June 24, 1993, Los Angeles

Dear CSMT/SCM members,

This is being written as a "real" letter, in pen and ink, sitting outside at "City Bean Coffee", near UCLA. Canada was quite well represented at the "Ballads and Boundaries" Conference, The 23rd International Ballad Conference of the Commission für Volksdichtung.

Neil Rosenberg was on the "Boundaries of Performance" round table panel; Joseph Bonelli of Winnipeg kicked off about ballads, print culture and reality; Henning Meinke and Jimmy Quigley discussed Irish ballads published in Newfoundland; I gave a paper on ballads: "Romancing the Romance". Neil and I (also the reception) joined the evening music session on mandolin and f segmented respectively.

I was also a featured concert performer, with a 32-minute round-the-world ballad tour (Spain, Ireland, France, Canada, Yugoslavia + some and even songs in English).

The meeting was moderated "Narrative Singing in an Intercultural Context" and, though the Anglo-American/European influence was very strong, we learned a good deal about the corrido and Mexican-American culture, as well as about other national traditions of humanity, the Far East, the Philippines, Germany, India, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Portugal, Albania, and Yugoslav areas (guess who?).
... Boundaries the paper was on... the alliterative conference title. show up everywhere...in talks...in songs...in jokes...closing boundaries...negotiating boundaries...reinforcing negative boundaries...I began to feel...allergic to the term...It was Neil who proposed...at some point...talking about..."intersections"...While we were all very eager to discuss all the above boundary-related activities...it remained to be seen how attacker Leon's plea/challenge will be taken up...CST members would find the element that there wasn't enough music at the conference familiar...It's true that the papers could have used more...memorable exceptions included the...Douglas' Marvel and the story to illustrate...the paper...Spino-Shin's Albina video...only the...Diana Dwyer's memorable "4 ideas + a sketch"...but an elegant noting...because...the American...failed...to the disclosure...that the...author...had never actually heard it sung.

Meanwhile...I'm back in LA with my 9-year-old daughter...tonight is Sikh day...I'm sort of quietly contemplating a musical...oratorio...of Disneyland...but...don't know...if the boundary between me...my own popular culture is one...I can manage to traverse...

Have a good summer...and please write!!!

Judith Cohen