories. They dominate at activity in the fruticulture sector, and yet a great struggle awaits them to achieve equality within the tasks under the domestic yoke. This is an especially important aspect which has yet to be conquered by them, as their household activities, in conjunction with their professional duties, lead these women, according to their reports, to accumulate the equivalent of four workdays per day. Owing to the strength

of these women from the Brazilian semiarid region which has allowed them to reconfigure their stories within irrigated agriculture, they have not grown weak and they continue to fight against the burden imposed on them.

We found that the everyday singularities in female rural workers are in their empowerment and their resistance when faced with the sexual division of labor. Their empowerment also demonstrates their resistance in attempting to change the course of their lives, which are influenced by the yoke of history, that makes them carry the bitter legacy of the region's questionable development, in which public policies put into action almost half a century ago. Notwithstanding diagnoses which show that social problems could be fortified, condemning the family farmers to "miserable cold sack lunches" in Silva's observation (1981), these women demonstrated that the dialectic of life, especially, women's current position in society, continues to lack vigilance and dedication to continue the struggle for equal rights in gender, in its totality, in family and at work, wherein reside their everyday life.

Finally, in analyzing the images of everyday life of female viticulture workers in the São Francisco Valley to make their social conditions and their work's impact in the region visible, in selecting images that are included at the end of this study, it became evident that the analyses which these women made of their own everyday work are not disassociated with their lives. In this research, it was not for us to interpret the images. That would not be possible. Supported by the theoretical-methodological perspective, we relied on the narrative force of the photographic images that "disestablish the canonic writings as the only legitimate form of scientific evidence," in line with Achutti (2004).

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