IDENTITY POLITICS RECO(R)DED: VINYL HUNTERS

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Subject(s): Cultural Essay, Political Essay, Societal Essay
Published by: Teaduste Akadeemia Kirjastus
Keywords: memory; exoticism; popular culture; vinyl records
Summary/Abstract: The article is a study into exotic record collecting as a manifestation of memory-based identity politics – a way of reasserting one's agency in the consumerist society through an expanded consciousness of the complexities of the forgotten cultural past (in the present case, extremely eccentric obscure vinyl records). First, exotic record collecting is linked to the more extensive tradition of utopian exoticism in Western culture – the recycling of cultural memory (thus also an exoticism...
based on temporal rather than spatial distance) is presented as an extension of the earlier but largely exhausted exoticism which was inspired by alien territories. Next, exotic vinyl hunting is suggested to be the postmodern revival of the cultural project of ‘ethnographic surrealism’, celebrated by James Clifford as one of the crucial catalysts of modernism. Finally, the connection between exotic record collecting and other reinterpretations of collective cultural memory is indicated, as exemplified by collector Mickey MacGowan’s The Unknown Museum, which ventures to expand collective cultural memory of the history of popular culture and thus combat the perennial industrial promotion of the ‘new’ with more vintage and affective ways of defining oneself through material objects of imagined value.
The article is a study into exotic record collecting as a manifestation of memory-based identity politics – a way of reasserting one’s agency in the consumerist society through an expanded consciousness of the complexities of the forgotten cultural past (in the present case). This community complicates issues of national participation and identity politics by allowing for mass participation of non-Brazilians in a specifically Brazilian cultural inheritance. At the same time, this study is concerned with the contemporary complication of the traditional economic and social motivations of collectors. Notions of identity politics and cultural purity lead to segregation. Yet when Franzen acknowledged it, the same type of social justice warrior who criticised Shriver criticised him. None quite demanded that he must create black characters, but, as one said, his reprehensible admission had weakened the fight for “diversity and inclusion” — as if the two were synonymous. The great failing of identity politics and arguments against cultural appropriation is they assume identities and cultures are islands with warships patrolling their coasts. Cultures mix. None exists that is not a hybrid except possibly in the Amazon rainforest.