

## INTERCULTURALITY IN THE MUSICAL WORK OF ROBERT PLANT

**Fábio Cruz**

Centro de Letras e Comunicação, Faculdade de Jornalismo, Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Pelotas, Brazil  
Conceptualization, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

**Guilherme Curi**

Departamento de Comunicação Social, Faculdade de Jornalismo, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, Brazil  
Conceptualization, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

---

### ABSTRACT

This scientific essay analyses and discusses the concept of interculturality across the work of the musician Robert Plant, from his early career to the present day. We seek to contribute to what we call the “intersectional mainstream” and to understand the locus of interculturality throughout the singer’s 40-year career. Our main question is: what are the musical limits of Plant, who is recognised as one of the greatest rockers of all time and who has always sought dialogue with other musical genres and cultures? To answer this and other questions, we based our text on the theoretical communication assumptions of Muniz Sodré’s (2006, 2014), and Néstor García Canclini’s (2005) and Homi K. Bhabha’s (1998/2014) postcolonial precepts on interculturality. Based on the analysis of Plant’s work, we conclude that the musician’s challenging approach of dialogues and intersections remains to this day, cyclical and dialectical, the guiding star of the artist, who is not content to be just mainstream, much less a static mainstream, but an artist immersed in cultural dialogues and always willing to transcend market barriers.

### KEYWORDS

interculturality, Robert Plant, intersectional mainstream, communication, rock

---

## A INTERCULTURALIDADE NA OBRA MUSICAL DE ROBERT PLANT

### RESUMO

Este ensaio científico analisa e discute o conceito de interculturalidade ao longo da obra do músico Robert Plant, desde o começo da carreira até os dias atuais. Procuramos avançar na constituição do que denominamos “mainstream interseccional” e compreender o local da interculturalidade ao longo dos mais de 40 anos de carreira do cantor. Nosso principal questionamento é: quais os limites musicais de Plant, reconhecido por ser um dos principais roqueiros de todos os tempos e que sempre buscou dialogar com outros gêneros musicais e culturas? Para responder esta e outras questões decorrentes, nosso texto está baseado nos pressupostos teóricos comunicacionais de Muniz Sodré (2006, 2014) e nos preceitos pós-coloniais sobre interculturalidade de Néstor García Canclini (2005) e Homi K. Bhabha (1998/2014). Com base nas análises realizadas da obra de Plant, concluímos que a postura desafiadora de diálogos e atravessamentos do músico permanece até hoje, de forma cíclica e dialética, sendo a estrela-guia do artista, que não se contenta em ser somente mainstream,

muito menos um mainstream estático, mas um artista imerso em diálogos culturais e sempre disposto a transpor barreiras mercadológicas.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

interculturalidade, Robert Plant, mainstream interseccional, comunicação, rock

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION/*THE PRINCIPLE OF MOMENTS*

Robert Anthony Plant<sup>1</sup> is a songwriter who continuously refuses to take the easiest route and represents what we conceive as *intersectional mainstream*<sup>2</sup>. He is a sort of outsider/insider of contemporary music culture, a feature that is present and absent in the logic of the market and the phonographic industry.

A promising solo artist for CBS Records in the second half of the 1960s, Robert Plant would soon become the frontman of one of the most respected and well-known rock bands of all time, Led Zeppelin. This band, reigning and virtually unchallenged during the 1970s, had its course cut short in 1980 after drummer John Bonham passed away at 32.

In that same decade, in his solo career, Robert Plant would experience ups and downs, both in his personal and artistic life, but always challenging the dictates of the phonographic industry. Thus, he moved in and out of this system. Like his former band, he followed the rules but also confronted them. All in all, he has been active for more than five decades. And the praxis of the *intersectional mainstream*'s true representative carries on or, as the song says, "remains the same"<sup>3</sup>.

With Led Zeppelin and his solo career, in practically all of this journey, the musician still pursues innovation in his productions, a practice that gives him authenticity<sup>4</sup> within the phonographic industry game. This search for the new, the audacity, challenging oneself is what makes Robert Plant an example of *intersectional mainstream*.

As such, we consider this category part of an approach that either interacts or does not interact with the phonographic industry's market logics. As we understand, *intersectional mainstream* is a communication approach towards extrapolating a certain media performance guided by exclusively marketable rules. In other words, to risk and dwell in environments not strictly stipulated by the big phonographic industry and its close relationship with the media field present to this day. That is to say that Robert Plant

---

<sup>1</sup> Son of a middle-class family, typical "British working class" (a civil engineer father and a housewife mother), Robert Anthony Plant was born on August 20, 1948, in West Bromwich, Staffordshire, England. Passionate about American rock and blues, he formed his first bands in his teens. Black Snake Moan and The Crawling King Snakes were among these when he met drummer John Bonham, his future best friend and drummer of Led Zeppelin.

<sup>2</sup> "By promoting dialogues with possibilities other than blues and hard rock, we can place the group in the 'intersectional mainstream' when it promotes a kind of 'going beyond' the mainstream in the classical sense" (Cruz & Curi, 2017, p. 50).

<sup>3</sup> Referring to the song "The Song Remains the Same", from the album *Houses of the Holy* (1973) by Led Zeppelin.

<sup>4</sup> According to Janotti Júnior (2007), "authenticity then involves the controversial aspect of creativity in the cultural industries and the search for distinctions and differentiations amidst the musical universe. Ultimately, to be recognized translates into gaining a certain creative autonomy, but, at the same time, finding a place in the market" (p. 10).

keeps certain successful formulas of his creative trajectory while engaging and seeking tensions and cultural intersections and, therefore, challenging other sound possibilities in his productions. Being part of this *intersectional mainstream* is also not being a slave to the chains of success, a recurring pattern in artists and bands that represent what we call the “static mainstream”, something that happens in the work of some bands formed at the same time as Led Zeppelin, like, for example, the Rolling Stones, whom even today play the same songs from the past in their shows.

In the record *Mighty Rearranger* (available in Full Album, 2022), Plant reiterates this approach and the need always to go down new paths, a trait very close to what we call the *intersectional mainstream*.

I'm moving up to higher ground, I've found a new way out/There's parasols and barbecues and loungers by the pool/The late night conversations filled with 20th century cool/My peers may flirt with cabaret, some fake the rebel yell/ Me - I'm moving up to higher ground, I must escape this hell. (Plant, 2005, 00:00:38)

Keeping the base of hard rock and blues while stimulating creativity in his productions, the musician concomitantly denies what we call “static mainstream”, which presupposes keeping consecrated aesthetic and sound formulas that work and thus sell<sup>5</sup>. Overall, adopting certain — static — approaches to music is to foster a scenario that meets what the fans (and the industry) want to consume.

However, Plant does not always abide by this prospect. Not by a long shot. He actually prefers the promotion of intersections, and intercultural dialogues, as we will explore and discuss in this essay, based mainly on Muniz Sodré's (2006, 2014) theoretical assumptions, and Néstor García Canclini's (2005) and Homi K. Bhabha's (1998/2014) postcolonial precepts.

The musician establishes many dialogues and intersections: to hard rock and blues, his base, as mentioned above, Plant introduces songs and ballads inspired by English folk music, electronic experiences, elements of pop music, new wave, break, rockabilly, folk, soul, the psychedelia of the 1960s, bluegrass, among others. In short, a melting pot of music genres.

Constantly challenging the canons of the phonographic industry, Robert Plant keeps the essence but converses serenely and calmly with other possibilities in search of still-unknown maps of old and new sound geographies. Taking this perspective, one of the most expressive tensions with different rhythms and cultures would be experimentalism with North African music. Thus, we emphasise that this intersection and interculturality will be the guiding thread of this study.

As we shall argue below, interculturality is the underlying premise for such an intersection. In this way, we seek to build on the discussions previously explored in the article “O Incessante Rugido: Robert Plant e o Mainstream Interseccional” (The Ceaseless Roar:

<sup>5</sup> As examples, we can cite the Australian band AC/DC and the British bands Iron Maiden and Ozzy Osbourne, artists who, production after production, follow to the letter the same formats that gave them notoriety and, later, permanent success.

Robert Plant and the Intersectional Mainstream; Cruz & Curi, 2017) and understand the role of interculturality in the construction of what we call the *intersectional mainstream* from the analysis of Robert Plant's work over the 40 plus years of his artistic career. We ask: what are the musical limits of an artist recognised as one of the greatest rockers of all time and who has always sought dialogue with other musical genres? Or rather, are there limits for Robert Plant within the phonographic industry, which often labels him as a mere rocker?

To answer such questions and further the debate, this text has three sections, apart from the introduction. In the following subsection, we will deal with the theoretical and methodological concepts of communication and interculturality and how they relate to the concept of *intersectional mainstream*. Afterwards, we will conduct a detailed analysis of how such concepts can be perceived throughout the work of Robert Plant. Finally, we will present the final considerations on the issues addressed throughout the article.

## 2. THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES/AN "IMMIGRANT SONG"

To Muniz Sodré (2014), "communication proves to be the primary organisational form" in today's society. He adds: "we emphasise 'proves to be' because communication means, in fact, in its essence ( ... ) the organising process of mediation essential to the common human being, the approximate resolution of pertinent differences in symbolic forms" (p. 15). Therefore, as Sodré (2006) also states, the challenge of communication as social praxis would be to generate an understanding of the contemporary world. In other words, a "knowledge and at the same time an application of what is known, to the extent that the subjects involved in the discourse are guided, in the concrete situations of life, by the sense communicatively obtained" (p. 14).

The meanings we give to music and the sounds surrounding us stem from human communication (Wisnik, 2007) of different social and cultural bonds in our lives, full of intersubjective interactions. In this virtual arena, our belonging is negotiated. Music, throughout history, as Wisnik (2007) states, is the result of communication and an extensive conversation between "sound (as periodic recurrence, production of constancy) and noise (as relative disturbance of stability, superposition of complex, irrational, lagging pulses)" (p. 30). The meanings we give to this dialogue will always be produced and interpreted according to different cultures.

That said, looking at Robert Plant's trajectory, we can see that being in-between places, communicating, migrating to different places, and moving in time and space between different cultures and symbolic forms has always been a striking and constant feature of the artist's life. Plant's working-class mother was Roma, and he grew up amidst Welsh and Celtic folklore, peoples who are recognisably nomadic, diasporic, migrant and intercultural.

So, what interculturality are we talking about here? Initially, the concept is based on Canclini (2005). According to the author, the way the world was previously conceived, based on the idea that national States, laws, and educational and communication policies that organised the coexistence of groups in demarcated territories, over the last decades, have

become inadequate in light of the expansion of intercultural mixtures. Canclini (2005) thus defines interculturality as an intertwining and a confrontation, which refers to what happens when groups, individuals and cultural representations engage in relations and exchanges. Unlike multiculturalism, the anthropologist states, which presupposes acceptance of what is heterogeneous, interculturality assumes that “those who are different are what they are, in reciprocal negotiation, conflict and borrowing relationships” (Canclini, 2005, p. 17).

The researcher’s scientific interest is to observe the effective contemporary destabilisation of social, gender and generational orders caused by the recent global interdependence. However, Canclini (2005) is interested in the mismatches, in what stems from inequality, and perceives culture and cultural relations no longer as a collection of traits that make one society different from another but as a system of relations of meaning that identifies contrasts, differences and comparisons. According to Canclini (2005), “it is about paying attention to the mixtures and misunderstandings that bind the groups” (p. 25). That is, to understand the cultural action of an individual and a group, we must “describe how it appropriates other people’s symbolic products and materials and interprets them: the football or *musical fusions* [emphasis added], the television programmes that disseminate heterogeneous cultural styles” (Canclini, 2005, p. 26).

Thus, for obvious reasons, it is worth noting here that when we set out to analyse interculturality in Robert Plant’s work, we know that the musician speaks from a Eurocentric place, from an imperialist nation, England, which, most of the time, was and still is oppressive, hegemonic. Plant’s work is inscribed within the cultural industry, the mainstream, and the classic and well-known format of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1985)<sup>6</sup>, which feeds back into the capitalist and neoliberal system.

So, what do we mean by the *mainstream*? Considered a “broad consumption strategy”, it means making

admittedly efficient product creation choices relating to elements of consecrated works and with a relatively guaranteed success [It entails a] system of production/circulation of the major music companies. Consequently, the repertoire for the consumption of mainstream products is widely available to listeners, and the plastic dimension of the song displays a variety defined, to a large extent, by the entertainment industries and that repertoire. (Janotti Júnior & Cardoso Filho, 2006, p. 19)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The term “cultural industry” (in German: *Kulturindustrie*) was conceived by German philosophers and sociologists Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) in the chapter “The Cultural Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” in the book *Dialética do Esclarecimento* (Dialectic of Enlightenment; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1985), where they posit that popular culture is akin to a factory that produces standardised cultural goods — films, radio programmes, magazines, among others — used to manipulate passive society. Following industrial and financial capitalism logic, the cultural industry standardises products and homogenises them to be consumed by most people. Thus, everything that belongs to the cultural industry must follow a predefined consumption standard: the static mainstream.

<sup>7</sup> To clarify and distinguish, according to Cardoso Filho (2008), the underground, on the other hand, “follows a set of principles of product creation that requires a repertoire more defined for consumption. The ‘underground’ products have a particular production and circulation organisation and are almost invariably established on the negation of its other (the mainstream). This is an oppositional value positioning in which the positive corresponds to a segmented sharing, which is opposed to broad consumption” (p. 12).

In this same line of thought, in order to engage the target audience, the phonographic industry works to shape the image of its products according to the demands/desires/tastes of its audience/fans. Therefore, forming and building a media identity around the bands and/or artists is essential. That will be the basis to foster elements identifying these agents with their followers.

Our query dwells precisely within this field and pre-established formats of market demands from both the public and the so-called “expert” critics. In other words, knowing the limits of Plant’s work within this industry, how the interculturality he perceives and produces through his songs and shows interferes and, sometimes, transcends the limits set by the industry and, in a macro sense, in the Eurocentric culture itself.

Here, a second author helps us in the argument proposed. Bhabha (1998/2014) claims that the broader condition of interculturality lies precisely “in the awareness that the epistemological limits of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident voices and histories” (p. 25), which include immigrants, Roma people and restless artists like Robert Plant. According to the author, this is because “the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora”, and the “great social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the austere prose of political and economic refugees” (Bhabha, 1998/2014, p. 26).

The author argues that interculturality occurs in what he calls *in-between*. That is, Bhabha (1998/2014, p. 28) proposes an epistemological way of positioning oneself in the world that would be the “being beyond”, that is, “inhabiting an intermediate space” between past, present and future. Thus, the intermediate space becomes a space of intervention in the present itself. Something we seek to highlight in the analysis of Plant’s work.

In this way, culture’s border work demands an encounter with “the new” that is not part of the past and present continuum. He creates an idea of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. This art does not just take up the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past by reconfiguring it as a contingent “in-between” that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of the necessity, rather than nostalgia, of living (Bhabha, 1998/2014, p. 29).

In short, for Bhabha (1998/2014), the theoretical recognition of these in-between places can also be called the “third space”, as the “split-space of enunciation”, which may open paths and horizons for the meaning of an “international culture” based “not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (p. 76). The author states that we must remember that it is the “inter – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha, 1998/2014, p. 76). In other words, by exploring this “third space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha, 1998/2014, p. 76).

Such perception connects with what we argue about Plant’s work relating to tradition, seen as a constant process, rediscovered, never static, much less immobile and immersed in the past. Thus, we dare to say that Plant’s work, based on its *intersectional*

and intercultural characteristics sustained here, disrupts even the market and cultural borders so present in the musical works produced in what we call Western culture. We may find these characteristics in works such as *Lullaby... and the Ceaseless Roar* (2014) and *Carry Fire* (2017).

### 3. THE WAY/THAT'S THE WAY

As previously exposed, only this time focusing on the musician's artistic career, we argue once again that Robert Plant's journeys through time and space<sup>8</sup> started very early. Concerning North America, for example, the birthplace of Led Zeppelin's greatest hits, until the release of the second album, *Led Zeppelin II*, released on October 22, 1970 (Thomas, 2009), the band had already toured four times (Lewis, 1991). However, what really began to stir that young man who, from an early age, was attracted to travel and experiences beyond the British island and the European continent, happened in October 1971.

Soon after the end of the Australian tour, while drummer John Bonham and bassist and keyboardist John Paul Jones flew back to England, Plant and guitarist Jimmy Page decided to tour Thailand and India. According to reports from the band's manager, Richard Cole,

we had a great time. I got some good local drivers who took us wherever we wanted, even to places we didn't know. ( ... ) Robert loves to travel, he likes to eat different food, meet different people, listen to all kinds of music. (Rees, 2013/2014, p. 112)

Four months later, in February 1972, Plant and Page would return to India, more specifically Mumbai, to record with musicians from the city's symphony orchestra. They reworked "Four Sticks" (track from the 1971 *Led Zeppelin IV* album; Led Zeppelin, 2015) and "Friends" (track from the 1970 *Led Zeppelin III* album; Led Zeppelin, 2020) with the local musicians, "setting a precedent that Plant, in particular, would follow other times" (Rees, 2013/2014, p. 112). However, another remarkable trip, still in 1972, impressed the young singer even more and would mark him forever:

this time to Morocco, at the north-western tip of Africa, just across the sea for those coming from Europe, but a world away. In Marrakesh, a city of centuries-old red-brick buildings in the south of the country, Plant first heard the music of the indigenous Berber and Gnaoua – seductive, trance-like hums, rhythmic and hypnotic. He and Page took a tape recorder and drove up the Atlas Mountains, the great mountain range that stretches 2,500 kilometres from east to west of the country, recording the songs in villages and street markets. Back in Marrakesh and walking through the profuse network

---

<sup>8</sup> Alluding to an excerpt from the lyrics of "Kashmir" (Led Zeppelin, 2017) from Led Zeppelin's album *Physical Graffiti*, "released on February 24, 1975" (Rees, 2013/2014, p. 134).

of souks, Plant also met Oum Kalsoum, Egyptian by birth and the greatest Arab singer then alive. Her remarkable, high voice, an instrument in itself, haunted the city's radios. (Rees, 2013/2014, pp. 112–113)

In Plant's own words, hearing Oum Kalsoum's voice was a revelatory experience that would influence the cross-cultural composition of the artist's work and, more importantly, his singing style ever since.

I would hear that voice above all the noise — Oum Kalsoum singing. Her voice was everywhere; it came out of every door, flickered amidst the commotion, the chaos, the car horns and the braying donkeys. I kept thinking: “Wow, how can I put that in what I do?” And I went for it. (Rees, 2013/2014, p. 113)

However, the answer to Plant's question would only come three years later, in 1975, on the album *Physical Graffiti*. Originally titled “Driving to Kashmir” (Williamson, 2007/2011, p. 226), “Kashmir”, the song at hand, would recount the artist's personal experience during a trip to Morocco. It is considered the musician's greatest pride in his period with Led Zeppelin. The mysterious track carries a sonority classified until then as oriental<sup>9</sup> and, according to him, is the definitive hallmark of the band (Wall, 2008/2009).

The North African atmosphere would resurface vigorously in 1982. In his solo career, Plant (2016c) composed “Slow Dancer”, one of the tracks on his debut album, *Pictures at Eleven*. Regarded as a kind of sequel to “Kashmir”, the song featured a Leylet Hob (Radio Martiko, 2019) inspired guitar, the best-known version of which was by Oum Kalsoum.

While on the following album, *The Principle of Moments* (1983), the intersection with Arabic music sounded timid, on “Wreckless Love” (Plant, 2016g), the same cannot be said about “Watching You” (Plant, 2016e), from the album *Manic Nirvana* (1990). Underpinned by heavy percussion that brings rock and North Africa together, Plant again evokes the mysterious side introduced with “Kashmir”.

Three years later, in *Fate of Nations* (1993), *intersectionality* and *interculturality* resurface in songs like “Down to the Sea” (Plant, 2016f), with Indian percussive tablas and, especially, with “Calling to You” (Chanobass, 2015), the album's opening track, with oriental sonorities and exotic musical scales, little used in rock records of the major phonographic industry. According to Williamson (2007/2011),

*Fate of Nations* [was] the most daring album of Plant's solo career up to that point and set directions for his future project, *Strange Sensation*. ‘Calling to You’ kicks off in crushing fashion with a ‘Kashmir’ style riff before Nigel Kennedy's [English violinist] thrilling violin coda takes the track to new heights. (p. 198)

Robert Plant would reach the apex of interculturality in his following project, *No Quarter* (1994), by combining and mixing musical sounds and rhythms from different

<sup>9</sup> Edward Said (1978/2013), in his work *O Orientalismo: O Oriente Como Invenção do Ocidente* (Orientalism) suggests that the terms by which the world is divided, “East” and “West”, although it may seem a mere innocent distinction, actually tend to intensify differences and hinder some attempts to bring cultures closer together.

cultures and continents, such as the inclusion of North African music. After accepting an invitation to participate in the *MTV Unplugged* series, the musician joined forces again with his Led Zeppelin partner Jimmy Page. This (re)conciliation resulted in a symbiosis between his ex-band's catalogue and the sound mentioned above. That is, Plant inhabits here the *in-between*, as Bhabha (1998/2014) reminds us, "a return to the present to re-describe our cultural contemporaneity ( ... ) to touch the future on its hither side" (p. 12).

Thus mixing Led Zeppelin classics revamped with new songs, the singer also promoted a meeting between two different cultures, "but without one diluting the other" (Rees, 2013/2014, p. 223), according to the Egyptian percussionist Hossam Ramzy. Here the musicians gathered instrumentalists from the London Metropolitan Orchestra with an Egyptian string and percussion ensemble. Ramzy himself defined Plant in the project:

Robert knew a lot about Egyptian and Arabic music altogether ( ... ). He would ask me a lot of questions about the Arab world. He wanted to make sure he understood. He would come and practice Arabic with me because he had learned the language ( ... ) Robert is one of the sweetest people you can meet, but when it comes to making music, he has no friends. He is very demanding, and every note is important. (Rees, 2013/2014, pp. 223–224)

Plant's real immersion in Arab culture shows once again that he does not perceive it as mere caricatured or illustrative art, like cultures that would be on shelves to be used commercially in an exotic and eccentric way, but rather, something that the artist seeks to understand, to take part in, to inhabit the *in-between*, and then incorporate into his work.

Plant's meticulousness and interest in other cultures would remain strong on the world tour that followed soon after the release of *No Quarter*. So, on the road, the singer promoted, once again, an unusual scenario: he gathered the same group of Egyptian musicians with orchestras from the places the tour was going to, such as, for example, São Paulo, Brazil. Hence, the song that would sum up all this effort was "Kashmir", the *intercultural intersectionality* between the music of their past and the North African sound.

Soon after the *No Quarter* tour, this intersection would be reflected again in *Walking Into Clarksdale*, 1998, a new record by Plant and Page. The most emblematic track in this sense would be "Most High" (Maul1977, 2010), which even won the Grammy for best hard rock performance the following year, attesting to how the limits of rock can be exceeded. After that, the singer would end the partnership with the guitarist and move to his next endeavours and his 1960s musical roots with 2002's *Dreamland*.

By this time, Plant had a new band, Strange Sensation, with guitarist Justin Adams, "whose interests in North African music provided a strong foil for Plant's own World Music passions" (Williamson, 2007/2011, p. 145).

Soon, the new partnership would rekindle the singer's flame for the oriental sound on *Mighty Rearranger* from 2005. There are plenty of examples: besides "Another Tribe" (braxfjun, 2011), the album's opening acoustic song, the musician would showcase three other movements of his intersection with North African music, namely "The Enchanter" (Plant, 2016b), "Dancing in Heaven" (Plant, 2016a) and "Takamba" (Plant, 2016d).

The artist would then take a break from working with the band Strange Sensation, to record albums which proved very successful on both sides of the Atlantic: *Raising Sand* (2007), partnered with the American singer Alison Krauss, and *Band of Joy* (2010). Both productions show influences from folk, country, blues, rhythm and blues, psychedelia and bluegrass.

However, in 2014, the singer would rejoin the musicians of Strange Sensation — now renamed Sensational Space Shifters — and release *Lullaby and... the Ceaseless Roar*. The inclusion of Gambian musician Juldeh Camara gives an *intersectional* and *intercultural* sound to almost every song on the album. Songs like “Little Maggie” (Plant, 2014a), “Rainbow” (Plant, 2014b), “Up on the Hollow Hill (Understanding Arthur)” (Plant, 2016h) and “Arbaden (Maggie’s Baby)” (Plant, 2016j) are some examples of that.

Three years later, in 2017, the partnership with the Space Shifters would release *Carry Fire*, the artist’s last production. Once again, it is possible to perceive Plant’s *intersectionality* and dialogue with North Africa and the never-finite new possibilities, as in the tracks “Carving Up the World Again... a Wall and Not a Fencer” (Plant, 2017c), the album’s title song (Plant, 2017b) and *New World* (Plant, 2017d), a song that sums up the artist’s trajectory thus far and the constant search for new horizons, expressed in the song’s first lines: “with songs we praise a happy landing/on yet another virgin shore/escape the booming world/embrace the new world/out here the immigrant takes hold/across the plains and over mountains” (Plant, 2017a, 00:00:20).

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS/CODA

Based on the description and analysis of Plant’s work, we may suggest that the artist’s challenging approach to dialogues and intersections remains to this day, cyclical and dialectical, *coda*-like<sup>10</sup>, the guiding star of the artist, who is not content to be just mainstream, much less a static mainstream, much to the contrary, the musician sought and still seeks to overcome market barriers. We know the current market, like the artistic mainstream, is dynamic and increasingly directed to niches. Therefore, the logics of the market can expand according to each culture. However, even so, we understand that a kind of static mainstream persists in the rock segment, which would be the niche that Robert Plant should fit in, which in fact, is not the case.

The cultural industry’s pre-established formats are marginal to the artist’s posture. Primarily those referring to general aesthetics, with the guarantee that they will be sold and accepted by the general public, such as, for example, traditional rock band formations, which boil down to bass, drums and guitar, or the stereotype of a traditional rocker, the one who wears black, silver, sunglasses, and several tattoos.

Plant has long understood this whole game. He knows the demands of being mainstream. He recognises that record companies and the media see musicians as products.

---

<sup>10</sup> A musical element at the end of a song, symphony, sonata or composition that brings the whole piece to an end. *Coda* is also an album that includes a musical collection by Led Zeppelin, released on November 19, 1982, with the band’s songs recorded between 1970 and 1978.

So he knows you have to label them to create identification and appreciation. Immersed in this reality for over five decades, Plant plays the game. He plays the game, and he also doesn't. He has constantly been in and out of the dictates of the phonographic industry since the days of Led Zeppelin. As Janotti Júnior (2007) states, the band inhabited the dwelling where “the permanent tension involving creative processes and commercial logics” takes place (p. 3). That is, the restlessness with ready-made formulas was and still is the core of the artist's position in the contemporary world, immersed in contradictions typical of a consumer society<sup>11</sup>.

Not to follow the same format or the paths the music industry seeks to set — that seems to be the mantra Robert Plant has been evoking for almost 50 years. The artist seeks constant challenges by engaging with tradition, the past, the present, and the future. Could he be a kind of “mainstream left-winger”? Someone who breaks the barriers of what a rocker is, as stipulated by the hegemonic media. According to him,

yes. I create the challenges. Also because there is no other way of doing things. Unless you're composing just to keep your career afloat, to keep your house in Malibu. If that's the game, then I've entered the wrong profession. I don't want to follow that line. (“Robert Plant Conta Tudo”, 1988, p. 49)

He adds:

I know it's just music, entertainment, but for me, it's very important. The main thing is that I have fun. My business is to evolve, to change, but to keep that special Led Zeppelin thing. Our intention has always been to develop music. Today, the big record companies have ready-made formulas to survive. It was always a struggle to get me played on the radio. Nobody trusts me commercially. And that's a victory. I have a huge ego... I remember a newspaper calling me “the prince of anti-pop”. I loved it. It keeps me away from the Bon Jovis of life. (“Robert Plant Conta Tudo”, 1988, p. 28)

Sometimes neighbouring and sometimes not neighbouring the logics of the market, Robert Anthony Plant thus stands as an authentic representative of the *intersectional mainstream*. He dialogues with these trends and, in the next instant, turns his back, looking for alternatives, seeking dialogues, tensions, and intersections with other cultures, the argument that we seek to highlight here from the encounters and paths pointed out in the singer's trajectory and seek to advance on this issue.

Our argument seeks to push this issue forward by perceiving and highlighting that the intersectional mainstream in contemporaneity, based on the analysis of Robert Plant's work, only happens and can only be effectively perceived when he proposes new intercultural perspectives beyond a closed vision, which sees Europe as the centre of the world, even if involuntarily. The centre is displaced. It becomes mobile, non-static, mutable and hybrid.

<sup>11</sup> For Bauman (2007/2008), the consumer society “represents the kind of society that promotes, encourages or reinforces the choice of a consumerist lifestyle and existential strategy, and rejects all alternative cultural options” (p. 71).

Bhabha's (1998/2014) "third space" is where Plant's work resides, conceived here as the place where intercultural intersections take place, the continuous dialogues between cultures. In this space, there are no hierarchies but feedback and fusions. In other words, the artists involved do not leave their cultures aside. There is a mutual, dialectical and constant learning process where the market premises remain in the background.

In the intersectional and intercultural, there are no ready-made formulas. They are the result of encounters, of journeys with single tickets only. The one possible return is to the place of origin, which we will never know where it is because music is made of codas and mutual relations. It does not exist individually, but in the group, the common, the dialogue, and the communication.

### Translation: Anabela Delgado

#### REFERENCES

- Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (1985). *A dialética do esclarecimento* (G. A. de Almeida, Trans.). Jorge Zahar. (Original work published 1944)
- Bauman, Z. (2008). *Vida para consumo*. (C. A. Medeiros, Trans.). Jorge Zahar. (Original work published 2007)
- Bhabha, H. K. (2014). *O local da cultura* (M. Ávila, E. Reis, & G. Gonçalves, Trans.). UFMG. (Original work published 1998)
- braxfijun. (2011, July 15). *Robert Plant - Another Tribe (Mighty Rearranger Album).wmv* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSXakz4by3A>
- Canclini, N. G. (2005). *Diferentes, desiguais e desconectados: Mapas da interculturalidade*. UFRJ.
- Cardoso Filho, J. (2008). Emergência do sentido na canção midiática: Uma proposta metodológica. *InTexto*, (18), 47–63. <https://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/intexto/article/view/6730>
- Chanobass. (2015, September 1). *Calling To You (Robert Plant)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChgzpvPS9jA>
- Cruz, F., & Curi, G. O. (2017). O incessante rugido: Robert Plant e o mainstream interseccional. *Libero*, (29), 47–58. <https://seer.casperlibero.edu.br/index.php/libero/article/view/868>
- Full Album. (2022, September 26). *Robert Plant - Mighty Rearranger [Full Album] 2005* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS5-GjPtsyM>
- Janotti Júnior, J. (2007). Música popular massiva e comunicação: Um universo particular. *INTERCOM*, 4(2), 1–16.
- Janotti Júnior, J., & Cardoso Filho, J. (2006, September 6–9). *A música popular massiva, o mainstream e o underground* [Conference presentation]. XXIX Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, Brasília, Brasil. <http://www.intercom.org.br/papers/nacionais/2006/resumos/R1409-1.pdf>
- Led Zeppelin. (2015, February 25). *Four Sticks (remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijp27QMR2KU>

- Led Zeppelin. (2017, January 25). *Kashmir (remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzVJPgCn-Z8>
- Led Zeppelin (2020, October 23). *Friends (remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fk5lfjNH4cE>
- Led Zeppelin Timeline. (n.d.). “*Led Zeppelin III*” released. Retrieved September 6, 2022, from <https://www.ledzeppelin.com/event/october-5-1970>
- Lemos, J. A. (1993). Led Zeppelin: Toda a história da banda que inventou o heavy metal. *Revista Bizz*, 13.
- Lewis, D. (1991). *Led Zeppelin. A celebration*. Omnibus Press.
- Maul1977. (2010, January 23). *Most High Jimmy Page, Robert Plant* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZFo78UjZlI>
- Owen Rnadle. (2016, January 31). *Led Zeppelin - Led Zeppelin III - That's The Way* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Kif1gDxG3o>
- Plant, R. (2005). Tin Pan Valley [Song]. On *Mighty Rearranger*. Es Paranza; Sanctuary.
- Plant, R. (2014a, June 23). *Robert Plant 'Little Maggie' | Official Track* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlEJeZcvK4g>
- Plant, R. (2014b, June 23). *Robert Plant 'Rainbow' | Official Track* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3LoEUbRjGk>
- Plant, R. (2016a, April 21). *Dancing in heaven* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQbZCP5b4go>
- Plant, R. (2016b, April 21). *The enchanter (2006 remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxH2Wpwjcmo>
- Plant, R. (2016c, April 21). *Slow dancer (2006 remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dojo8c62B\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dojo8c62B_o)
- Plant, R. (2016d, April 21). *Takamba (2006 remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q75fDFRWgW4>
- Plant, R. (2016e, April 21). *Watching you (2006 remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5cjuzt9MOo>
- Plant, R. (2016f, July 17). *Down to the sea (2006 remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObOhzrCB5Ao>
- Plant, R. (2016g, July 17). *Wreckless love (2006 remaster)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGPYjalEHZQ>
- Plant, R. (2017a). New world [Song]. On *Carry Fire*. Nonesuch/Warner Bros.
- Plant, R. (2017b, October 13). *Carving Up the World Again... a wall and not a fence | official audio* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jggOLabrpqc>

- Plant, R. (2017c, October 13). *Carry Fire | official audio* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nNHMu0-jW8>
- Plant, R. (2017d, October 13). *Robert Plant - New World... | official audio* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHSRC7e1-Fg>
- Radio Martiko. (2019, October 21). Om Kalsoum - Laylat Hob بح قليل - موثلك م [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hETOM73chLk&t=1140s>
- Rees, P. (2014). *Robert Plant: Uma vida*. (E. Assis, Trans.). LeYa. (Original work published 2013)
- “Robert Plant conta tudo”. (1988, june). *Revista Bizz*, (35), 45–52.
- Said, E. W. (2013). *O orientalismo. O oriente como invenção do ocidente* (R. Eichenberg, Trans.). Companhia de Bolso. (Original work published 1978)
- Sodré, M. (2006). *As estratégias sensíveis. Afeto, Mídia e Política*. Vozes.
- Sodré, M. (2014). *Ciência do comum: Notas para o método comunicacional*. Vozes.
- Thomas, G. (2009). *Led Zeppelin. The illustrated biography*. Transatlantic Press.
- Wall, M. (2009). *Led Zeppelin: Quando os gigantes caminhavam sobre a terra* (E. Serapicos, Trans.). Larousse do Brasil. (Original work published 2008)
- Williamson, N. (2011). *O guia do Led Zeppelin* (H. Szolnoky, Trans.). Aleph. (Original work published 2007)
- Wisnik, J. M. (2007). *O som e o sentido: Uma outra história das músicas*. Companhia das Letras.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Fábio Cruz holds a doctorate in Media Culture and Technologies of the Imaginary (Postgraduate Programme in Social Communications, Art and Design - Faculty of Media at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil). He is a professor of the bachelor of Journalism course at the Federal University of Pelotas. He completed post-doctoral studies in Media, Human Rights and Social Movements at the University of Seville, Spain.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9933-5788>

Email: [fabiosouzadacruz@gmail.com](mailto:fabiosouzadacruz@gmail.com)

Address: Rua Gomes Carneiro, 01, CEP 96010-610, Pelotas, Brasil

Guilherme Curi holds a PhD in Communication and Culture from the School of Communication at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He is a substitute professor at the Department of Social Communication at the Federal University of Espírito Santo. He has completed post-doctoral studies with a Capes/PrInt research scholarship. He is a collaborating professor in the Postgraduate Programme in Communication at the Federal University of Santa Maria.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9464-4231>

Email: [curi.guilherme@gmail.com](mailto:curi.guilherme@gmail.com)

Address: Av. Fernando Ferrari, 514, Goiabeiras, CEP 29075-910; Vitória - ES – Brasil

**Submitted: 22/09/2022 | Accepted: 18/ 10/ 2022**



*This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.*