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Imagining Home, Nation, World: Appalachia on the Mall

This article reads the Smithsonian's annual folklife festival as a cultural product buffeted by changing material conditions and funding constraints as the United States transitioned from a Fordist industrial economy to a post-Fordist information economy. Based upon visitor interviews, promotional materials, and news reports, this article argues that the transition from a national to an international framework reconfigured the role of Appalachia in visitors' imaginations. In 2002, Appalachia represented ideals of "nation" and "home" in contrast to tantalizing and threatening foreign cultures and allowed visitors to entertain the wishful belief that the United States was a simple place peopled by simple denizens innocent of imperial ambitions.

IN THE SUMMER OF 2003, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival featured three programs: "Appalachia: Heritage and Harmony," "Mali: From Timbuktu to Washington," and "Scotland at the Smithsonian." I attended the festival as a research fellow hosted by the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH) and funded by Emory University's Center for the Study of Public Scholarship. My primary interest was in learning about the various ways that festival visitors interpreted the festival's representation of the Appalachian region of the United States. To this end, I performed over eighty semistructured interviews with individuals, pairs, and groups during the course of the ten days of the festival. I was struck by visitors' insistence on imagining the Appalachian region as a present-day expression of colonial American pioneer traditions. Despite festival organizers' attempts to complicate long-standing stereotypes about the region, visitors repeatedly envisioned Appalachia as "down home." For festival attendees, the region epitomized a "cozy," "sweet and relaxing," and "folksy" place "not of this century" (Interviews, June 25–29, 2003, and July 2–6, 2003).

In an earlier article on my 2003 research, I examined the overdetermined nature of visitors' grasp of Appalachia. I attributed visitors' reactions to the Appalachia program less as a consequence of particular representations or events they witnessed at the festival and more as a consequence of two overriding factors. First, visitors' interpretations were guided by their keen desire to believe in the existence of a rural place free of the problems that they associated with postmodern metropolitan consumer society. Second, visitors' appraisal of Appalachia as a place apart was guided

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by the dominant scholarly and popular narratives available for understanding the region (Satterwhite 2005).

In this article, I pursue to its logical end my interest in the power of narrative contexts in determining visitor interpretations. Rather than examining the particular modes of representation employed by festival staff and participants, I try to understand the ways in which the annual festival was shaped by the exigencies of two distinct historical eras. The first era encompasses the years from the Festival of American Folklife's founding in 1967 until 1998, when it was renamed the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The second era extends from 1998 until the present day. Following cultural theorist Eric Cazdyn (1995), this article reads the Smithsonian's annual festival as a "cultural product" that represents new "global realities" in "distorted and symbolic" ways (Cazdyn 1995:139; quoting Jameson 1988:350). In other words, I am (again) less interested in individual agency or responsibility and more interested in the national and transnational structuring structures at work.

Appalachia's shifting role in the American geographic imagination, I argue, parallels a series of shifts that cultural theorist Raymond Williams identified in the English imagination at the close of the nineteenth century. In *The Country and the City*, Williams describes an intensification in English readers' romantic imagination of the countryside following a shift from agrarian to industrial and urban labor. For English readers, the country represented "the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue" (1973:1). By the end of the nineteenth century, Williams argues, the city-country dynamic was "rebuilt on an international scale" as "developed" countries came to be imagined as "metropolitan" in relation to "undeveloped" countries identified as "rural." In the minds of English readers, the "lands of the Empire were an idyllic retreat," a pastoral antidote to urbanizing England (280–2). While Robert Cantwell (1993) examines the relationship between the pastoral and the ideals of home and community, and Simon Bronner (2002) notes the relationship between the pastoral and nationalism, Williams follows out the role of the pastoral into the global imagination of empire. According to Williams, with the expansion of the British empire in the nineteenth century, "There was also a marked development of the idea of England as 'home,' in that special sense in which 'home' is a memory and an ideal. . . . [Many images of this 'home'] are of an idea of rural England: its green peace contrasted with the tropical or arid places of actual work; its sense of belonging, of community, idealised by contrast with the tensions of colonial rule and the isolated alien settlement" (1973:281). Williams's identification of the significance of the pastoral in imagining home, nation, and empire offers a useful lens for interpreting the evolving figure of Appalachia at the Smithsonian's annual festival.

The transition from a national framework offered by the "Festival of American Folklife" (FAF) to an international framework offered by the "Smithsonian Folklife Festival" (SFF) changed the way the idea of Appalachia functioned for festival visitors. The festival's founders intended to elicit the admiration and respect of white professional middle-class visitors for the various cultural groups represented in the festival's first decades. Appalachian culture figured at the FAF both as a subaltern entity parallel to that of other minority groups represented (such as African Americans, Native

Americans, and immigrant Americans) and, paradoxically, as the most quintessentially American culture possible. The latter identification of Appalachia as quintessential America occurred thanks to the overlapping assumptions that American culture was at its core a white pioneer culture and that American pioneer culture had been preserved most faithfully in the southeastern mountains. In the FAF, then, Appalachia operated both as a curiosity and as a stand-in for the nation. Given new global contexts for the SFF after 1998, however, national navel-gazing of the 1960s and 1970s “Who-are-Americans?” variety gave way to an enchantment with international rural cultures. Under the emerging SFF framework, Appalachia figured as “home.” While Appalachia still served as a stand-in for the nation, for the most part it had lost its luster as a curiosity and instead had become “cozy” by contrast to the myriad tantalizing and threatening foreign cultures juxtaposed with it. As Williams reminds us, the countryside, at first integral to identifying and constructing the nation, later becomes a key component of the imperialist imagination as well.

In order to advance this argument about Appalachia’s changing role at the festival, I propose to track features of the festival’s early decades that were transformed between the Appalachian region’s appearances at the 1976 “Regional Americana” portion of the FAF’s bicentennial celebration and the 2003 “Appalachia: Heritage and Harmony” SFF program. The shift in the festival’s conditions for production, I argue, were overdetermined expressions of the changing material conditions that underwrote the festival as the United States transitioned from a Fordist industrial economy to a post-Fordist information economy. Fordism is generally associated with assembly-line factory production exemplified by Henry Ford’s automobile plants, particularly after World War II. The characteristics of the Fordist industrial economy include an emphasis on the manufactured product and an association with a highly unionized blue-collar labor force. Historians generally date a transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the 1970s. The post-Fordist economy saw a shift in emphasis from manufacturing to the increasing importance of the service sector. Rather than a stable work force and a single product, corporations focused on contingency in the labor force and on reaching particular sets of consumers through flexibility in the nature of the products created. The post-Fordist or information economy characteristic of advanced capitalism emphasizes consumption over production; services, knowledge, and tourism over physical products; and transnational networks rather than nation-bound corporations and factories.

In order to show how the festival changed in response to these shifting economic and social conditions, I focus on six elements present at the FAF and demonstrate the ways in which they were absent or transformed by the time of the SFF, including: (1) the festival’s name change; (2) the influence of labor unions; (3) the increasing significance of the tourist industry; (4) shifting reactions to racial and ethnic identifications; (5) the changing emphasis from American cultures to international ones; and (6) the rise of neoimperialism. By tracing the relationship between the festival and each of these features, I hope to tease out various strands of what are in actuality overlapping and interconnected shifts in the festival’s reactions to global realities. After looking briefly at each of these six changed elements in festival programming from 1967 to 2006, I will then return to the subject of Appalachia to discuss the ways that the changing global landscape reconfigured the region’s role in the national

imagination. Before I begin examining these social transformations, however, I first point to the durability and longevity of one major organizing and defining theme of the festival. American nationalism, as the festival's theme and *raison d'être*, has undergone few changes since the founding of the event. As we will see in the conclusion, however, even the persistence of patriotism and nationalism take on different meanings in changing planetary contexts.

My sources include my participant observation and interviews in 2003 and narratives and frameworks used by the 1976 and 2003 festival program books; archival research in the CFCH collection during my summer in Washington, D.C.; promotional videos for the festival released in 1984 and 2002; and secondary sources, including CFCH director Richard Kurin's history of the festival and numerous newspaper reports. My article is meant to suggest a way of thinking about the festival as conditioned by ever-changing historical forces not of its organizers' own choosing—even as the festival in turn exerts remarkable power on historical forces by documenting, defining, shaping, and promoting folkways and tradition bearers, nationally and internationally.

Nationalism as a Festival Constant and Six Changing Elements

This is the Festival of the Common Man. This is the Festival of the Democratic Act. This is the art that American people have made out of their experience. All of the people. . . .

We realize how beautiful we are. Black is beautiful and white is beautiful and Appalachia is beautiful and even old tired Washington sometimes is beautiful when the American people gather to sing and fall in love with each other again.

—Alan Lomax's comments at the 1968 festival, reprinted in the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration festival program book

One aspect of the festival has continued unabated and essentially unchallenged in each of its permutations. From its founding, the Festival of American Folklife has been identified with the celebration of nation. S. Dillon Ripley, secretary of the Smithsonian Institute when the FAF was first established, saw the festival as part of the Smithsonian's larger mission to nurture American citizens' "identification with the national patrimony" (quoted in Kurin 1998:8). The festival is the embodiment of "the sights and the sounds, and the *spirit* of America's people," as the voice-over narration informs viewers in a promotional video featuring footage from the 1982 FAF. According to the video, produced by the Smithsonian's Office of Folklore Programs for fundraising purposes, the "climax" of the festival occurs over "the Fourth of July weekend"—"What better time and what better place to celebrate the greatness of America?" A more recent promotional video with a 2002 copyright repeats the 1984 video's patriotic sentiments about coupling the festival with the Fourth of July holiday. Richard Kurin, director of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the script writer for the in-house video, continues to note the significance of the festival's "symbolic . . . ties to the 4th of July," including as recently as 2006 ("Smithsonian Folklife Festival" 2006). In 2003, the broad-based acceptance of a relationship between nationalism and the festival was highlighted by choices made by two media outlets to celebrate July 4 in connection with the SFF. American University's WAMU, producer of the popular "Stained Glass

Bluegrass” Sunday gospel radio program, marked the Fourth of July by broadcasting from the festival and emphasizing Appalachian programming. A Canadian television program, “My Brand New Life,” asked permission to film an episode at the festival on July 4, according to a June 25, 2003, e-mail from the show’s researcher, Ramelle Mair, to Smithsonian media contact person Vicki Moeser. (Copies of this message were passed out at a staff meeting.) The episode’s focus was prompted by the American teenager featured on the show, who suggested attending the festival as a means of celebrating the patriotic holiday.

One of U.S. nationalism’s most enduring associations is that of rural white common folk with the nation’s core identity (Bronner 2002:9, 14; Cantwell 1993:xv). The festival’s 1984 promotional video highlights the “spirit of America’s people” with visual images taken from the 1982 FAF. The images include a band featuring a white woman fiddler, a white man in a cowboy hat playing guitar, a white man in a white sleeveless undershirt holding up a horseshoe, and the feet of a clogging dancer. Although Korean and Korean-American tradition bearers were also present at the 1982 festival and figured prominently in the video, this particular point about the “spirit of America’s people” was necessarily illustrated by white American rural tradition bearers.

Against this steady backdrop of the festival as symbol of national pride, changing contexts for the festival have brought new meanings to bear on its assertion of nationalism. Here I discuss six changes in the festival’s production, promotion, and reception that are emblematic of shifts in larger global realities that have shaped, and have been shaped by, the festival’s representational strategies.

A Name Change for the Festival

In 1998, the festival officially changed its name from the Festival of American Folklife (FAF) to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (SFF). The festival’s title “was simplified,” according to CFCH director Richard Kurin, “in order to reflect long-term popular usage” (Kurin 1998:8). Although the formal name change was a matter of convenience and of recognizing long-standing tradition, the removal of “American” from the title and the addition of “Smithsonian” are symptoms of a broad sea-change in the contexts informing festival programming with the solidification of a post-Fordist economy. First, the incorporation of the well-respected label “Smithsonian” can be read as a kind of branding at a time when brands were becoming increasingly important to conveying auras of authority, quality, and authenticity onto marketable products. In post-Fordism, the products sold and laborers hired can change at the drop of a hat, but the relationship of trust and loyalty between the branded corporation and the consumer rises to a new level of prominence. As Cantwell notes in *Ethnomimesis*, the festival tends to attract a well-educated audience interested in accumulating the kind of cultural capital that is enhanced through association with the venerable Smithsonian Institution (1993:87, 101).

Second, the removal of “American” from the title can be read as a symbol of the festival’s permutation from an inward-looking celebration to a more outward-facing attempt to understand the United States’ prominence in and interactions with the world. This shift was formally marked by the 1998 name change, but the change in

emphasis from domestic to international programming happened much more slowly. The festival included the participation of foreign governments for the first time in 1973, the FAF's seventh year. With the Korea program in 1982, the festival began to produce stand-alone programs on "featured countries," and in the following seven years the festival produced twelve individual featured country programs that had no manifest connection to the United States (Kurin 1998:140; Smithsonian Institution 1974:2).¹ The year of the name change, then, marked not so much an actual shift in programming but a moment of recognition of the evolving internationalist aims of the festival since its 1960s-era interest in cataloguing and displaying American cultural groups. Most notably, the conversion to an internationalist festival reached its fullest expression four years after the name change with the 2002 production of the Silk Road program. This was the only year in which the festival consisted of a single program and the only year in which no U.S.-centered programming existed.

Coincidentally, in the year of the name change itself the featured country programs included the Philippines (discussed in the Trimillos article in this issue) and the Baltic Nations, thereby symbolizing not only the festival's shift from domestic to international programming but also the United States' shift from old-fashioned empire to newfangled neoimperialism. The United States took possession of the Philippines during the Spanish-American War, an event that for some historians marks the first stirrings of official U.S. empire-building and that occurred exactly one hundred years before the festival changed its name. In contrast to this older version of territorial empire, the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania signify U.S. neoimperialism and global dominance in the post-Cold War era because of their 1991 alignment with the West following their independence from the Soviet Union. I will return to the shifts from domestic to international and from empire to neoimperialism below.

Labor Unions and the Language of Another Era

During the height of Fordism, labor unions were a major symbolic presence at the Festival of American Folklife. By 2003, in an era of transnational corporations and the networked society, old-economy forces such as the labor union were invisible at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.²

The festival's commitment to labor and labor organizing in its first decade is made clear in part by the prominent placement of an essay by AFL-CIO president George Meany in the front of the 1976 annual festival program book. Immediately following essays by the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and the director of the festival, Meany proclaimed the importance of workers' rights, unions, and the respect and validation the festival offered working-class participants returning to their hometowns. Meany honored, for example, mechanics "who formed a workingman's party to fight for free public education and an end to debtors prison" (Meany 1976:3). The promotional video featuring the 1982 festival boasted that "sixty labor organizations" had participated in the festival over the course of its first seventeen years.

The decline in union prominence was reflected over time by the decline in recurrent occupation-themed "labor programs" (which in 1973 were given the patrioti-

cally and emotionally charged title of “Working Americans” programs). The changing nature of the U.S. economy was signaled by a shift from labor programs featuring working-class tradesmen like butchers, plumbers, and members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to those featuring information and service sector employees, including “American Trial Lawyers” (1986), “Workers at the White House” (1992), “Working at the Smithsonian” (1996), and “Masters of the Building Arts” (2001) (Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage 2006). Occupational demonstrations continued to make up a portion of many programs, as in the oil rig workers who discussed their jobs for the 2003 Scotland program, but long gone were the fiery rhetoric and the politicized presence of unions.

Perhaps the early festival’s collaboration with and promotion of labor unions for extractive industries contributed to its pervasive use of the language of natural resources. During the 1970s, politicians and festival organizers promoted the festival as a means of “conserving” folk traditions as national “resources.” In promoting a bill to encourage heritage celebration in the United States, Oklahoma Senator Fred Harris argued in 1971 for acknowledging that “there is a vast *cultural treasure* in America’s common man, and that our society will be a better one if we focus on that treasure and build it” (Kurin 1998:126–7; emphasis added). In his essay for the 1976 festival program book, S. Dillon Ripley emphasized the importance of “cultural resources” and reiterated his 1973 statement that the Smithsonian Institute’s role is that of “preserver and conservatory of living cultural forms” (Ripley 1976:2–3).

As the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism undermined union power, a concomitant shift away from allusions to folklore as “treasure” or “resource” occurred. By the twenty-first-century incarnation of the festival, cherishing the diversity of American peoples and traditions remained a part of CFCH ideology, but the rhetoric in the program books and news coverage more closely fit emerging priorities and values. Catchphrases in articles about the Silk Road program, for example, were no longer about internal resources so much as about meeting strangers, crossing boundaries, “think[ing] globally,” “bridge-building,” “explor[ing] . . . the interconnections,” and “webs” of contacts (Kaplan 2002:T41; O’Sullivan 2002; *Washington Post* 2002). All of these metaphors signaled perfectly a switch from old Fordist models of resource extraction or preservation to network society models that stress relationships and information over resources and products.

Funding and the New Emphasis on Tourism

In keeping with the structures of a Fordist economy, sponsors of the Festival of American Folklife tended to be nation-identified corporations as well as agencies of federal and state governments. Even though unions were stronger financially as well as politically in the FAF era, the AFL-CIO’s contribution to festival funding even in its 1976 prominence paled in contrast to donations of one million dollars each by American Airlines and General Foods (Kurin 1998:131).

Funding in the era of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival after 1998 took on new dimensions and reflected new social and economic realities. One major difference was the increasingly prominent role played by the tourist industry. A 2002 promo-

tional video for the festival featured verbatim much of the same narration as its 1984 predecessor, including the boast that the festival “attracts over a million visitors a year” and that “media coverage reaches millions more.” In 2002, however, the script contains an important addition. These repeated observations from 1984 are followed by the assertion that the festival had been “voted a top tourist attraction in the United States.” Furthermore, 2002 narrator Ossie Davis intones that “Featured nations have seen millions of visitors exposed to their nations, increasing tourism, promoting craft sales, and providing new insights.” The order of priority in this list of outcomes is telling, with tourist and retail dollars preceding “insights.” Transitions in festival funding and programming occurred simultaneously in response to touristic desires of the American leisure class and the growing interests of U.S. and foreign tourist associations and governments in nurturing and capitalizing upon those desires.

The increasing pressure of tourist interests is evident in CFCH curator Richard Kennedy’s comment that “Some in Indonesia worried that our presentation [in 1991] would not offer the American public a polished, ‘proper,’ tourist view of the culture” (quoted in Kurin 1998:139). Organizers for the 1994 Bahamas program initially expressed a desire for Americans to recognize the country as “more than ‘sun, sand, and surf’” (John Franklin; quoted in Kurin 1998:140). Ultimately, however, tourists remained one of the main intended audiences, if, hopefully, an educable one. After the 1994 festival, Bahamian organizers planned to “develop a festival park . . . for the benefit of Bahamian youth as well as for tourists who hope to gain a deeper, broader vision of the country, its culture, and its people” (Franklin; quoted in Kurin 1998:140).

In 2003, the role of tourism in driving festival participation was underscored by the fact that Scottish tourist and government agencies and the nation of Mali each provided more than a million dollars in funding for their respective programs (according to a June 10, 2003, e-mail from Kurin to Diana Parker titled “Festival \$s for the Press”). Indeed, lead volunteers at a June 18 training session were informed that the government of Mali instituted a 7 percent budget cut in order to pay for its participation in the 2003 festival. Aboubakar Sanogo, a Malian working as a program coordinator for the festival, told lead volunteers that his prime minister had said, “After ‘From Timbuktu to Washington,’ we hope Washington will come to Timbuktu. . . . [This is our] invitation for America after the festival to visit.” Many of the brilliantly colored and romantic images in the 2003 program book featured Scottish tourist sites and were provided by the VisitScotland agency. CFCH staff, perhaps in response to participants’ and funders’ concerns, asked in its 2003 visitor survey whether attending the festival resulted in respondents’ “willingness to visit” each of the three featured places. Of 418 visitors surveyed, 49 percent responded affirmatively for Mali, 60 percent for Appalachia, and 78 percent for Scotland.

Representatives of the Birthplace of Country Music Alliance (BCMA), who initiated collaboration with CFCH on the 2003 Appalachia program, shared Scottish and Malian organizers’ interest in increasing tourism and furthermore hoped that Appalachia’s presence on the National Mall would attract new industries and residents to the region (as indicated in interviews with BCMA director Bill Hartley on June 3, 2003; board member Tim White on June 9, 2003; and board member Leton Harding on June 10, 2003). The Appalachia program secured some funding from state tourist

agencies, including Tennessee Tourism and the West Virginia Division of Tourism, as well as from federal and state funders like the National Endowment for the Arts, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Virginia Foundation for Humanities. Regional, national, and multinational companies such as King Pharmaceuticals, the Norfolk Southern Foundation, Eastman Chemical, and the United Company (coal) were also financial sponsors. Clearly each of these funders assumed the festival's goals and messages were compatible with their own.

Whether it is in a people's best interest for either Fordist resource extraction or post-Fordist tourism to be central to an economy is up for debate. Many observers, including some CFCH staff, are hopeful that tourism may play a significant role in sustainable economic development. At the same time, other observers note that the tourist industry frequently is controlled by, and of the greatest benefit to, local elites. These local elites themselves often comprise a portion of a global corporate elite, and they work in tandem with transnational agencies and corporations whose activities may not result in the best interests of the populace. The Mali program, for example, received additional funding from the World Bank and USAID (United States Agency for International Development), whose structural adjustments programs have long been criticized as neoimperialist. Funding for the 2004 Haiti program commemorating the Haitian revolution came from national governments but also from international development agencies; the post-Fordist Haitian industries of banking, telecommunications, and rum; U.S.-based transnational corporations; and individual members of the transnational corporate elite (namely Americans interested in doing business in Haiti and Haitians interested in a business relationship with the United States).³

Attitudes toward Racial and Ethnic Diversity within the United States

In the festival's early decades as the Festival of American Folklife, celebration of ethnic and cultural heritage had just recently gained federal legitimacy in the form of the Ethnic Heritage Act of 1974 and the American Folklife Preservation Act in 1976. These acts themselves were promoted by organizers of the festival, including folklorist and labor historian Archie Green.

The racial politics that underlay celebrations of ethnic and cultural heritage were mixed. On the one hand, some rhetoric espoused by organizers tended to emphasize "quintessential" Americanness often associated with white rural residents, including Green's 1976 congressional testimony on behalf of the iconic "banjo picker" and "rodeo rider" (Hardin 2001). On the other hand, early organizers like Green and festival founder Ralph Rinzler also tried to expand visitors' sense of who should count as American by highlighting the diverse array of cultural traditions that informed U.S. history. Even as they pushed the envelope of who could be considered an "authentic" or "true" American, organizers simultaneously relied upon a fairly conservative nationalism when they insisted that Native American, African American, Asian American, and other cultural groups have an important role in constructing what organizers saw as the unique greatness of the United States. The white liberal agenda of incorporating people of color into a shared vision of nation was communicated to the broader public through this nationalist vehicle, as suggested

by a 1971 comment about the festival by reporter Kevin Phillips, who proclaimed that “Americans need to know one another and to comprehend the many cultures that make up our nation” (quoted in Kurin 1998:135).

In 1975, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute and festival supporter S. Dillon Ripley was on the forefront of recognizing an increasingly palpable “fear of the loss of identity” experienced by at least certain portions of what Ripley termed “mankind today” (Ripley 1975:3). Beginning in the 1970s, cultural difference seemed to offer many a respite from mass culture. White ethnic revivalists in the United States began to cherish their Polish, Russian, Italian, Greek, Jewish, Irish, and other previously undesirable identifications (Jacobson 1998). This ethnic revival stemmed from, in the words of cultural theorist Marilyn Halter, a “search for recognizable or familiar points of reference” in a newly postmodern society that some experienced as a “cold, impersonal, and fragmented world.” Once a boon, “material abundance” came to signify “spiritual impoverishment” (Halter 2000:12). A “search for authenticity” in cultural representations arose from “nostalgia for an idealized and fixed point in time when folk culture was supposedly” a haven of community and belonging “untouched by the corruption that is automatically associated with commercial development” (Halter 2000:17).

By 2003, according to Halter, some observers went so far as to characterize celebrations of ethnic heritage as “the American way.” No longer the somewhat countercultural activity of the early years of the Festival of American Folklife, having an ethnicity had become “almost a civic duty” (Wood 1998:230), as had appreciating the ethnicity of others. Whereas first- and second-generation immigrants experienced great pressure and desire to assimilate, third- and fourth-generation Americans in the late 1990s could claim ethnic heritage “without risk to middle class security” (Halter 2000:9). With the embrace of ethnic chic came a renewed interest in groups living supposedly more “authentic” lives apart from mass society. While such “authentic” lives could be identified within the bounds of the United States, as attested by some festival visitors’ assumptions about Appalachian residents, visitors also sought the titillation of cultural difference in exotic foreigners through the vicarious tourism provided by the festival.

From a Festival about America to a Festival about (America in) the World

In its first decades, the Festival of American Folklife couched its attention to other countries as a means to better understand the American present by examining foreign influences in America’s past. Over time, however, rhetoric about the festival deemphasized its role as a site for reflection on national origins (exemplified by frequent “Old Ways in the New World” exhibits) and instead accentuated the “culture” to be searched out in distant destinations.

True to its name, the Festival of American Folklife focused primarily on traditions within the borders of the United States proper. According to Smithsonian officials, including Rinzler, the festival was intended as a “living laboratory of American culture” (Morris and Rinzler 1974:2). The 1984 promotional video for the festival exemplifies the ethos of celebrating the nation through regional and ethnic Americana. The voice-over tells a familiar story: “As a nation of immigrants, it is fitting that we should celebrate our cultural diversity. And so the festival presents a rich program of ethnic

music and dance performances.” When the video narration notes the presence of tradition bearers from “forty foreign countries,” it implies that those tradition bearers are of paramount importance, *not* for understanding foreign nations themselves but for understanding immigrants’ contributions to “the greatness of America.” Under the FAF rubric, foreign countries were valued for the ways they might inform Americans about American culture. The video suggests that more than a thousand years of Korean custom is important for understanding not Korea but Korean Americanness and America more generally. Even when the narrator suggests that visitors “experience . . . the beauty and joy of another culture,” the only culture truly at stake is American culture.

In recent years, national reporting and festival programming have explicitly placed the festival in an international context. The new global context is made clear in the 2002 promotional video narration, which claims that participation at the festival “is a chance for people to show the world who they are.” The internet-based *National Geographic News* covered the 2003 festival with a headline that trumpeted “Smithsonian Festival Brings World to U.S. National Mall” (Haeber 2003).

Empire to Neoimperial Power

When under the rubric of the Festival of American Folklife, the festival told certain stories about American empire to supporters. The 1984 promotional video, for example, acknowledged frankly that culture bearers at the festival over the years had represented “every region of the United States *and its possessions*” (emphasis added). Apparently, in 1984 the admission of the United States’ territorial possessions was not nearly as uncomfortable as it would be in 2006, when it might seem to highlight too baldly the unabashed fact of U.S. empire. Indeed, the 2002 revision of this same script omits the impolitic reference to U.S. “possessions”—although Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico were still in fact territories of U.S. empire without rights to full federal participation. Sometime between the 1984 version and the 2002 version of the festival’s promotional video, territorial possessions came to be seen as outmoded in the face of the highly visible War on Terror and neoimperial strategies of economic globalization.

Concerns of festival goers have helped create an impetus for more and more international programming at the festival. Beginning in the 1990s, program book essays, newspaper accounts, and visitor testimonies referenced the role of the festival in a planetary mission for cross-national understanding. In introducing the 2003 festival program, Smithsonian Institute secretary Lawrence Small wrote that “Given recent world events . . . [w]e need places where people of diverse backgrounds can gather together, learn from one another, and share in inspiring educational experiences” (Small 2003:7). The increasing impossibility of an isolationist United States after September 11 (“given recent world events,” in Small’s evocative words) forced Americans to be more aware of their nation’s role on the world stage. At the opening of the twenty-first century, U.S. imperialism’s visibility to Americans is arguably greater than at any time since the Vietnam War. Festival visitors, whether committed

to jingoist nationalism or to world peace through greater tolerance and education, feel compelled to look beyond the borders of the United States to educate themselves about people of other nations.

The transition from domestic to international festival occurred gradually after 1973, as I have discussed, but it may be said to have culminated with the Silk Road program in 2002. The six million dollar program was the largest in the festival's history, the most expensive since the 1976 Bicentennial, and the first to focus on a single festival-wide theme (Marquis 2002:E3; O'Sullivan 2002:T29). Visitors found the program electrifying. The 2002 festival received far greater coverage nationally than the usual and dependable *Washington Post* attention. News outlets based in Seattle, Houston, and Columbus, Ohio, published brief mentions or photographs, and the *New York Times* ran a substantial piece on the Silk Road. As CFCH Development Officer Loretta Cooper observed in an interview on June 19, 2003, the Silk Road program "really helped the festival, took it to another dimension," "especially" in terms of "publicity."

Articles about the 2002 Silk Road program repeatedly employed orientaling language to promote the festival as an opportunity for Americans to take a peek at exotic places usually secreted away. An article on family programming at the festival referred to a children's treasure hunt activity as an "Exotic Adventure" (Kaplan 2002:T41). Another article reported that "Organizers said that political transformations across Asia over the last two decades . . . have enabled Westerners to *glimpse* the lands and lifestyles of a culturally rich region that had been largely *inaccessible* for a hundred years" (Marquis 2002:E3; emphasis added).

News articles also suggested that the festival was valuable for its presentation of strategic geopolitical knowledge. One article claimed that "The festival offers a view of lands that are often reduced to snippets on nightly broadcasts involving troop movements or diplomatic brinksmanship" (Wong 2002:A4). The language of international diplomacy was underscored by photos of Secretary of State Colin Powell at the festival on opening day; descriptions of festival participants as "ambassadors" offering "theory on why U.S.-Pakistani relations have sometimes been strained" (Vasquez 2002:B1); and references to "the troubled state of affairs in much of the Silk Road territory" (Wiltz 2002:C1) and "since Sept. 11 . . . , an interest in the region" (Trescott 2002:C01).

If there was any doubt of the neoimperial gaze in either the orientaling language of providing "glimpses" of hidden places or in the repeated association of the festival with geopolitics, Richard Kennedy, a cocurator of the 2002 festival, more explicitly articulated a triumphalist narrative. Kennedy credited "The modest victories of democracy and capitalism at the end of the second millennium" with permitting "strangers once again to meet along the ancient roads of silk and once again exchange ideas and products" (quoted in Marquis 2002:E3).

According to voice-over narration in the 2002 promotional video, the festival was not only a "national treasure" (a concept held over from the festival's earliest years) but also a "rite of cultural democracy." This characterization, too, harkens to the first decade of the festival, when celebrating cultural equality on the National Mall was meant to underwrite political equality among Americans of all races. In the 2002 video, however, the assertion of the festival as a "rite of cultural democ-

racy” is illustrated not by the visual language of 1960s U.S. civil rights struggles but by an image of Tibetan monks. The image proclaims a newly planetary context for cultural—if not political—democracy. Yet the image is also accompanied by the tune “This Land is Your Land,” leaving little doubt about the self-congratulatory assignment of credit for the American origins of this global mission for exporting cultural democracy. A speech by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton featured in the 2002 video further highlights the role of America as ambassador to the world when she speaks of her enjoyment in witnessing the festival’s recognition of “our folklife and the diversity of the culture that has really made such a difference to our country and to the world.”

If, as a writer for *Destinations* magazine asserted in 1993, “Festival goers find a world in miniature on the National Mall—an international version of the county fair,” perhaps festival visitors came in the 1990s to see the world as their country—a miniature, manageable world (quoted in Kurin 1998:59).

Appalachia, 1976 to 2003

As the context for the production of the festival evolved from Fordist to post-Fordist, from “American Folklife” to “Smithsonian Folklife,” as the “culture” at the festival changed from natural resource to destination, and as the festival’s mission moved from navel-gazing to Other-gazing, the framework for understanding Appalachia also shifted. Whereas under the rubric of the FAF, Appalachia was important for nation as nation, Appalachia at the SFF became even more heavily identified with nation and more important for the way the region allowed visitors to imagine that nation vis-à-vis the world.

As part of the Festival of American Folklife, Appalachia was placed in a position of congruity with other “subaltern” American identities to be cherished, preserved, and acknowledged as belonging to the core of the nation: Native Americans, African Americans, “Old World” immigrants, and blue-collar laborers, among others. Alan Lomax’s inclusion of Appalachia in his 1968 speech about the importance of the festival (quoted in the epigraph above) signals both roles for Appalachia—Appalachia as a distinct minority and Appalachia as significant national figure comparable to but contrasted with the nation’s capital. The dual role for Appalachia is evident when Lomax places the region as an equivalent to “black,” “white,” and the District of Columbia: “Black is beautiful and white is beautiful and Appalachia is beautiful and even old tired Washington sometimes is beautiful” (quoted in Smithsonian Institution 1976:48). At the same time that Appalachia was figured as an internal Other (like “blacks”), the region was also figured as “us,” the authentic core of America’s purportedly Anglo-Saxon roots (“whites”) and institutions (the capital). The latter associations are indicated by the ease with which the purportedly “pioneer” culture of Appalachia fit with the National Park Service director’s 1976 emphasis on celebrating the “homey skills” of the “people who settled a new land” (Everhardt 1976:3).

By contrast, in 2003, Appalachia’s placement was parallel to Scotland and Mali. Rather than equivalent to other subaltern programs like those on Native American

traditions and African American traditions, the Appalachia program now incorporated those groups into the representation of the region itself, with Native Americans and African Americans appearing as minor yet remarkable components of mountain culture. A colonial, pioneer-identified, yet racially integrated Appalachia exquisitely epitomized *both* white and multicultural America. Appalachia went from longtime festival darling to, in 2003, a somewhat taken-for-granted and passé synecdoche for America itself—a bedrock for exploring the scintillating difference of Scotland, Mali, and beyond. As the festival shifted to catalogue and represent the entire world, Appalachia, represented as (white) Americans' ancestral home, continued to be an important piece of the puzzle, a way in which to ground American identity in a global maelstrom. Especially for those Americans uncomfortable with or anxious about post-modernity's mobility and mass culture, Appalachia—the real place and the festival program—seemed like a refuge. The Appalachia program's central placement on the Mall in 2003 helped it serve as sort of a homeplace between Scotland and Mali, a place from which to venture out and a place to regroup, surrounded by "American" sounds and comfort foods (see Figure 1). Even for those visitors undaunted by globe-trotting, Appalachia retained its important role of embodying Americans' collective past.

* * * * *

The Appalachian region has been a perennial favorite at the Festival of American Folklife since its founding in 1967. Coal mining, clogging, ballad singing, stringed instruments, and bluegrass music, all associated with the region, have been featured more years than not under one rubric or another. From at least the "Upland South" portion of the U.S. bicentennial celebration in 1976 through the "Appalachia: Heritage and Harmony" exhibit in 2003, the region's presence at the festival has signaled an enduring and popular assumption of Appalachia's centrality to the foundations of American culture. As a 2003 *Washington Post* article about the festival claimed, Appalachia and Scotland provided "a major wellspring of the American character" and the Scots-Irish in Appalachia "defined our essence as a people for the past 200 years. . . . Shouldn't we maybe say thank you?" (Ringle 2003:C1).

Appalachia's role, then, is to bolster (white) Americans' sense of their history and themselves. This is in keeping with long-standing assumptions of the region as a reservoir for pioneer practices unchanged since the 1776 founding of the nation (Whisnant 1983). Appalachia's first concerted programmed appearance on the National Mall occurred in conjunction with the 1976 Festival of American Folklife's three-month-long U.S. bicentennial celebration. As with all other featured regions and minority groups in 1976, the weeklong "Upland South" program was presented to visitors within a particularly patriotic framing of the festival's mission. The program book included articles with headlines such as "A Bicentennial Commemoration: In Celebration of Our National Heritage," "The Spirit of '76," and "Our 200th Birthday: What We Have to Celebrate." Gary Everhardt, then director of the National Park Service, asserted (with no apparent notice of the festival's Native American programs) that "we celebrate here" the "homely skills" of the people "who settled a new land": "You will find here people who out of their daily toil weave a unique pattern of living

which has become our cherished heritage. Everywhere you look there will be America" (Everhardt 1976:3).

My interviews with festival visitors in 2003 confirmed the continuation of this construction of Appalachia as conserving the nation's pioneer traditions and values. My respondents, like visitors in the Appalachia section overall, were approximately half men and half women, almost all white, predominately well educated, and usually anywhere between twenty-five and sixty-five years of age. Most of my respondents spent approximately one to three hours in the Appalachia program over the course of the two-week festival. Three quarters of my interviewees were living in the Washington, D.C., area at the time of the festival, but only about one in five of them had grown up there. Just two respondents had grown up in southern Appalachia (Satterwhite 2005:330–2).

In an earlier discussion of my findings, I demonstrated that visitors imagined the region as the (white, rural) roots of "real" America, a reservoir of an originary and legitimate American culture. "Folksy"; "traditional"; "canning, food, quilting"; "hand-made stuff, old world skills"; "staunch pioneers"; "backwoods"; "not of this century"; "old ways"; "make soap, gut groundhog"; "homemade clothes"; "don't have a lot of things"; "attached to the land"; "a lack of technology"; and "more folkish" were the key words and phrases in respondents' remarks (Satterwhite 2005). When prompted by the question of how they would describe Appalachia to someone who knew nothing about it, a small minority of visitors mentioned "poverty," "coal mining," or "economically depressed." Perhaps in part because there was little at the festival to evoke—much less explain—these associations of Appalachia with structural inequality, descriptions of the region's economic conditions remained subordinate to mythical images of the region as (precapitalist) folk.

Appalachia's emblematic role as the ongoing reservoir for the nation's history and white visitors' cultural heritage was underscored in 2003 by its depiction in the program book almost exclusively through black-and-white photos (Borden 2003:14–39). (See Figure 2.) With a few colorful exceptions, the vast majority of images in the Appalachia portion of the program book are archival photos from as far back as 1927, including a large number from the 1940s through the 1960s. When a reader turns next to the Mali section of the 2003 festival program book, by contrast, she finds a riot of color (Borden 2003:40–67). Few of the Mali photos are dated, giving the impression of a timeless nation without historical change: each image could as easily be from 1900 as 2003. Moving on to the Scotland section, a reader may notice that it, too, is peppered predominately with color photography largely unaccompanied by dates (Borden 2003:68–93). Viewers may read the photos as highly contemporary because many are promotional scenic photos provided by the tourist agency VisitScotland. Alternatively, viewers may interpret the dateless photos in a similar vein as the Malian photos, as evidence of a rich heritage unbounded by time. However, the inclusion of four "high art" paintings and one print illustration emphasize the modernity of Scotland in contrast to the gritty black-and-white Appalachians or brightly dressed Malians. Appalachia stands out from the others with faded pictures presented as if they might be found in the viewers' own family albums of Americans past.



Figure 2. The preponderance of black-and-white photographic representations of Appalachia served to establish the region as part of a mythical American past, as well as part of white visitors' own ancestral family albums. This photo of the Melton and Russell families posing with homemade instruments on Jacob Rey and May Melton's porch in Galax, Virginia, in 1965 was reproduced on a festival sign and in the 2003 festival program book. (Photo credit: J. Scott Odell Collection of Folk Music, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution.)

Among the visitors I interviewed, desire for non-mass-mediated “lively oral traditions” and “homemade entertainment that’s been lost through generations” was a frequent refrain. Visitors’ idea of Appalachia, they insisted over and over, was that the region embodied “real American culture” and the “roots of the whole culture.” The point of the Appalachian program, they averred, was “To be reeducated into our own roots, who we are, where we came from.” Interviewees described Appalachian people as “solid, good, good people, country folk”; “friendly” yet “fiercely proud”; “fiercely independent” and “self-sufficient”; “real people” full of “simplicity”; “hard-working” and “hardscrabble”; “Christian” and “religious.” While a few visitors mentioned less pastoral aspects of the region, including coal mining and Appalachia’s economic inequality relative to the rest of the United States, these came across as anomalies—perhaps partly because, after all, if the Appalachia that visitors imagined and desired could be preserved or returned to them, industry and money would be superfluous. Visitors envisioned a people “wild and free” yet with a “sense of community” and commitment to family, a people living in a place where “life is a little less encumbered, frantic” and where “they don’t have crowds.” The purpose of the program, according to one respondent, was to “create an environment where we can

pass one another and smile. It's safe. [Appalachians] like to stay conservative, safe." Visitors seemed almost to think of people who lived in Appalachia as the visitors' own alter egos—their very best selves, their root selves—from whom they have strayed but who, at base, they remain: virtuous commoners.

Both eras, then, manifested a kind of rural longing for Appalachia as untainted by modern or postmodern commercial society. But in 2003, Appalachia took on an added meaning of "home." Appalachia as home and nation became a site from which visitors understood *all* Americans as simple pioneers facing a global frontier full of dangers that threaten to victimize a people simply trying to make do and get by. Visitors gravitated to Appalachia as a kind of "home quarters," in the words of one respondent. Visitors unsure of foreign foods or weary of the unfamiliar described Appalachia as "home culture"—as a place for safe eating, as reassuringly familiar, and as deserving of necessary national pride. The most frequent descriptions of Appalachian people that visitors offered were "down to earth" and "down home." Other descriptors emphasized this sense of homeliness (all puns intended), including "homey," "cozy," "neighborly," "simple, family people," "country folk," "salt of the earth," and "sweet and relaxing."

As Raymond Williams might have predicted, then, in 2003 the framing of Appalachia between Scotland and Mali shifted the meaning of the region to stand in for both "home" and "nation." Paradoxically, the nation is also identified as metropolitan in contrast to the simple rural places to be controlled through (neo)imperialism. And indeed, the 2003 program book presented all three featured places—Appalachia, Mali, and Scotland—as pastoral foils for (visitors') metropolitan life, in that Kurin's introduction describes all three as having "rugged natural environment[s]" and as being "relatively sparsely populated compared to nearby population centers" (Kurin 2003:9).

Despite repeated attempts on the part of festival staff and other organizers, the dominant images of Appalachia have remained essentially unchanged romanticizations of rural agrarian culture from the 1960s to the twenty-first century. Commenting on corn culture programming at the 1969 Festival, Judith Martin offered an example of the delight visitors experienced in the presence of Appalachian icons in a modern setting: "It's hard to find something to compare with the sight of a skinny old man, his brightly printed shorts showing above his jeans, making corn liquor on Federal property" (quoted in Kurin 1998:20). More than thirty years later, an online article about the 2003 festival in *National Geographic News* refers to the Appalachia program as focusing on "a back-country region" and featuring "banjo picking," "[h]orseshoes, picking circles, Bluegrass, and railroad ties" (Haerber 2003).

The importance of white rural cultures to the project of imagining Americans as simple and innocent folk reaching out to the world is underscored by the 2002 promotional video's closing song and image. The tune "Will the Circle Be Unbroken"—associated with white country music and with Appalachia in particular through its identification with the Carter Family musical group—plays in the background. The camera pans in on a photo of a white man in overalls posed arm-in-arm with a Middle Eastern musician in native dress. The shift from domestic to international frame for Appalachia allows some Americans to imagine themselves as the put-

upon, good, white, simple folk threatened and victimized by the big bad wider world.

The Question of Agency

Readers of my work often respond by asking to whose agency I attribute the phenomena I describe. If visitors, participants, and journalists reacted to the festival in certain ways, whose responsibility was that? If the festival shifted from the rhetoric of resource to the rhetoric of tourist destination, did organizers resist or promote that shift?

Staff members at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage believe in the festival as “Doing the Public Good” (Small 2003:7). They believe in the power of the festival to challenge misconceptions about cultural groups (misconceptions that can have dangerous and unjust consequences), as when the Silk Road program tried to address fears of Middle Easterners (O’Sullivan 2002:T29). In its opening years, the festival organizers believed passionately in constructing a new and more inclusive sense of who and what counts as “American.” In this sense of expanding audiences’ ways of thinking about group identity and group difference, then, the festival is—or at least attempts to be—antihegemonic. Even when the festival fails to deliver its intended messages to its visitors, some staff members argue, the true value of the festival lies in offering marginalized cultural groups a degree of legitimacy with their national governments. In this way, too, organizers see their purpose as challenging dominant systems of valuation. (For more on the good of the festival from an organizer’s perspective, see “Why We Do the Festival” in Kurin 1998:48–61.)

In another sense, however, festival organizers are so intent on the perpetuation of the festival that they are forced into an opportunism regarding funding that disallows any real or sustained critique of the structures and economies that enable the festival’s existence. Whatever private conversations they may have, CFCH staff members do not publicly engage in debates about the negative effects that may accompany cultural tourism like that promoted by state tourist agencies, such as VisitScotland, or about the structural inequalities embedded into projects and goals undertaken by other sponsors, such as the World Bank, the United Company, ConocoPhillips, or Whole Foods Market. This is not to say that individual organizers do not find cause for concern in a U.S. economic imperialism that allows a cultural imperialism that those organizers, collectively and institutionally, desire to combat. But the festival itself does not comment on dominant economic arrangements, and, in fact, the festival’s existence is dependent upon them. This is particularly true in an era when federal policy is designed to shrink government spending on domestic arts and humanities programs and in which the federal government, given its neoimperialist adventures overseas, is falling ever more deeply into debt. The festival staff is repeatedly forced to accommodate to new funding exigencies. Given such a financial climate, it is little wonder that appeals to nationalism are so pervasive in festival rhetoric. As CFCH Development Officer Cooper reported in an interview on June 19, 2003, she “wrote some of the most red, white, and blue notes I’ve ever seen” to convince companies to support the Appalachia program. “The only thing I didn’t do was whistle Dixie.”

Furthermore, at times the impulse for self-preservation has led the center’s repre-

sentatives to go so far as to disavow the counterhegemonic implications of the festival's goal of cultural inclusiveness. In 1989, for example, CFCH director Kurin distributed a memo to festival staff in which he noted that some citizens had criticized the Cuban presence at the upcoming festival on the grounds that "our government does not recognize theirs" (Kurin 1989). Kurin's memo advised festival staff to respond to such criticism by asserting that "The Festival concerns culture, not politics" (Kurin 1989)—a disingenuous insistence on a separation of culture and politics that is both impossible and in opposition to the stance regularly undertaken by festival organizers to be advocates for the oppressed and undervalued.

I offer these observations to mollify those who ask at whose feet I lay blame or credit for institutional changes or failures. As I stated at the outset, however, I am far more interested in reading the festival as a social text reflective of and constitutive of global socioeconomic realities than I am in assessing individuals' intentions or shortcomings. Because each and every iteration of the festival relies not only upon relatively stable funding for staff lines but also on multiple new sources of funding for specific programming, the festival is little shielded from the larger geopolitical conditions and contexts that it tries to shape.

Conclusion: Appalachia's Status at the Postmodern Festival

Visitors have often seen their participation in the festival as a reaction against commercialism. Festivals have long been one means of satiating desires for stability and a sense of belonging and mutuality beyond the dominant mode of "using and consuming" in a postmodern landscape (Cantwell 1993:102; Williams 1973:298). They offer, in Marilyn Halter's words, "a temporary sense of community that, in an intensive and optional way, gratifies such longings for meaningful interpersonal contact" (2000:13).

The society within which the festival is constructed, however, maintains its pressure. As Halter has observed, festivals, museums, and heritage tours that promote ethnic and cultural heritage "all benefit from a highly evolved consumer society" in which one can claim ethnic identity by becoming a connoisseur of ethnic products, foods, and music (2000:22). The increasing influence and financial support of tourist boards in the production of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival is one indication of the intervention of consumer society. Tourism necessarily commodifies experience yet packages it as if it were unmediated. Ultimately, it is more akin to the dominant mode of using and consuming than it is to experiences of connection and mutuality promoted by the festival proper. Funders' and visitors' use of tourism as a lens for understanding the festival as a destination rather than a conservatory will therefore necessarily shape the cultural work that the festival performs, regardless of the intent of festival organizers.

Most visitors found the Appalachia program lacking in comparison to the Scotland and Mali programs that bookended it. In part, this perception was a result of fundraising failures in the wake of the post-September 11 economy and a transition at the CFCH to a new fundraising officer during the spring before the festival. The Appalachia program had to be scaled back to include what was essentially only musical

and other oral programming and to leave out material culture or other visual artifacts. As a result, the “Heritage and Harmony” program paled in comparison to the crafts and whiskey distilling demonstrations, dramatic performances, fashion displays, the on-site reproductions of traditional Malian homes, the massive Djenné Arch, and a golf course in the Mali and Scotland programs. But the fact that Scottish tourist boards and a Malian government keen on attracting American visitors provided so lavish a representation of those two places meant that it might have been difficult for Appalachian fundraising to keep up in any case. Certainly, the \$200,000 raised in cash and in-kind donations for Appalachia trailed dramatically behind the \$1.1 million and \$1.5 million raised for Scotland and Mali, respectively (as indicated in a June 10, 2003, e-mail titled “Festival \$s for the Press” sent by Kurin to Festival Director Diana Parker).

Beyond the obvious asymmetry in resources for elaborate program production, there are further reasons to speculate that visitors were less enchanted with the Appalachian programming than with the international programming. For one, there was a curious discrepancy between my survey findings in the Appalachia program and those of the CFCH’s festival-wide visitor survey, despite the fact that both I and the CFCH interns would likely have been perceived by visitors as official Smithsonian representatives, given that we all wore Smithsonian photo id badges. My survey included the question, “Which of the three programs interests you most?” Of the visitors with whom I spoke during eighty-two interviews conducted almost exclusively within the Appalachian portion of the festival, 45 percent said they were most interested in the Appalachia program, versus only 20 percent who said they were most interested in Mali. A CFCH-conducted survey of 418 visitors, by contrast, asked which program was the “best” program. Only 16 percent of respondents named Appalachia as the best program; 48 percent named Mali.

I am intrigued by the fact that the results would be so divergent. Is that simply because of the difference in phrasing between a more subjective “interest in” versus a presumably more objective “best” program? Or does it point to segmentation in the festival’s audience that resulted in one subset of visitors’ spending time primarily or only in the Appalachia program? The discrepancy may indicate the existence of a set of American visitors who felt a need for home as safe haven, versus another set of visitors (comprised of native-born Americans, new immigrants, and international visitors) with a more transnational and cosmopolitan identification. Visitors motivated to attend the Appalachia section of the festival found great appeal in it. Some clung to an idea of Appalachia as the internal and originary Other, a place protected from standardization they feared in dominant society. Such visitors complained that “American culture is so generic, like MTV” and suggested that “It’s good to be reminded that there are culture groups and heritage in this country as well.” For them, “Bluegrass is white soul,” which suggests that Appalachianness offers a safely appealing form of ethnic difference that promises just enough “local color” to guard against sameness and conformity. Yet the majority of visitors, perhaps, saw the Appalachia program as the least interesting option and craved the excitement they identified with the foreign.

Three examples demonstrate that by 2003 a shift had taken place from visitors' eager consumption of the exotic *within* the United States (at the FAF) to their eager consumption of the exotic *outside* the United States (at the SFF). The first indication of 2003 festival goers' delight in the international as exotic is that volunteers, including dozens of Peace Corps veterans, flocked to serve in Malian crafts and occupational booths, long before volunteer positions in Scotland and Appalachian programs were filled, according to an interview with Volunteer Coordinator Tasha Coleman (June 16, 2003). A second indication that recent festival goers crave foreign over domestic difference is suggested by a 2002 *New York Times* article on the Silk Road program, which reported that a regular visitor said that the festival "had come a long way from the days when a few tents were declared to be a New Orleans-style Mardi Gras." "This is definitely more exotic," the festival veteran remarked (Marquis 2002:E3).

The third example of visitors' recent desire and demand for international programming is offered by a 2006 online interview and discussion with CFCH director Richard Kurin. On the heels of programs on the Silk Road (2002), Mali (2003), Haiti (2004), and Oman (2005), the 2006 Smithsonian Folklife Festival was slated to feature programs on Native American basketry, African American music, Chicagoan Latino music, and Alberta, Canada. During the discussion, hosted by the *Washington Post* in advance of the festival, potential visitors repeatedly expressed their disappointment to Kurin. One Washington, D.C., resident who regularly attends the festival asked, "With a whole world of cultures to choose from, why select 4 North American subcultures to focus on this year? We use the festival to introduce our kids to unfamiliar cultures . . . so this year's lineup, while certainly worthwhile, is disappointing in its breadth." Another regular festival visitor wrote in to say "I always enjoy the Folklife Festival," but asked "why do most—if not all—exhibits focus on North America? Have we forgotten about other continents? With so little world news reaching a great cross-section of our country . . . it seems unfortunate that the geographic representation is so limited" (Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2006). The trend in visitor desires, especially since the spectacular 2002 Silk Road program, is easy to trace: the more foreign, the better. The colorful flavor of difference had come to reside in the international.

If Appalachia appeared to take a back seat to the overseas exotic in 2003, however, it nonetheless performed a vital function within the new international frame. To recall ideas provided by Raymond Williams, the festival's shifting frame increasingly identified Appalachia as "home" and therefore as somewhat commonplace but full of virtue, a place from which one might strike out upon titillating adventures abroad. This figuration allowed professional, white, middle-class visitors (who from the first decades of the festival's existence were invited to adore "the common man") to entertain the wishful belief that the United States, at base, is wholly identified with its Appalachian "hearth"—imagined as a simple place full of simple people. Visitors could believe that they themselves were simple people—that they, too, were simply another set of villagers encountering strangers on equal footing in a global village. The real danger in Appalachia's emergent function within an international rather than domestic festival frame, then, is that this self-understanding on the part of visitors

has come to permit them to deny the real power and ambition of the United States in the world (Behdad 2003:5).

Notes

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1. Kurin dates “featured country” programs to “Mexican Communities” in 1978. I date them to the 1982 “Korea” program because the latter is the first program whose title ostensibly references only the featured country, rather than its immigrants in the United States as well (although a festival promotional video makes it clear that the Korea program in 1982 was as much about Korean-Americans as it was about Koreans).

2. According to CFCH fundraiser Loretta Cooper, the lack of union funding for the 2003 Appalachia program was logistical rather than ideological. Cooper began working for the CFCH in March 2003, just months before the opening of the festival. She reported in a June 19, 2003, interview that “the UMW [United Mine Workers] would have [donated] if asked earlier. That was our error, with me not being here.” Cooper left the CFCH in 2006 (*Talk Story* 2006).

3. This information was gleaned by comparing the sponsors listed on the CFCH Web site (<http://www.folklife.si.edu/center/festival.html>) with other materials (*Columbia University Record* 1995; *The History Makers* 2006; *KRT Wire* 2006; *National Minority Supplier Development Council* 2003; *PromoCapital* 2006; *Strategis* 2006).

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