

Between Gender, Religiosity and the Relationship with Nature: The Healers as Popular Doctors Guided by God in Clevelândia (PR)

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ABSTRACT

This article establishes an ethnographic mapping, from the point of view of history and Oral History, in the city of Cleveland with a strong stamp of ordinary and traditional Catholic culture. From this perspective, we built a collection of oral interviews, with the life stories of 13 healers and a healer from the city and region. In this sense, we were guided by the very threads and intricacies that fieldwork has allowed us to reach and, also, to dialogue with theorists such as Michel de Certeau, Raymond Williams, Fritjof Capra, Alessandro Portelli, Janaina Amado.

Keywords: Benziment, Environment, Oral History, Practices, Religiosity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to understand the narratives of five women healers from Clevelândia (PR) in search of similar markers, or not, that legitimize them as healers. It analyzes how they produce medicines for their audience, how they share traditional knowledge for generations, why and how they perform blessings and the gestures that are part of the prayers. From individual or collective memories, systemic, corporal or otherwise, we seek to understand the classifications, conflicts, and rituals.

From the historical and oral history point of view, the text establishes an ethnographic mapping in the city of Clevelândia, with a strong imprint of ordinary and Catholic culture. In the analysis of observations about their daily lives and the systemic constructions of our interviewees, the axes of memory, culture and nature form a social mapping. The observation and the narratives involve the use of plants and medicinal herbs in their practices of blessing and/or prayers, as well as the services they provide to their attendants, such as the indication of teas, production of home remedies, such as syrup, some of them with authorization and services associated with the Unified Health System (SUS). Thus, the goal is to think about what places they occupy with their behavior as women healers in the social world, along with the prayers, healing practices and discourses that guide their bodies that make them “popular doctors”, giving them their identity belonging to the healing craft and the community (Pollak, 1989). The process also involved sharing aspects of the natural world and the field of religiosity escaping, at times, from homogeneous normality imposed by the contemporary social world.

II. THE ART OF BAKING: THE HEALERS, SECRETS AND MAGIC INVOLVING THE SYRUP AND ITS PREPARATION

Our interviewees are specialists in syrups/bottles for “amarelão”¹, in addition to indicating teas. It is from the syrup that our discussion starts, in order to explore the dimensions that appear in the reports regarding how they deal with the herbs, their preparation until delivery to the patient.

We established the axes of gender, religiosity and environment to discuss an element that permeated part of the interviews: the idea that healers see themselves as popular doctors guided by God to bless and treat their attendants. However, this only applies to the preparation of medicine for anemia. For this reason, we selected only the interviewees who deal with the production of the medicine, using medicinal plants/herbs in their daily lives, as a form of joint treatment with blessings, especially for children and the elderly.

¹Our healers more commonly refer to the yellow syrup as a disease. However, there are times when they themselves mention treatment for it, such as anemia, hepatitis and fever.

Dona Jandira Antunes Dal Olmo, 69 years old, perhaps the most recognized faith healer who produces syrup in Cleveland, narrated this about the herbs used in the preparation:

So, I charge the medicine, right? People spend. It has the service of harvesting herbs, drying, cooking at the right time. When I make the medicine, when I'm preparing it, I pray. And that medicine, whether to cure the disease that the person came looking for, you have to put your intention there.

Dona Jandira's testimony allows exploring the idea that they do not disbelieve in plants or herbs - the subjectivation of things, as well as establishing a relationship of intentionality of grace, of request for healing with prayers with the plants at the time of preparation of the syrup. It is in this process that these women healers are empowered who, faced with a volume of objects and rituals that are not things because they are alive, after all, subjectivities are also bodies of living materials with which they work and deal, relate, allow that give new meaning to the art of making medicine.

In order to problematize the gesture of placing intention in the preparation of medicines, Jandira was asked about the relationship with nature through contact with plants/herbs, whether in the blessing or in the preparation of the syrup itself. Here is the moment when she praises her own work, being a woman, having children, making it clear that it is this type of medicine that she manages to deal with and her issues. In her words;

I went to see a doctor when I was having my second daughter. No one got sick, it was just home remedies. I grew up only with home remedies.

The healer, who has invested her whole life in home remedies, on the other hand, also depends on controlled medicines for blood pressure and diabetes and is familiar with the Unified Health System in the city and region. With regard to this, many elderly people at Casa Lar are guided by the public health sector for blessings, including the witch doctor's syrup.

Dona Jandira confirmed this relationship between SUS care and her work, as did other interviewees². She reiterates that a nurse was often at her residence while working at one of the Municipal Emergency Services. In fact, this type of relationship has been in place for over twenty years in the city, whether through the Health Sector and the healers, or through the Pastoral do Idoso and the Home for the Elderly, of which Dona Jandira is one of the coordinators, playing an important decision-making role. The relationship between Catholicism and areas of Public Health, directly and indirectly, for example, is also pointed out.

The issue of preparing the syrup also has a history and this was told by our interviewee. It came about due to her interest during the illness of her first ex-husband and, later, she sought courses and specialization, both in making syrup and tea. Of these, many learned by inheritance. In her words:

I once took a course there in Santa Isabel, with a doctor, on herbal medicine. To this day I say: there are people who come here and say so-and-so said that such a thing is good. Yesterday a gentleman came here and said that they taught him to make a kale smoothie and he said he had a stomach ache. (...) Then I said: how did you do it? I did as I was taught. (...) He is yellow. (...) I said: Don't go to the pharmacy to get a vitamin for yourselves, make a homemade vitamin. Take a piece of beetroot, an apple, you cut it in three, four pieces you can put milk, coconut water and a piece of cabbage leaf. Together, in one day. In the other you can take another little piece of carrot, banana, mango and make another shake, but always with a little piece of cabbage. Hit and take. (...) I said to the boy yesterday: Put three leaves of cabbage, beat and drink? that's poison.

Dona Jandira reveals, based on excerpts such as the narrative above, that there is a disputed place. From her trajectory, recognition, courses, positions she occupies, it is as if she could and was able to reveal and guide the attendant, the patient. In this case, for example, she demonstrates ability in speech to say the vitamin, the amount of vegetables for the yellow oil vitamin, what can be used, what can and cannot be mixed, because like any other medicine it can cause a reaction. Thus, she makes suggestions for ingredients and the amount to be used, unlike the syrup for yellowing, which she does not reveal the secret.

In the treatment of yellow fever or anemia, her greatest specialty, she has been improving based on the demand received. Above, she mentions how to make homemade fortifying vitamin, for yellowing and the necessary care, as we infer below:

You should never mix the herb that doesn't combine, it's like medicine from the pharmacy. For example, like Tanchais is not a pure antibiotic, right? Mallow is a pure antibiotic, Espinheira Santa is a pure antibiotic, Quebra-pedra is a pure, pure antibiotic. That big Butterbur is a pure antibiotic, Ortiguinha is a pure antibiotic, Ortigão is an antibiotic too, there is no better medicine for the bladder. So how are you going to mix these

²Examples are a former nurse at the Emergency Room in Clevelandia, Daniele Pedroso, who answered a semi-structured questionnaire; my father, in memoriam, Celso Maschio, retired after 23 years as an ambulance driver for the Municipality of Clevelandia, who also answered a semi-structured questionnaire; In addition to other healers who appear in this same text, confirming the relationship between them and the city's Health Sector.

medicines with each other? It's the same effect. The amount is a little bit of everything. For example, you're going to boil some tea for yourself there, in a kettle that has almost a liter of water, it's three leaves of mauve, Espinheira Santa, Ortiguinha, Tanchais, a maximum of four leaves. So things have to be minimal (...) Because there are medicines that sometimes the person takes at the doctor, or at the hospital and ends up dying, because it's too much! The dosage is strong. I take medicine, for example, for blood pressure and for the heart. But if I take it once and I don't feel! [Our emphasis]

The healer, in addition to mastering the use of herbs for illnesses, maintains a relationship with the nature of her own body - listening to it, feeling it. Just as he talks to the plants for handling and manufacturing medicine, he does the same with the medicine he takes for his heart and blood pressure problems, as we can see in the excerpt: "I take medicine for blood pressure and for the heart. But if I take it and I don't feel!" Here seems to remain the evidence and preference of the healer not only in the manufacture of natural remedies, but in the care of her own body with herbs and natural plants.

The extensive knowledge that Dona Jandira has with plants, the years of blessing and the contact with the pastoral, consolidated her as perhaps the most popular healer in the region. She comments on this issue:

People from Palmas, Abelardo, Beltrão, Pato Branco, and Mariópolis come here. Medicine goes to Curitiba, to Blumenau, everywhere. At the end of next year, relatives from far away, take the medicine and come to get it and they don't have it. It's all year round, right? The Saturday before last, a mother came from Chapecó with a child, a liter of medicine that the baby took she gained almost 1 kg. A baby who didn't lose weight, just lost it. She went to the doctor and the doctor said it was normal and the child fainting, and the months passed. The parents were very happy. So it's something like that for me it's a victory when I see things like that going forward, right? He is the popular doctor guided by God! [Our emphasis].

It is important to observe in the fragment the interviewee's consideration of her work: "the healer is the popular doctor guided by God!". In this medical relationship, Dona Jandira serves an audience, especially children, from Monday to Friday, which sometimes reaches thirty people. Recently, she has managed to schedule appointments due to the growing number of appointments in the city, from outside and also by telephone. The healer's residence usually has at least one or two people to bless, at times when we visit her, to take a blessing or to look for the medicine for the yellow fever.

Here there are days that go beyond twenty. It never drops from ten, twelve, fifteen, twenty a day. Now in the winter it is a little less, but in the summer there are days when twenty-five, thirty people come.

Another point that appears highlighted in some interviews is the direct relationship between the service provided by faith healers and the demands of public health facilities, especially for the elderly - Lar dos Idosos. Dona Jandira herself is from the Pastoral for the Elderly of the Catholic Church, a function highlighted by her below:

I've been to the hospital many times and they come here too. Because whoever works at the hospital there, for example, Eloides, those people there all know. Yesterday Eloides' mother came and she is from inside the hospital. The old lady was still looking for a liter of medicine, the poor thing arrived here on Wednesday crying, then Bete came and left her in the car. (...) she Said: but look, I don't know what else to do for our sick girl. She went to that one in Saletinha and this Saletinha told her: she's going to die of yellowing. Then I said: what are you doing? Then she said I'm not fine! Saletinha said I was going to die, Dona Jandira. I said: my God! Why does one person put worms in the heads of others, right? An old, weak, sick person. But I said: no, God did not come down to disillusion anyone. The lady will be fine. I will pray to you, I'm going to make the medicine and you're going to take it, you're going to be fine. You get that little worm out of your head that that person told you.

The interview fragment denotes not only care for patients at the hospital or in relation to family members and the public at the hospital itself, but also conflicts between the healers themselves. The elderly woman received by her who was in conflict because she had received the news that she was going to die of yellow fever had been attended by another healer, also considered a specialist in treating yellow fever. As can be seen, popular doctors guided by God also have disagreements about their knowledge and the ways in which they deal with the sacred and the potential of their medicine, their knowledge.

Dona Jandira, in addition to fulfilling the role of counselor authorized by the priest, as she insists on emphasizing, guaranteed the cure for the patient's yellowness through her syrup and her blessing. In addition to being part of the city's elderly group and participating in a series of activities that the Catholic Church and the Pastorals carry out for the elderly, in these participations she meets a good part of the group of elderly people in the city, who are her friends, building bonds of sociability and solidarity. This makes her concern for the health of these people even more solid and the consequent increase in demand from this public for her services.

She comments:

Dude, he's quite old. Most are anemia. Yellow, it's because it's very weak, there are some who eat well, there are some who don't. Eat right, right? (...) Most come here rather than to the doctor, because they know that in that range that gave yellow, they don't go to the doctor, which is no use! (...) because doctors didn't study to cure yellow fever. Look at Mezomo, he lives in the field, he and his wife. He brought his wife here almost carrying him on his lap. He spent some money here in Pato Branco and they said she had cancer and the woman was dying. Then, when they couldn't find what the woman had, they said: you can take her home because she has nothing else to do. (...) Then she went to Cascavel, there they admitted her, they did tests at the blood clinic. (...) So doctor, what happened to my wife's exam? They said: The one who passed the exams is Tiricia, old yellow. But so what are you going to do now? Will you treat her? They're going to give her the medicine, right? No, you are looking for a woman who drinks bottles. The cancer doctors told him. (...) If I tell you, say the doctors there, no one will believe it, until today, no doctor has studied medicine for this disease. The Mezomo ah, I can't believe it! It came from Cascavel and came straight here. (...) If he crossed himself, he took I think about 5 or 6 liters of medicine and the woman is working there.

The healer's speech allows exploring the relationship between medicine, pharmacological chemistry and medicinal/home care. In the above report, the doctor, faced with a suspicion of cancer, fortunately unrealistic, discovers profound anemia in the patient and suggests that a home remedy would have more effect on products from the chemical industry. For this, the person indicated and the patient, his wife, look for the healer in search of the home remedy.

Dona Jandira is advertising her treatment, at the same time as she invites us to think about Janaína Amado in "O Grande Liar" (1995), when she admits that the report cannot always be taken as true, but we cannot question the truth of the interviewee, that is, we do not know to what extent our interviewee's entire report can be taken as true, but it is not up to us to judge. The fact that traditional medicine integrates chemical treatments with traditional herbs or that doctors recommend a natural medicine to a patient is interesting, both from a historical and cultural point of view.

About the production process of the syrup, Dona Jandira does not reveal which herbs are used. She says that for light yellowing it's seven and for the serious one it's nine. Just like she claims she learned to do with nine herbs, but she does with seven and it was her late companion who picked the herbs for her. She says to plant, care for, harvest, dry and store, because there is an established relationship with Nature, after all, there are times of the year when all the herbs are not available and, in view of public demand, she has stipulated days for the preparation and delivery of the syrup, unlike other times when we arrived at her house and found the medicine always ready for delivery. Now the interested party needs to call first and check if she has the ingredients and when he can get the syrup.

This dimension is interesting and important to be explored in environmental terms, because it is a cycle. The planting cycle and the harvest cycle. Nature in its process, but also the human relationship in this movement. That is, we are talking about two aspects: the natural and the human in the sense of the relationship with nature and the healer, in this case, who plants, harvests, dries the herbs and produces the medicine. But, also, another movement that she created, in the relationship with the public that she receives, of establishing a kind of agenda as she manufactures the medicine, for its delivery. That is, it is no longer manufactured at a daily speed as in previous years, but according to the availability and disposition of the healer.

As for revealing the ingredients, however, we found in other interviews, in the speeches of other healers, as well as the shape, the preparation of the syrup, like Dona Saletinha who warned the patient assisted by Dona Jandira that she would die of yellowing. This made it possible to identify not only the silences and revelations between one narrative and another, but also the tensions and disputes between these women's knowledge.

Dona Salete Aparecida Borba Meneguini, Dona Saletinha, 57 years old, is a neighborhood healer. Most of the patients are children with anemia/yellow fever or with "faggot", or from/to "fright", as she points out. Her narrative was constituted by a certain insecurity as "being a healer", in a speech permeated by a tone of not seeing herself, in herself, as a healer, but as someone who inherited from her sister (who discredited her) the gift of blessing, saying that she did not wanted to bless it, but even so, he left all the prayers saved for her to find. That is, the sister was the consolidated healer of the family, the neighborhood and the region, sought after by people. And there is also a question of gender present. As a woman and a faith healer/rezadeira, with a strong presence of Catholicism, she cannot deny care to a child.

According to Dona Saletinha, she was forced to help a frightened child, who arrived at her residence and she would not deny assistance to a child, and she never stopped blessing, believing that she had a gift of healing, through prayers and sympathies, especially with children, for the care of the child. Here we once again see gender issues present.

Dona Salete, when I asked her about the treatments she was undergoing and whether she recommended medication, she narrated as follows:

For anemia then I have to write it down, right? the right amount because then it takes time for the liver to clean. (...) Go picão, parsley, dark beer, a glass, a box of condensed milk, cloves, cinnamon. It's seven. And then it boils and boils, it gets a little thick, then you put it in a bowl and drink a little every day. And there are people who can't have sweets, right? then I take the condensed milk and put that for the liver there, chamomile. Replaces. And then the person takes a little before eating. And I tell people to drink a lot of water too, because there are people who don't drink water.

Unlike Dona Jandira, who works only with herbs, Dona Salete mixes dark beer and condensed milk, but they have the common aspect of being seven herbs. In addition, Dona Salete does not use extra herbs, like Dona Jandira (the 9-herb recipe).

Not only in the treatment of anemia, which, according to Dona Salete, varies the public because it refers especially to elderly men looking for medicine, their specialty with children varies in care and treatment. She narrates a little of her experience as follows, to take away the fright of a child, for example, from her first blessing/sympathy:

Joelma's Ana there, I scared her, the first person I scared was a child. And I took her fright away with egg. She turns 21 already. (...) We put a glass of water, take an egg, then bless the child, always pulling it inside that water, in a cross, and then that egg when the child is scared enough, what scared her appears, it whitens all over the egg. She makes the design on the egg.

Since Dona Salete's blessings are aimed mainly at children, I asked about the places where she blessed, including from a distance, and the ways in which she carried out the blessing practices. She answered:

Benzo anywhere. (...) And for children I light the candles, right? which is for the guardian angel. (...) And to scare us, we have to bless the child for nine days. Then, let's say, I bless you today, two days later I bless you alone, one more and then it's nine times. Personally one comes three times. This one to take the scare away. For fagots, for example, if it's not too marked, it could be one or three times, right? Then we see if there is enough or not. And for yellow too. But the yellow one gives me a lot of coughing, when I finish blessing someone gives me something like that that looks like it's burning down.

As can be seen in Dona Salete's narrative, she calls herself a healer and mixes aspects of Catholicism in her practices, such as lighting candles for the child's guardian angel, and blessing nine days. In addition, in some moments of the interview she revealed that she made novenas to the guardian angel and saints, especially for children. Therefore, we can say that Dona Salete is a healer, but also a healer in the field of religiosity and practices of these women we studied in Cleveland, not only their contact with the natural world, but also the dimensions of the sacred, hidden connections, as in invites us to think about Capra (2002):

The system of common values and beliefs creates an identity among members of the social network, an identity based on the feeling of being part of a larger group. In different cultures, people have different identities because they espouse different sets of values and cultures. At the same time, a single individual can belong to different cultures. People's behavior is shaped and bounded by their cultural identity, which in turn reinforces in them a deeply ingrained sense of people's way of life, and this embeddedness tends to be so deep that it even escapes our awareness for most of the time. of time (Capra, 2002, p. 99).

Of the interviewees, Dona Salete was one of the only healers who specifically reported side effects felt at the time of the blessing, such as burning and coughing when the patient has yellow fever, that is, the energies of the blessed patient.

Another healer, neighbor of the owner Saletinha, owner Aurora Recalcati, 80 years old, one of the oldest healers in Clevelândia, also receives a large number of people every day, especially children and the elderly.

What comes most is a sick child, with yellow fever. And the old ones, yellow. I make medicine for them, right? But I bless a little bit of everything. Faggot, wild breaker, shingles, anemia, yellowtail. All of that I bless. I make medicine from a bottle. For the medicine I charge 10 per liter, because I use firewood, I use sugar, I use everything, or I use gas. And I only make medicine for yellowing, for anemia. Hey, so many old people come here dying, sometimes they go to the doctor, they stay in the hospital for a week, a month and the doctor doesn't cure them. (...) And there's picão, Guaixuma, winter plum leaf, plantain... Everything from there I do the liter and they are cured, thank God and, if necessary, they come back to me to make another medicine. (...) Then they drink it three times a day, something like this... One liter. But for the yellow man, it's older than that! (...) But children come too much too, God forbid! There are days when there are ten, twelve children there for me to take care of. And I will continue until the day God calls me.

As can be seen in the reports of the healers, there are some aspects in common, such as that blessing is a gift from God, in addition to the massive care of children, the elderly, affected by yellow fever/anemia. In the case of Dona Aurora and Dona Jandira, the common aspect of the bottle is the fact that they do not mix alcoholic beverages or condensed milk, as Dona Salette does. However, Dona Aurora mixes leaves from fruit trees, unlike Dona Jandira, who works more with plant roots. In addition, Dona Laura (analysis below), Dona Salette and Dona Aurora live nearby.

On the other hand, unlike Little sale which receives people from the neighborhood, Dona Aurora, like Dona Jandira, is an old healer and is sought after throughout the region. In her narrative she told us about how this occurs:

It comes from Pato Branco, it comes from Palmas, it comes from Abelardo, it comes from everywhere. Benzo from afar. They leave me the name there and I bless it. There are three notebooks over there. They call me, they call me and I answer. Sometimes they come to call me to answer. But now I gave up because I don't have time, right? There are a few there who want me to go and bless them at home. But I ask God to bless me because I like to plant, weed and clean. Here you have all kinds of fruit. I have everything weed. And I use it for tea. Sometimes someone has a stomach ache and I say go to the garden and take a little piece of canflower from the garden and make a tea that you already heal and that's it. Plantain for children, for coughs, for the flu. There is boldo that is good for coughs too. All medicine is good, just have faith and make the tea and drink it. Partridge grass is good for the kidneys, for inflammation in the ovaries and for back pain. We find it in the bush. There are a few who want and don't know, right? So I go and take and give. (...) And for tea kids, what goes the most is Boldo, Tanchagem and Poejinho too. But we teach and they don't. They bring a child there dying of pain and they don't make tea.

The fragment of Dona Aurora's interview is interesting because it is the interview that deals most with the plants that can be indicated for various things. Dona Aurora, on the contrary, insists on affirming her belief in herbs, her relationship with Nature based on plants instead of chemical remedies and that she recommends teas for treatments, especially for pain in children. However, she emphasizes in several moments of the interview, as she did above, that the mothers take the children a lot to bless and she indicates the teas to be made, that she even goes so far as to pick herbs from her garden and give them to the person, but that the vast majority do not make the teas. They resume the practice of leading the child to the blessing, but do not follow her indication of the tea to be taken to improve the pain that the child is feeling and receive it as a complement to the blessing. That is, it produces an associative practice:

Another interviewee, Isolda Irene Balena, 75 years old, is a former farmer, a woman from the land, as she refers to herself. A healer who is not well known in the city because she has always lived in the countryside, but recently after the death of her husband and the illness of a son, she moved to live with a daughter in the city. However, she often says that she doesn't like living here because she doesn't have "nature".

During the interview with Dona Isolda or Dona Balena as she is known, she demonstrates emotions and feelings for her relationship with nature and elements. She is a Catholic faith healer, who practices prayers in blessings, but does not use any type of artifact such as rosary / rosary, just the anointing with her hands. Incidentally, of the interviewees selected here, only Jandira uses rosaries and Aurora uses incense. The rest is anointing with hands.

Dona Isolda doesn't bless many people, just acquaintances or by appointment, like Dona Saletinha. She learned the practice of blessing with a former black slave, a neighbor of her father's farm, as a child, due to the relationship she had with her and for being the healer and companion of her mother-in-law, who was the midwife of all the women in the city. and inside.

Its specialty is also yellow, also producing and selling liter syrup, in addition to sympathies and blessings for skin diseases, mainly "izipela"³. In her narrative she tells how the story began with the blessing:

We lived in Cachoeirinha, so at that time there wasn't so much medicine for worms, for shingles, for these "Izipelas", so I took my brothers. It was an old woman who lived a hundred meters away and she blessed in a loud voice. And I, I kept that in my head, but I didn't pretend that one day it could serve. Then we came to live at Esmeralda farm, the first time I blessed it, a girl from Leonilda said: Isolda come here, Valette is going to die, she has a fever that can't be controlled anymore. I said to her: what happened? She wants bananas and doesn't have any. It was fifteen kilometers that you had to walk if you wanted to buy these bananas. And then I said: Leonilda, I learned to bless with that old lady, I'm going to try it. (...) Then I went about 500 meters to get some green corn and when I came back she was playing on the road with her friends.

³According to the Brazilian Society of Dermatology, it is known as Erysipelas. It is an inflammatory condition that affects the dermis and the adipose tissue (subcutaneous cellular tissue) of the skin, with involvement of the lymphatic vessels. It predominantly affects the lower limbs of elderly patients. However, it can reach people of any age and other regions of the skin. <https://www.sbd.org>

In addition to how it was the firstblessing she tells us what she blesses, how to bless and her specialty for the yellow, how it started and the preparation, to make the syrup. In her narrative:

After that I started to bless copper, izipela. Then we came to live here. Vilson, my husband, always had to go there near the Pato Branco river to take people to make medicine for yellow fever. And then the old lady said: I'm always sick, I can't go find the herbs and he asked: but can't you write it down? Do you have any secrets? No, no, she said. Then she gave it to me in secret. I've been taking this medicine about forty years now. And to this day I haven't seen anyone say that they didn't heal with that. (...) Then my blessing started there: faggot, shingles, zipela and the medicine for yellowing. Quebranto also always picks up, which is normal for a child. Only not many people come, more are the acquaintances. (...) Now if the yellowness doesn't heal too, in four days if it's not good, you can forget that it's not. And also if it's shingles that I cut, it heals already, if you can't see a doctor, I'll tell you. (...) Once I also made a lot of medicine for bronchitis, I took the herbs and boiled them, which was good. Ask Alaor's wife at the pharmacy. I made her some syrup, poor thing, she was desperate one day and I got there at the pharmacy, and I said: I'll make you some syrup, she even had a stain on her lungs and it healed. When she sees me, that woman hugs me, kisses me. It is the gratitude that she has healed. (...) But at that time people came every week. There was a queue benzer, the other breaking, the other was like this diet relapse medicine I did a lot. Now women almost don't earn anymore, right? Poor thing, she was desperate one day and I got there at the pharmacy, and I said: I'll make you some syrup, she even had a stain on her lungs and it healed. When she sees me, that woman hugs me, kisses me. It is the gratitude that she has healed. (...) But at that time people came every week. There was a queue benzer, the other breaking, the other was like this diet relapse medicine I did a lot. Now women almost don't earn anymore, right? Poor thing, she was desperate one day and I got there at the pharmacy, and I said: I'll make you some syrup, she even had a stain on her lungs and it healed. When she sees me, that woman hugs me, kisses me. It is the gratitude that she has healed. (...) But at that time people came every week. There was a queue benzer, the other breaking, the other was like this diet relapse medicine I did a lot. Now women almost don't earn anymore, right?

Dona Isolda is a reserved healer. he doesn't use blessings, but he also only blesses by indication. She keeps everything she learned from the "black" old lady, her neighbor by observation and secret, as she says. She believes in the power of her prayers and medicine, but she doesn't strive for the number of visits, but for the quality and improvement of care, especially yellow fever and erysipelas, in addition to stating that her profession is that of a seamstress.

It is a wisdom that passes between women. In a way women who are also a bit subversive. However, the line between being a well-respected healer and not is a thin one. After all, they keep knowledge, secrets, magic, even save lives and save lives.saved the lives of so many people. Historically, Dona Isolda, for example, is a healer who reveals fragments of a narrative of protection, of help between women and even of transgression, such as the relationship with the garden to the detriment of the house. At the same time, she also occupies the role of a Catholic mother, a present and maternal grandmother. They are figures and roles that permeate the trajectories of these women that allow us to centralize the discussion around the axes of gender, religiosity/Catholicism and nature, without losing the dimension of the subjectivities that involve the lives of our interviewees.

It is also interesting in Dona Isolda's interview that she mentions that she made the medicine for bronchitis for the pharmacist's wife. In other interviews, we found faith healers reporting the pharmacist in question indicating the services of faith healers for pharmacy customers - again the relationship between areas of Health in the city and the craft of blessing. With regard to the healers' specialties, this web appears in the narratives of other interviewees. Whether in the public health sector, or in pharmacies, one can hypothesize that it is because it is a country town where everyone knows each other and one indicates traditional knowledge and folk medicine to each other as a possibility of cure. That is, pharmacies and the health system deliver and/or sell their medicines, but they also consider natural treatments and value the work of healers as "popular doctors guided by God", reference of Dona Jandira. These are aspects in common in the cultural fabric of the city.

According to Dona Isolda, the emphasis given to the "syrup" is due to her son's hepatitis. She got emotional during the interview telling such a part of the story of their lives:

I have a son. My God, but I kind of cried for that son, we spent what he didn't have. Sometimes the other children charge me. But we spent everything on illness and it went far to heal. We look for everything. First, the doctor did an exam and found nothing. (...) he gave him hepatitis, he stayed in bed for a year. He just sat on the couch like that, he couldn't walk. He didn't die because the skin on his liver didn't burst. His liver turned to jelly. Then as healed he recovered. A little with other people's medicine, a little with mine. Then he recovered. I always treated my children. (...) I looked at him, he had his shirt open like that, but it looked like he had spilled something yellow like that, his eyes, my God my son, pure yellow you have. Then I always have medicine in the freezer, put oline and take it. (...) And the remedy for not saying that I don't charge, because nutmeg is expensive, if you buy rui barbo it is also expensive. Cinnamon doesn't go in the bitter. I charge ten dick per liter. Yeah, just for the gas I spend. There are people who, there's a woman where we lived, she boiled the cloves in water and charged up to 50 reais.

The interview is interesting because it explores the stipulated values charged by medicines for the treatment of diseases such as asyallowing/anemia in Cleveland. Not only is the demand high, but so is the competition. There is competition and prices, but due to the fact that the city is small and the belief in healers is great, in home remedies as well, there seems to be an audience that pays R\$ 50.00 for a home remedy for anemia/yellow fever, believing in treatment, in healing through medicine and blessing.

After the narrated description of what Dona Isolda blessed, I asked about the remedy for yellowing, the herbs used in it and how to cook it. She narrated:

For yellow I use gervão, nutmeg and picão and paripiroba and rui barbo, that's five things. I needed mutton bur, mutton bur root, but I could never find it here [in Cleveland]. There is not. So sometimes I put a little piece of coconut flower, which is the same thing. At home I have paripiroba, the gervão, I dry it wherever I can find it, which is not poisonous. I dry it, then I put it in a box and close it, when necessary. The paripiroba too, the rui barbo where I lived had its feet, so I plucked a lot and dried it like this in the shade and it's there for when you need it, about three or four little pieces. And the nutmeg, let's say that each liter has a shako. And the sweet for the little one goes a kilo of sugar, I put two liters of water and the other too, the bitter I put two liters. (...) After the nutmeg, then you put it, after it's cold, a bottle of olina inside and then take it three times a day. And it doesn't last a week, if you drink a disposable liter.

As can be seen, the method of preparing the syrup used by healers is different. Nor all herbs are the same. They are close with regard to the so-called strong and weak yellowing and the weak and strong syrup respectively; likewise some herbs, to sugar and the amount of sugar. As far as the prayers are concerned, none of them reveal it, but they make a point of mentioning that the secret is there and that they do the process while they are preparing the medicine. In this sense, here is the art of making, the magic of preparing, the belief and belief in what is being practiced both in the practice of healers and by the patient/person who seeks them.

In the case of Dona Isolda, to check if the person has yellowing, during the recording of the interview, she narrated the procedure:

To see if there's yellow, I do it like this... With my hand and there are the words we say, if there's not yellow, it arrives here. At the tip of your finger. We say like this: show Sir if Ana [Example, it is her granddaughter who was present during the interview]. If you have it, it hurts here and not... Yeah. In your hand and here, so if you don't have it, measure it here. And then, for the medicine, in this case, then if it's for the sweet, weaker one, two liters of water, a kilo of sugar, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, anise and rui barbo too, then there's parsley root, sage, coconut tree.

Dona Isolda was the only faith healer who revealed, according to the measurement, the degree of yellowness and from there how many herbs are used for the medicine and which medicine to be produced for the yellowness. However, like the other healers, she does not reveal why there are nine ingredients for the syrup, only that what really cures, for the most severe anemia, it needs to be the nine ingredients, the "bitter" and not the "sweet". That is, here we are also dealing with what was said and not said in the narratives, the silences of the interviews, what our interviewees remembered, what they forgot, but also what they insisted on not revealing, the secrets of their practices, their magic. That is why we value the discussions of Alessandro Portelli (1996) about the spaces where the unexplored territory of subjectivity is placed: the main paradox of oral history and memories - the sources are people and the historian seeks to identify, let emerge where the subjects' subjectivities are inscribed, from where they emerge. This is the richness of our sources, our people interviewed, that is, the living force of our healers and their universe of magic, beliefs, religiosities, secrets and mysteries, what can and what cannot be revealed and what we as researchers need to respect without judgement.

Returning to Dona Isolda's speech, as well as the other interviewees, when asked about the audience received, she replied:

It varies a lot, big people come, old people come, young people come. Ah, but those who have yellow hair come looking for me. And my specialty is yellowing, faggot, quentente, izipela, everything that comes with it, sewing, lace. And it's all because of that old lady. She was a very dark old woman, with curly, long hair, darling! I had contact with her for about nine, ten years. We were neighbors. It's always been [lived] in the countryside, right? to go to the doctor was not easy. To bless a queer how would you get to the doctor? I got there at the doctor and did nothing. An izipela didn't do anything, neither did a coppersmith. Now, nowadays, you have a shingles with Novacort, he already... It's reality. Everything changed, right? But if someone comes looking for me, I do my duty to bless them. It's like the medicine for yellowing that Father Eugenio said like this: until you're alive and able to, make the medicine for yellow. So then I'm fulfilling the priest's word. Thank God I've always been Catholic, I've never changed my religion and I don't want to change either!

In the narrative of the healer, there are several points of connection, such as the heritage of Catholicism and the authorization to bless and make the medicine for yellow fever, by the priest, in the same way as

Dona Jandira. In fact, the relationship between how to make the teas, the preparation of the medicines, the presence of Catholicism, the fact of being a woman and the relationship between these healing women and their knowledge is what constitutes the core and, at the same time, what intervenes. It is what allows us to bring them together and, also, it is what allows us, from their narratives, to characterize and problematize, to let their subjectivities and identities flow.

In the case of Dona Isolda, despite the strength of the present religion, another aspect that also crosses religion and that her memory makes a point of returning to is contact with farming. The following is an example of a fragment:

Life has always been one of farming. And always have. I really enjoyed it, I loved plowing, clearing, planting corn, beans, harvesting, everything. But I never thought of saying today I'm tired. Yeah, Woman of land. Funny, we used to go to the fields, for example, in the morning, get up and go to express milk, come back from expressing milk and make coffee, then I had a sister with me who is now deceased, until that one didn't come, I was the one who did everything, huh? Then I would make the coffee, give it, treat the piazzada, if it was the nearby farm, I would pass soap on the clothes that we had the tank outside, right? in the sangha, and from then on, eleven o'clock would make the food and then sometimes I would pass cloth that they didn't have like what they have today. And when it was two o'clock I wrung out my clothes and then went to the fields until five, five and a bit. Everyday. And sometimes we got tired, but we didn't stop. He planted corn, beans, rice and at that time soybeans. She sold when it was good, right? (...) I have no love for the house that I didn't even have for the farm! Ah, I would have a dream, if I could pick up my hoe... (laughs). And go back to planting things, but God forbid. Ah, the rock! My life got tied up there. I clean the house, I leave everything in order. But I don't have that love inside the house that I didn't have for the farm.

The last interviewee, Dona Laura Melo Cella, 80 years old, a former healer, and this was one of the reasons why we bring fragments of her interview to the debate, but she also brings different aspects in the treatment of herbs, in the relationship with nature and on the issue of health, including public health. In her narrative, she mentions her contact with the blessing from the treatment with the yellow man and the relationship with another healer from Cleveland, now deceased. In her narrative:

Dona Catarina was the one who saved me because of the yellowing. One of the remedies that I make that I learned was this one. Yellow plum. This one if you're attacked by the flu make some tea and drink it. With orange leaf. Ginger. Mix and boil. If you have honey... For me, I don't take it with honey, it's bad. She has diabetes [Paula, granddaughter, who participated in the interview]. (...) And for the yellow man, there's Guanxuma tea. You know what it is? Picao, Parsley Root. Bird's Grass, it bears a little fruit that falls. And palm tree bark, that long, thin leaf. It's three of each. Palm tree, Guanxuma, picão, bird grass, aloe vera, hence sugar. If the person likes sweets. You see all the ingredients, then you take everything out and if the person (...) After it has boiled, take it out and add the sugar. And there's nutmeg. Grate half a nutmeg,

Dona Laura says she stopped blessing because after a stroke she became very ill and she also grew many herbs on her little land, but they went there and put poison in her herbs and she found it very difficult to cultivate again. She even mentions, with the tape recorder off, that it was one of her children who carried out this practice so that she would no longer deal with nature.

When asked about how she learned to bless, she commented:

I listened to the mother blessing, the old ones and I kept them. Like those yellowing remedies I already used, medicine for anemia. I just didn't make it for myself because of the candy. The remedies were all homemade. Everything homemade. Guanxuma and Picão too. Now, like those in yellow, I don't know who told Paula and I say. Like the one she says about rhubarb, it's from that little tree, it had a foot there and when they put the poison on it ran out. She had another foot down there and also, finished.

In addition to the poisons in her plantations and the difficulties in harvesting the plants, I asked her why she stopped blessing, but if there is any case in which she still continues to bless, she replied:

Even before I got sick. I even said, a few said, I say no to me, nobody did anything and I'm here suffering, so I'm going to stop. Like for me that time I got sick, the medicine that the late Catarina made. I had to pay. And I do it for free for others, right? I didn't charge and Dona Catarina was taken a meter of firewood from where we lived for the medicine she made me. And a lot of people came here to bless, but then I let go and no one else came. There are weeks we spend alone like mother's day, we spend it alone. (...) I did more blessings for the queers because it was more children that came. Sometimes they don't come, but they ask to bless them from afar. Benzo equal, do what? It's a child, right?

The fragment of Dona Laura's narrative is interesting because although she considers herself a former healer, she did not practice blessings and cooking the medicine for yellow fever and other remedies that she made with the herbs and medicinal plants she cultivated before they poisoned her plantations. According to the granddaughter, if someone comes to her for the blessing, especially as a child, she does

not deny the blessing. According to the granddaughter, who participated in the interview, what weakened her and made her abandon the profession of blessing was the illness process.

In general terms, as can be seen, there are several points of contact between the work of faith healers and clevelandenses: being women, generation, the public they serve - children and the elderly, the treatment with herbs, the relationship with nature, the fact that most of them are ex-farmers or the family comes from working with the land, coming from Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, are specialists in the treatment of yellow and produce the famous syrup/bottled.

On the other hand, there are differences geographic/spatial, the neighborhoods where they live and the herbs they use in the production of medicine and in the ritualistic form of blessing. We identified that those who live in the closest neighborhoods and have religions and close religiosity have similar characteristics with regard to the production of the medicine, as is the case of Dona Aurora, Dona Laura and Dona Salete, unlike Dona Jandira and Dona Isolda. Although each syrup has its own peculiarities in the preparation method, as there are different ingredients in all of them, each one has its own way, in the same way as with the blessing.

The same can be said about the narratives themselves, as their subjectivity was respected and emerged according to each interviewee. The art of narrating and cooking belongs to each woman, to each healer, and not to all healers. We do not deny their expressiveness, but we value the individuality of these women, their narratives, subjectivities, beliefs, individual relationships and interconnections when they appeared, webs and systems of life and the network of Benzer itself, of the historical and sociocultural practices of Benzer, but which we also consider individual, family, traditional, own, magical and unique heritages as each one deals with and connects, in its own way, with religiosity, with nature, with gender, with the public, with what they consider sacred and for what they understand by blessing, praying, healing, medicating, being guided by God popularly in this cure, as they themselves prefer to say.

III. CONCLUSION

From a cultural point of view, studies such as ours show that the handling and management of natural areas can be deeply linked to the worldview and cultural and symbolic practices of the so-called traditional communities and not exclusively to scientific concepts and practices in their modern sense (Diegues, 2004, pp. 12-13). In the case of Cleveland healers, it is not that they are isolated and live in a community of healers only, but they are guardians of knowledge that respect nature and, in a way, conservationists of natural resources since they make use of aspects of the world natural in your daily life.

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