

August, 1990

THE BURNING OF EL KOO-KOO-EE

As you know, El Coco is the bogeyman of childhood cuentos. As a child I was often warned about El Koo-koo-ee (spelled here phonetically.) "Te va 'garar el Koo-koo-ee" were frightening words when we were small and getting into trouble. Or when we were growing up and staying out too late. El Koo-koo-ee also has a well known counterpart, La Llorona. Together they were fear instilling figures from stories and night cuentos. Our elders used these figures to teach us the correct way of behaving.

Every once in awhile the figure of the Koo-koo-ee gets too heavy to bear, fears become real, and it is time to have a fiesta and get rid of Koo-koo-ee fears, whatever they may be.

I propose to the artistas of Albuquerque that we have an annual Koo-koo-ee fiesta where we construct a giant figure of El Koo-koo-ee, an effigy of our own personal and communal fears, and burn it at dusk. The burning of such an effigy figure which symbolizes ones fears is a very universal phenomenon, and because El Coco/ El Koo-koo-ee is part of the mythos of our culture this bulto of fears speaks to us in a very direct way. Here is the bogeyman of our cuentos, the warning of our parents. El Koo-koo-ee is tied to our culture, our cuentos, our history on the Rio Grande. When one can focus on one's fears, one can also cleanse oneself of those fears. The viejitos knew what they were doing when they told us to beware of El Koo-koo-ee.

As artistas de Albuquerque this project would bring us together every September to construct the Koo-koo-ee effigy. I propose we burn it October 5 or 6 in a park or open space in one of the Albuquerque barrios. Autumn is a good time to burn the Koo-koo-ee fears that have built up over the year. If the harvest is good, it is a good time to celebrate and think positively of the future. It is a good time to begin to tell the stories of our culture so the children will not forget the legends and cuentos of our ancestors. It is a good time to face the winter cleansed of old Koo-koo-ee fears.

Our first meeting will take place at the studio of Francisco Le Febre, 1523 7 th St NW (corner of 7th and Bellamah NW) at 7pm on August 16, 1990. Please call Francisco at 247-1524 if you have questions or me at 898-2207. We need Albuquerque artistas' ideas on this project.

Rudolfo A. Anaya

