

Between the digital and the ancestral: archive, repertoire, and Jongo in motion

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Abstract | Between the digital and the ancestral, the Black body in Jongo constitutes a living archive, essential for safeguarding this Afro-Brazilian tradition. Engaging with the concepts of archive and repertoire (Taylor, 2003), this article draws on an artistic residency focused on Jongo, held in the United States in 2023, and the documentary produced from this experience as means to explore processes of cultural transmission, documentation, identity, and ancestry. The documentary, in addition to capturing the practices experienced, reveals the dynamics of adaptation and reinterpretation of Jongo in a transnational context, highlighting the power of the body in motion as a space of memory and resistance.

KEYWORDS: Jongo. Body-archive. Screendance.

Entre o digital e o ancestral: arquivo, repertório e o Jongo em movimento

Resumo | Entre o digital e o ancestral, o corpo negro no Jongo constitui um arquivo vivo, indispensável na salvaguarda dessa tradição Afro-Brasileira. Dialogando com os conceitos de arquivo e repertório (Taylor, 2003), este artigo utiliza uma residência artística focada no Jongo, realizada nos Estados Unidos em 2023, e o documentário produzido a partir dessa experiência como meios para explorar os processos de transmissão cultural, documentação, identidade e ancestralidade. O documentário, além de registrar as práticas vivenciadas, revela as dinâmicas de adaptação e resignificação do Jongo em um contexto transnacional, enfatizando a potência do corpo em movimento como espaço de memória e resistência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Jongo. Corpo-arquivo. Videodança.

Entre lo digital y lo ancestral: archivo, repertorio y el Jongo en movimiento

Resumen | Entre lo digital y lo ancestral, el cuerpo negro en el Jongo constituye un archivo vivo, esencial para la salvaguarda de esta tradición afrobrasileña. Dialogando con los conceptos de archivo y repertorio (Taylor, 2003), este artículo se basa en una residencia artística enfocada en el Jongo, realizada en los Estados Unidos en 2023, y en el documental producido a partir de esta experiencia como medio para explorar los procesos de transmisión cultural, documentación, identidad y ancestralidad. El documental, además de registrar las prácticas vividas, revela las dinámicas de adaptación y resignificación del Jongo en un contexto transnacional, destacando el poder del cuerpo en movimiento como un espacio de memoria y resistencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Jongo. Cuerpo-archivo. Videodanza.

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I walked,
I stopped,
I struggled, but I arrived at *Jongo*.
Ponto from *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro*¹

1. Introduction

I believe that Black people, in general, are used to having a long history where our culture is always told by someone else [...], it is not our body that is there, it is not us who are present. There is always someone who went to study us and brought it back here. So, it is very symbolic for our bodies to be here (Martins, 2024)².

With these words, Dr. Alessandra Ribeiro Martins concludes the documentary *Jongo Abroad: Traditions in Transit* (2024). Filmed during an artistic residency at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) in the United States, the documentary captured the experience of teaching *Jongo* in U.S. territory, introducing the theme of this article – the analysis of the transmission of this Afro-Brazilian manifestation abroad through the concepts of archive and repertoire, coined by Diana Taylor (2003). A scholar in the field of performance studies born in Mexico, Taylor distinguishes two main modes of knowledge and transmission of cultural memory. According to her, while the *archive* encompasses documents, texts, objects, and other physical records, the *repertoire* consists of bodily practices, such as dance and rituals, which transmit knowledge through presence and action. Taylor (2003) emphasizes that the repertoire, being alive and performative, challenges the limitations of the archive, offering a dynamic space for the transmission of knowledge, especially in cultural contexts where orality and the body are central, as is the case with *Jongo*.

Equally important to understanding the relationship between archive and repertoire in the transmission of *Jongo* are the studies by Brazilian scholars such as Beatriz Nascimento (2018), Maria Antonieta Antonacci (2013), Henrique Cunha Júnior (2010), Eduardo David Oliveira (2009), and the co-author of this article, Dr. Alessandra Ribeiro Martins (2021; 2017). These works provide specific insights into the Black body in Brazil, the territory where *Jongo* was created by enslaved people in the 19th century, and its

¹ “Andei, parei, custei mas no Jongo eu cheguei.” Ponto da Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro.

² Original quote – “Eu acho que a população negra de modo geral já está acostumada a ter um histórico muito grande onde a nossa cultura é sempre contada pelo outro [...], não é o nosso corpo que está, não somos nós que estamos. Sempre tem alguém que foi lá nos estudar e veio fazer aqui. Então é muito simbólico o nosso corpo estar aqui” (Martins, 2024).

continuity in the present, especially in *quilombos*³ (both urban and rural) and Black families.

Jongo, also known as *Caxambu*, is a cultural manifestation that developed primarily in the Southeast region of Brazil. Rooted in the Afro-diasporic values of ancestry and community, *Jongo* integrates percussion, dance, and songs, known as *pontos* (points). During the oppression of slavery, the sung poetry in the *pontos* allowed enslaved people to communicate through metaphors that were not understood by the masters. Even today, the *pontos* represent knowledge preserved by the elder *jongueiros* and *jongueiras*⁴ and transmitted to younger generations through practical gatherings, with each *ponto* suited to a specific circumstance. The *ponto* encompasses everything the *jongueiro* says or sings during the *Jongo* circle.

The dance element of *Jongo* was a source of joy and resistance, a moment when enslaved people felt, through movement, once again in control of their bodies. Today, the dance is performed in pairs or solo. The practitioners move to the center of the circle until they are replaced by other *jongueiros*. In some communities, there is the choreographic element of the *umbigada* (a belly bump) to switch partners or the “*sapeca iá iá*” for women and “*sapeca iô iô*” for men, always alternated and with new dancers entering the circle. People dance in the circle according to their knowledge and skills. Some spin, others jump or drag their feet. Some move slowly, while others very quickly. There are *Jongo* circles where multiple pairs dance simultaneously as the *jongueiro* leads the song and the drums (also called *tambús*) play euphorically. In other circles, the *tambús* are placed at the center, while the dancers form a moving circle around them. The *tambús*, in turn, are fundamental to the *Jongo* circle, as they symbolize ancestry and are responsible for the rhythmic harmony of each community. These instruments are always revered by *jongueiros*, as they create a connection with the ancestors and the spiritual world (Martins, 2021).

Recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Brazilian National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) in 2005, *Jongo* demonstrates the relationship between tradition, reinvention, safeguarding, and continuity, aspects embodied by each *jongueira* and their community.

³ Quilombos were and are communities formed by enslaved people and their descendants in Brazil. To this day, quilombola communities are sites of resistance. For more information on quilombos, please consult NASCIMENTO, Beatriz. **Uma história feita por mãos negras**: Relações raciais, quilombolas e movimentos. 1. ed. Organização Alex Ratts. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021.

⁴ Practitioners of *Jongo*.

In this article, we reflect on the journey of three *jongueiras* of the *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro*⁵—Dr. Alessandra Ribeiro Martins, Bianca Lúcia Martins Lopes, and Flávia Tamiris Soares Silva—traveling from Campinas, São Paulo, where the community is based at the *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira*⁶, to spend a week at UCCS in the United States. There, they shared their ancestral knowledge with undergraduate students in theater and dance, as well as conducted open workshops for people unaffiliated with the university. The processes that enabled this artistic residency involved identity-related questions that we, the authors of this article, recognize as significant. Writing from different geographical locations—Rosely Conz in the United States and Dr. Alessandra Ribeiro Martins in Brazil—we are united by the desire to disseminate the tradition of *Jongo* and, more profoundly, as Dr. Alessandra stated in one of the documentary interviews, “to create a better world for everyone” (Martins, 2024).

In this endeavor, it is important to acknowledge our positionality. Dr. Alessandra Ribeiro Martins, a Black woman, master *jongueira*, leader of the *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro*, PhD in history and urbanism, as well as a *mãe de santo* (priestess) in Umbanda, has a wealth experience with *Jongo* and Afro-diasporic cultural practices. These are life experiences that bring unique and non-transferable knowledge, distinct from those of Rosely Conz, a White woman, dance artist, and educator, whose desire to reconnect with her ancestry led her to the *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira* on an afternoon in 2022, nearly twenty years after witnessing *Jongo* for the first time at one of the first *Arraiais Afro-Julinos*.⁷ Aware of our positionalities, we recognize that the fight against racism and inequity must be carried out through collaborations and alliances. The transmission and preservation of *Jongo* require joining of forces and resources, not “despite” our differences, but with and because of them, as we connect through the opportunities that allow us to walk together. This is how we brought the *Jongo* residency project to life at UCCS in the United States.

⁵ The *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro* consists of a group of people and families, who revive the *Jongo* tradition in Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil, through the memory of Benedito Ribeiro, with gatherings that feature drumming, singing, and dancing, with the goal of sharing and continuing this ancestral culture.

⁶ *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira* is the headquarters of *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro*. It is a cultural center in Campinas city, where *Jongo* and other Afro-Brazilian manifestations are maintained. For more, please, consult <https://comunidadejongoditoribeiro.wordpress.com/casa-de-cultura-fazenda-roseira/>

⁷ The *Arraial Afro-Julino* is an annual event of the *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro* that takes place every second Saturday in July. It celebrates the community's anniversary and its reconnection with ancestry. The festivity begins with the recitation of the *terço* (rosary) to Saint Benedict and features artistic performances by partner groups from various locations in the state of São Paulo that represent the Afro segment. In 2009, the *Arraial* was included in the official calendar of the State of São Paulo due to the event's importance, its role as a reference, and its promotion of Afro culture in its diversity. All planning, development, promotion, and organization of the *Arraial* are done by the community itself, bringing together generations of friends and families.

In August 2022, Conz assumed the position of Assistant Professor at UCCS. Living in the United States since 2014, she has taught Afro-Brazilian dances at different universities in the country, always seeking to bring the bearers of these traditions into her classroom. This opportunity happened in November 2022, through a university grant program. The project approved the funds that allowed Dr. Alessandra, Bianca, and Flávia to spend a week—from September 10 to 17, 2023—at UCCS. As part of the artistic residency, the *jongueiras* created a public performance, which was presented in one of the university's theaters on September 17, 2023.

The performance was developed over the course of the week through daily meetings lasting two to three hours each, with nine undergraduate students from the university's dance and theater program. Most of the students who participated in these meetings did so as part of their extracurricular activities and not necessarily as a course requirement or part of a specific class. They attended out of interest in learning about and from *Jongo*, a tradition that was previously unknown to most of them.

Recognizing the importance of documenting the residency for project accountability but mostly for creative aspirations, Conz included in the budget of the grant proposal the videographic documentation of most activities, as well as interviews with the *jongueiras*. The filming and audio recordings were done by two undergraduate students in communications from the university—Mordred Cameron and Tori Smith—who documented the open workshop for the Colorado Springs community, three rehearsals with the nine students mentioned above, as well as the technical rehearsal and performance. With more than 30 hours of video recorded at UCCS, the editing process played a central role in selecting images, which in turn determined the modes of representation of the residency and its participants. Additionally, footage filmed by Dr. Diogo Angeli during the *Arraial Afro-Julino* in 2023 was used, and when edited, it created the sense of transit between the U.S. and Brazil, the central argument of the documentary.

The presence of the *jongueiras* at UCCS allows us to reflect on the body as part of the repertoire but also as archive, the first theme discussed in this article. In the second section, we analyze the documentary *Jongo no Exterior: Tradições em Trânsito* (2024). We demonstrate that the documentary, in the digital age, simultaneously fulfills the functions of archive and repertoire without replacing the need for the living, present body. Finally, we observe that, just as *Jongo* transcends decades and social and geographic barriers, the boundaries between archive and repertoire are relativized by the body that dances *Jongo*. The *jongueira* carries her history and ancestral territory wherever she goes, in a continuous process of storage, transmission, and transformation, reaching bodies of

different ethnicities and races, transcending language barriers to affirm concepts of community and ancestry.

2. The body as archive (and repertoire)

The concept of the body as an archive has been explored by scholars across different fields and disciplines, ranging from philosophy to cultural studies, including dance and performance studies. From the 20th century with Marcel Mauss (1936) and Merleau-Ponty (1945), to contemporary scholars like Diana Taylor (2003), the body continues to provoke inquiry, with questions spanning from neuroscience to psychology. In our study, to analyze the processes of *Jongo* transmission, we chose to use the concepts of archive and repertoire:

The archive includes, but is not limited to, written texts. The repertoire contains verbal performances—songs, prayers, speeches—as well as nonverbal practices. The written/oral divide does, on one level, capture the archive/repertoire difference I am developing in this study insofar as the means of transmission differ, as do the requirements of storage and dissemination. The repertoire, whether in terms of verbal or nonverbal expression, transmits live, embodied actions (Taylor, 2003, p.24).

These theories can be applied to the analysis of two modes of existence of the Southeast Brazil's *Jongo* in the context of the residency in the U.S. The first to be discussed here is live performance, which takes place in the *roda* (circle), with the *pontos*, drums, and dancers—the embodied repertoire that becomes embodied archive.

The way slavery, racism, and violence affected and continue to affect Brazilian Black bodies is crucial when discussing memory and archiving. Enslaved people understood, long before Merleau-Ponty, what it meant to have the body as an archive of their history, as Beatriz Nascimento explains: “It is not only what is written that tells us the truth about our ancestors and allows us to reflect on our national identity. History is also recorded in our bodies, as a physical body stemming from a chain of other bodies in nature” (Nascimento, 2018, p. 267)⁸.

In the body live memories, experiences, and meanings—history as a living, pulsating archive. During the period of slavery, Black bodies were controlled in an attempt to objectify and erase memories, experiences, and belonging. This was no accident. The body is where gestures, culture, and identity reside (Connerton, 1989); to dominate it meant eradicating not only the individual but also the possibility of transmission, and consequently, the existence of a community's history. However, the body as part of its

⁸ Original in Portuguese - “Não é só o que está escrito que nos conta a verdade de nossos antepassados e nos proporciona a reflexão sobre nossa identidade nacional. A História também está registrada nos nossos corpos, enquanto corpo físico oriundo de uma cadeia de outros corpos na natureza” (Nascimento, 2018, p. 267).

community resists and remembers through dance, song, and drums, recreating, in Brazil, a tradition archived in the bodies stolen from Africa. Ancestral knowledge survived in cells, muscles, and in the reinvention of the wisdom brought from Africa as continuities (Irobi, 2012) to the new continent. This notion destabilizes the archive and its logic of accumulation and ownership—the living body, moving flesh, cannot and could not be fully imprisoned.

Deepening the themes of memory and collective history in relation to *Jongo*, it is important to remember that this manifestation “arrived in Brazil with Africans from the Congo-Angola region, from the Bantu linguistic group” (Martins, 2021, p. 22)⁹, bringing with it the principles and values of Bantu culture and philosophy, as Cunha Júnior explains:

The community is historical, it is a gathering of words, like its existences. In Ubuntu, we have the existence defined by the existence of other existences. I, we, exist because you and the others exist; there is a collaborative sense of collective human existence” (Cunha Júnior, 2010, p. 26)¹⁰.

Therefore, it does not make sense to think of the body solely as an individual, but rather as part of the web of transmissions that is the community, which in turn, is grounded in the concept of ancestry.

Derived from the traditional African experience, ancestry becomes an analytical category to interpret various spheres of life for Black Brazilians. Fueled by tradition, it is a sign that permeates cultural manifestations of Black people in Brazil, spreading its dynamics to any racial group that wishes to embrace African values. Thus, it starts to take shape as an epistemology that allows for the creation of social structures capable of confronting the singular way of organizing life and production in the contemporary world (Oliveira, 2009, p. 4)¹¹.

Ancestry, defined as epistemology and an analytical category of relationships—and not just a kinship relation—offers the framework for understanding the process of transmitting knowledge in *Jongo*. This is anchored in the dancers’ bodies, the community, and ancestry: “Ancestry also implies a perspective on death, as a continuation of

⁹ Original in Portuguese - “...chegou no Brasil com os Africanos da região de Congo-Angola, do tronco linguístico Banto” (Martins, 2021, p. 22)

¹⁰ Original in Portuguese - “A comunidade é histórica, é uma reunião de palavras, como suas existências. No Ubuntu, temos a existência definida pela existência de outras existências. Eu, nós, existimos porque você e os outros existem; tem um sentido colaborativo da existência humana coletiva” (Cunha Júnior, 2010, p. 26).

¹¹ Original in Portuguese - “Tributária da experiência tradicional africana, a ancestralidade converte-se em categoria analítica para interpretar as várias esferas da vida do negro brasileiro. Retro-alimentada pela tradição, ela é um signo que perpassa as manifestações culturais dos negros no Brasil, esparramando sua dinâmica para qualquer grupo racial que queira assumir os valores africanos. Passa, assim, a configurar-se como uma epistemologia que permite engendrar estruturas sociais capazes de confrontar o modo único de organizar a vida e a produção no mundo contemporâneo” (Oliveira, 2009, p. 4).

intelligent life in the invisible world and its reappearance in another corporeal life in the visible world” (Cunha Júnior, 2010, p. 32)¹².

In the Eurocentric Catholic tradition, the life of a person on the visible world ends with the death of their body. There is either heaven or hell, which are inaccessible for the living, and this now “disembodied being” has its eternal home, no longer interacting with the living. In the African worldview, knowledge survives in the ancestors not as something lost or separate, but as living intelligence, which finds a way to endure their traditions, as Cunha Júnior affirms above. The ancestors bridge the visible and invisible worlds, materializing their knowledge in the living, just as Benedito Ribeiro finds a way to rescue and maintain the *Jongo* tradition in this visible world through his granddaughter. It was through ancestry that Dr. Alessandra discovered and continues the tradition of *Jongo*, as she recounts in an interview after learning that her grandfather was a *jongueiro* through her Uncle Dudu (Master Carlos Augusto Ribeiro), her mother’s brother, both children of Benedito Ribeiro:

When the ancestral element arises, the Campinas’ *Jongo*... I think it is born. Because then, this is no longer just a group of people who enjoy various musicality and who want to learn more about this rhythm, because it is cool and engaging. It was a group of people who did all that, who were sensitive to all drums, and who had an ancestor there—and that ancestor had to be cared for (Martins, 2023)¹³.

Thus, although she did not know her grandfather in life, Dr. Alessandra connects with this knowledge through her ancestry, something that changes not only her relationship with *Jongo* but that of an entire community. In this way, we can say that body, community, and ancestry are archival technologies. These technologies, however, do not exist without a connection to the territory. Considering the concept of African matrix as territory, Martins observes the space as a materialization of social memory and a symbol of belonging, understanding that the body, memory, and ancestry become visible (or are purposefully rendered invisible by racism) in the territory. Using Pierre Nora as a reference, Martins states:

Places of memory are, first and foremost, places in a triple sense: they are material places where social memory is anchored and can be apprehended by the senses; they are functional because they have or acquire the function of grounding collective memories; they are symbolic, where this collective

¹² Original in Portuguese - “A ancestralidade implica também uma visão sobre a morte, como continuidade da vida inteligente no mundo invisível e o ressurgimento desta noutra vida corpórea no mundo visível” (Cunha Júnior, 2010, p. 32).

¹³ Original in Portuguese - “Quando surge o elemento ancestral, o *Jongo* de Campinas... eu acho que ele nasce. Porque daí não é só mais um grupo de pessoas que gostam de diversas musicalidades e que querem conhecer mais esse ritmo porque é bacana e envolvente. Mas era um grupo de pessoas que faziam tudo isso, que eram sensíveis para todos os tambores, e que tinham ali um ancestral e que esse ancestral tinha que ser cuidado” (Martins, 2023).

memory – that is to say, this identity – is expressed and revealed. They are, therefore, places charged with a will to remember (Martins, 2017, p. 25)¹⁴.

The *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira* is a place of memory for the *Comunidade Jongo Dito Ribeiro*, where body-archives continue to safeguard *Jongo* through the transmission of learned knowledge. Our argument here is not that a body-archive spontaneously dances or sings through “innate” or unmediated memories. Assigning skills based solely on ethnicity or place of birth can lead to stereotyping cultures and people. What we defend, again using Taylor, is that:

The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of representation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge” (Taylor, 2003, p. 25).

These embodied acts exist in connection with the territory, which, as a place of memory, does not exist spontaneously. Territories of memory are created and maintained, manifesting “their historical value as documents and monuments that reveal social processes of conflicts, passions, and interests that, consciously or not, endow them with an iconic function” (Martins, 2017, p. 25)¹⁵.

During the artistic residency in the U.S., these concepts – body as archive, transmission processes rooted in territory and ancestry, and the importance of community for the continuity of the cultural practice of *Jongo*– became evident. The presence of Black female bodies in a predominantly White city and university, such as the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS), had a profound impact in terms of racial representation. The Black students in the department were able to see themselves represented in the bodies of their *mestras* (masters) and had the opportunity to learn about the culture directly from its keepers. The territory of the *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira*, along with the ancestral territories embodied by Dr. Alessandra, Bianca, and Flávia, traveled with them, profoundly transforming the teaching and learning experience of the students in the United States. Just as the body-archives of the *jongueiras* safeguard ancestral knowledge at the *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira* – a territory that becomes a

¹⁴ Original in Portuguese – “Os lugares de memória são, primeiramente, lugares em uma tríplice acepção: são lugares materiais onde a memória social se ancora e pode ser apreendida pelos sentidos; são funcionais porque têm ou adquiriram a função de alicerçar memórias coletivas; são simbólicos, onde essa memória coletiva – vale dizer essa identidade – se expressa e se revela. São, portanto, lugares carregados de uma vontade de memória” (Martins, 2017, p. 25).

¹⁵ Original in Portuguese - “seu valor histórico como documentos e monumentos reveladores dos processos sociais, dos conflitos, das paixões e dos interesses que, conscientemente ou não, os revestem de uma função icônica” (Martins, 2017, p. 25).

living nucleus of identity and cultural transmission – the same happened during the residency in the U.S. The spaces at the university resonated with the beats of the drums, the bare feet dancing *Jongo* on the Marley floor of the dance studio, the laughter, and the songs in Portuguese – sounds and presences that had never existed there before.

The teaching of the *Jongo* steps, rhythms, and *pontos* became a means of incorporating complex and often unfamiliar concepts for the students, such as ancestry. Many of them reported a new sense of ancestry, something that motivated them to research their own histories, seeking connection with their roots, in a movement that extended beyond the dance studio. As Bianca Lúcia said in one of the interviews conducted during the residency, “*Jongo* is everything we do. This conversation, for example, is *Jongo*.”¹⁶ This is because *Jongo* permeates all aspects of the *Jongo* community's existence; it is not something one “does,” but something one is. Through contact with the *jongueiras*, the students involved in the project perceived the breadth of knowledge to which they were being exposed, and several of them began an identity process concerning their own ancestry that continued after the residency ended. This would not have been possible without the body-archives of the *jongueiras* in the United States territory, who used the *Jongo* as repertoire (Taylor, 2003) to enhance new forms of body-archives with the young students involved in the residency.

The documentation of this process on video, and its subsequent editing, allowed for an analysis of the impact of this experience, creating an archive-repertoire material that will enable the dissemination of *Jongo* to English-speaking people, constituting a significant material that we will detail below.

3. The documentary as archive (and repertoire)

Having established the importance of the body as archive and repertoire in the transmission of ancestral knowledge, we examine its relationship with the concept of the archive as defined by Diana Taylor: “Archival’ memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change.” (Taylor, 2003, p. 19). We emphasize the word “*supposedly*” in the previous excerpt because history shows that archives do not exist in a political and social vacuum, which would theoretically guarantee their resistance to change. The reality is that documents disappear or are destroyed. New forms of archives

¹⁶ Interview conducted during the residency, not published. Original in Portuguese – “O *Jongo* é tudo que a gente faz. Essa conversa, por exemplo, é *Jongo*”

emerge in the digital age in the form of social media, such as YouTube channels or cloud storage, which are often as ephemeral and unstable as bodily performances are considered to be.

Social, economic, and geographic inequalities continue to determine who has access to “traditional” archives – museums, libraries, collections – or even who is represented *in* and *by* the archive. Which bodies are credited and named in history books, for example? Which bodies remain generically “identified” only by their race or gender, described through a colonial gaze? These are broad discussions that we do not intend to delve into in this article. What we defend is that the more the knowledge holders – the creators and keepers of manifestations like *Jongo* – generate materials that prioritize their perspective and their voices as authors, the greater the chances of transforming the archives, not only in terms of content but also in methodologies and storage formats.

One of the challenges faced by our community – and I think this is why I became a historian – was seeing how fundamental documents and archives are for future generations. I have very few photos of my grandfather; I have no audio of him singing *Jongo*... So, when we began recovering this memory, it was through orality, which is essential in our culture. But we saw how much the absence of these memory resources was felt. So, today, having audiovisual recordings, sound recordings, and photographs of everything we live is an opportunity... so that the children who are arriving can look at this place [Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira] and say, ‘look, my great-aunt said this, sang this. And today we sing like this, we do it like this’ (Martins, 2023)¹⁷.

Dr. Alessandra reaffirms the need for documentation and strengthens the dialogue between archive and repertoire in the maintenance and transmission of knowledge. Orality emerges as a fundamental concept in this relationship, simultaneously assuming the roles of archive and repertoire, in a definition that transcends mere speech to include “verbal discourse conceived and composed with diverse forms of expression, such as theater, music, dance, and bodily expression” (Cunha Júnior, 2010, p. 31)¹⁸. This holistic perspective on *Jongo* – which includes dance, singing, the playing of drums, and the history of this cultural expression – is what we sought to bring to the documentary. Equally important was reflecting on the representation of these contents, avoiding the commodification of *Jongo* and its practitioners, as bell hooks advises:

¹⁷ Original in Portuguese – “Um dos desafios da nossa comunidade, e acho que foi por isso que me tornei historiadora, foi ver como documento e arquivo são fundamentais para a geração futura. Eu tenho poucas fotos do meu avô, eu não tenho nenhum áudio dele cantando *Jongo*... Então quando a gente começa a recuperar essa memória, foi a partir da oralidade, que é essencial na nossa cultura, mas a gente viu o quanto a ausência desses recursos da memória fez falta. Então, hoje para a gente ter registro áudio visual, ter registro sonoro, ter fotografia de tudo que a gente vive é uma possibilidade ... das crianças que estão chegando poderem olhar para isso aqui [Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira] e dizer ‘olha minha tia-avó falava isso, cantava isso. E hoje a gente canta assim, a gente faz assim” (Martins, 2023).

¹⁸ Original in Portuguese - “o discurso verbal pensando e composto com diversas formas de expressão, como teatro, a música, a dança e a expressão corporal” (Cunha Júnior, 2010, p. 31).

Commodification of blackness has created a social context where appropriation by non-black people of the black image knows no boundaries. If the many non-black people who produce images or critical narratives about blackness and black people do not interrogate their perspective, then they may simply recreate the imperial gaze—the look that seeks to dominate, subjugate, and colonize (hooks, 2014, p.7).

To avoid this type of representation based on colonial, patriarchal, White forms of domination and exotification, we relied on the perspectives of Dr. Alessandra, Bianca, and Flávia during the process of creating and editing the documentary. Initial versions of the documentary were shared with the *jongueiras*, and conversations with Dr. Alessandra guided the process of selecting themes and images. We decided to focus on *Jongo* as a tradition in transit, brought to the United States by the bodies of the *jongueiras*, and the way this experience impacted the students involved in it.

An interesting aspect of the residency, regarding the students, was the diversity among those who enrolled in the workshop. Even in a predominantly White and cisgender population, *Jongo* attracted a transgender student, another student who identifies as non-binary, a homosexual student, and two female students who identify as Black and/or Latinx. The diversity of bodies fostered discussions about ancestry, community, racism, and cultural appropriation, which were masterfully conducted by Dr. Alessandra. This was because she created an environment of sharing and equity, valuing each student's identity and inviting them to discuss with generosity and openness.

Another aspect of *Jongo no Exterior: Tradições em Trânsito* (2024) that aligns with ideals of representation was the translation of the content between English and Portuguese. We kept the spoken words and *pontos* in their original language, adding subtitles. In this way, the viewer hears the voices of the knowledge-holders in Portuguese, with access to English subtitles. The same was done for the students who participated in the performance – English was translated with subtitles in Portuguese, creating equity between the languages while facilitating accessibility. As Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o states, "Every language is equally a memory bank of knowledge, information and experiences of the community that created it [...]" (Thiong'o, 2023, p.8). In other words, languages are systems of archiving and transmission. And for these archives to not be closed in on themselves, translations act as devices of inclusion, as bridges (Thiong'o, 2023) between cultures, between archives and repertoires.

Our documentary is being finalized and submitted to dance film festivals. Once this circulation ends, the intention is to make it widely available through digital platforms¹⁹,

¹⁹ Now the documentary appears as "unlisted" on YouTube, which means that search engines cannot find it. The documentary was accepted and was first screened in the city of Exeter, in Great Britain, at the "Exeter

which have the power to redefine notions of the archive. That is because “digital technologies are not only the transmitters of our shared intangible cultural heritage, they are the cultural heritage itself” (Causey, 2018, p.vi). If the digital space is unstable and ephemeral—especially on unpaid platforms like YouTube, where videos are uploaded and removed, illegally shared, and transformed—we understand that the documentary, in this context, assumes on characteristics attributed to the repertoire: impermanence and transformation. The basic premise of the archive, grounded in controlled repetition, is threatened by the volatility of these online forms of archiving. Hito Steyerl, a German filmmaker, argues that:

So, within these platforms, largely deregulated and quite disordered archives catering to volatile and heterogenous peer groups, the clash between different forces and interests is still going on but is simply displaced onto a new battlefield. Those archives are not based on exclusion and faithful repetition like the traditional ones, rather on inclusion and invisibility (Steyerl, 2008).

On one hand, digital archives democratize access and the inclusion of diverse artifacts and voices. On the other, power dynamics maintained by algorithms, constant changes in intellectual property rules and storage policies, and the sheer volume of information may all render significant content invisible. Nevertheless, we take the risk. Including the documentary on unpaid digital platforms (after circulating in screendance film festivals) allows it to enter a circuit where the confrontation and collaboration between different forces and interests are broader and more decentralized than those of traditional archives mediated by curators, institutions, etc. Even within the sea of (mis)information on these platforms, the documentary can be “found” or “rediscovered” in unexpected contexts, and its presence in this new cultural “battlefield” may have impacts that a traditional archive might not. In addition, more than archives or archival practices, Prelinger (2009) proposes thinking about the concept of access as central to this discussion, stating that:

Access is more than simply providing user services. It’s a formative practice without a logical endpoint, merging the internal activity of the archives with scholarship, historical awareness, cultural production, and public discourse (Prelinger, 2009, p.169-170).

Thus, we affirm that as important as making materials accessible is creating ways to improve users' information literacy so that discernment among sources and cultural artifacts empowers effective searches, avoiding misinformation. Considering the archive

Dance International Film Festival” in October 2024. The link to the documentary will be made available in the “references” section of this article, remaining unlisted, as required by many screendance festivals that are considering screening it.

as an educational, dialogic device, we are again reminded of the intrinsic relationship between archive and repertoire. In the case of *Jongo*, information literacy is built by the learning from the *jongueiras* and their embodied knowledge, which is shared through presence and then, once filmed and edited, mediated by the camera in the documentary. Once available online, it reaches the body of the viewer, transforming the engagement process among the spectator and the bodies mediated by the camera:

[In contrast, when a dancer's body is mediated through a screen], the viewer is required to 'perform' in a different way in order to engage with the work, such as activating a mouse or using a keyboard. Whatley explains that the relationship between the work and the viewer through the use of technology suggests that modes of virtual engagement implicate the watcher in the viewing "as co-creator, thereby active in realising the work (ibid., 267). (Griffiths; Walmsley, 2018, p.19)

In this way, we reaffirm that the documentary, in this case, assumes functions of both archive and repertoire, as Taylor explains:

Repertoire, etymologically 'a treasury, an inventory,' also allows for individual agency, referring also to 'the finder, discoverer,' and meaning 'to find out.' The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission" (Taylor, 2003, p.20).

The online environment questions and redefines the concept of presence as defined by Taylor. This is because, in the online context, the documentary requires the viewer to search and seek for it. It demands a form of digital presence for the search to materialize itself as discovery, potentially transcending geographic and linguistic barriers.

4. Final Considerations

Throughout this article we discussed how the concepts of archive and repertoire (Taylor, 2003) apply to *Jongo*, specifically in the context of an international residency where this Afro-Brazilian practice was brought to a U.S. university. We observed that *Jongo*, as repertoire, is archived in the Black bodies of its practitioners. They carry with them the collective memory of the *Jongo* community, its territory, and its ancestry. These are the archiving technologies that enable the transmission not only of the songs, dances, and rhythms but also of the "invisible", everyday knowledge, born from *Jongo* experience and the coexistence at *Casa de Cultura Fazenda Roseira*, which are equally essential to the transmission of this cultural heritage. Filmed and documented, the residency (or at least part of it) was transformed into a documentary, another form of archive, as defined by Taylor (2003). In the online environment, the documentary assumes characteristics of the repertoire, demonstrating the intrinsic relationship between these two concepts: archive and repertoire as complementary, not binary, with their definitions expanded and

their boundaries diluted, redefined in the digital medium. More than categorizing, the importance of this discussion lies in recognizing specific processes of transmission that rely on the body. By affirming and recognizing repertoire as a form of knowledge, Taylor (2003) seeks to create space for epistemologies based on the living, moving body, decentralizing the prominence of the traditional written archive which, in the 21st century, reinvents itself due to changes in the digital virtual space.

We hope that *Jongo no Exterior: Tradições em Trânsito* (2024) serves as a cultural mediator, facilitating the dissemination of *Jongo* and blurring the boundaries between repertoire and archive. Recognizing the fluidity and complementarity between archive and repertoire reinforces the need to direct financial, social, and political resources toward caring for the living bodies of *jongueiras* and *jongueiros*, which are the fundamental archives of *Jongo*. That, however, should not justify neglecting the importance of “traditional” documentation. By engaging with the documentary *Jongo no Exterior: Tradições em Trânsito* (2024), we hope that viewers will recognize the multiple layers of knowledge embedded in *Jongo*—oppression, resistance, and struggle, but also joy, pleasure, and belonging—all of which, in themselves, serve as archiving technologies (as processes and methods).

Finally, we hope that viewers agree with Dr. Alessandra Ribeiro Martins when she states: “Racism and discrimination can only be resolved collectively and with love. Therefore, the responsibility of everyone who receives a seed of *Jongo* is to know that this seed is one of love, and love belongs in all bodies and all people” (Martins, 2024)²⁰. May viewers also become bodies-archives-repertoires of love in the preservation of *Jongo*.

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²⁰ Original in Portuguese - “Racismo, discriminação só se resolvem conjuntamente e com amor. Então a responsabilidade a cada um que recebe uma semente do *Jongo* é saber que essa semente é de amor, e o amor cabe em todos os corpos e todas as pessoas” (Martins, 2024).

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