

The EthnoFolk Letters 8

April 19, 1995
Toronto, Ontario

Dear EthnoFolk,

Listening to the 6:00 am news, I hear that Canadian patrol boats are heading back to Newfoundland. And unlikely as it may seem, there go my summer gigs.

So, why are my summer gigs linked to the "fish wars"? Well, most of you know I've been doing a lot of fieldwork, lecturing, and performing in Spain the past few years. And, in fact, a good deal of it has been in Galicia. Some even in Vigo, the site of the *cantigas d'amigo*, twelfth-century love songs in a woman's voice (with nary a mention of turbot). As soon as the turbot trouble began, I had a concert in Ottawa cancelled -- it was to have been hosted by the Spanish ambassador, at a dinner for Mediterranean ambassadors. The concert was off, then on, then off again rather dramatically: having just checked with the Embassy that it was still on, I was boarding the bus to Ottawa with all my instruments when my name was paged and the woman at the information desk told me they had just called to cancel it!

Meanwhile, I almost never go to Newfoundland. But that same week found me being interviewed for a position in St. John's. It felt somewhat odd to show the faculty videotapes of my fieldwork in Galicia and then send postcards to friends in Vigo, marking a neat x in the spot where the Spanish boat had been tied up. One of my friends in Galicia is from the same town as the Spanish captain's wife and his father is one of the Galician fishermen who will be affected....

The first time I went to Galicia was over twenty years ago. At that time I recorded several songs from fishermen's wives who were mending nets in the village of Malpica. One of the songs began, "*Eu o Canadá...*"; it was explained to me that it was about the men going off to fish.... So, without any historical or political comment, here's the song.

Yours,
Judith Cohen

June PS: I waited around to mail this to George and John because I couldn't get all the words off the tape, and knew two friends were arriving from Galicia. Now that they've been and gone, and have helped with the hard bit, here it is.

PPS: Peter Narváez read a paper at the Folklore Studies Association of Canada / Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore meeting this June, entitled "'Jig One on the Sly': Vernacular Song Responses to the to the Atlantic Fisheries Crisis / La Chanson populaire dans le contexte de la crise de la pêche dans l'atlantique." There's an abstract in the FSAC/ACEF *Bulletin* 19.1-2 (May 1995). The paper was based upon interviews with songmakers and some twenty song texts.