

THE COYOTE CYCLE

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SEVEN PLAYS BY

MURRAY MEDNICK

THE COYOTE CYCLE

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First Edition

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I: POINTING



Margaret Von Biesen

"Woodchucks fuckin' in the trees." Darrell Larson as COYOTE in *Pointing*.



James Margullo

TRICKSTER (Norbert Weisser) explodes from the earth on his entrance in *Pointing*.

THE SCENE: A clearing in the woods at dusk. It is quiet for awhile, then COYOTE falls from the tree cover above. He is wearing a black leather jacket, a tee-shirt with the figure of a hand on it, jeans, sneakers; carries a silver arrow on his back, assorted "weapons" and an inflated bear-bladder on his hip. He announces:

COYOTE: Coyote was sent by Earthmaker on a mission, which is to destroy the evil spirits afflicting mankind! *(Pauses, makes a spiraling movement)* To make the waterfall come to Earth. *(Pause)* He bounced around, doing the best he could. Most of the time he forgot. He made a lot of dumb mistakes. He's not good, and he's not bad — but he's tricky. *(Stops, listens; with an obeisant gesture to the sky)* You have to climb high into the mountains, way above the snow line! *(Seems to hear something, freezes; listens hard, points.)* THERE! *(Drops the point, but remains extremely alert, as HARE.)* Coyote is an Outlaw, a Wanted Man... *(Forgets HARE and points with formidable power in the other three directions.)* THERE! THERE! THERE!

(TRICKSTER explodes out of the ground with a mournful cry. He is dressed neatly in a suit but is mud-encrusted and bone-weary. COYOTE circles him in amazement.)

COYOTE: Are you a human being?

TRICKSTER: *(As though blinded)* Is my body attached? Is my body attached? Is my body...? Can you see it?

COYOTE: A muddy man! A mental man!

TRICKSTER: *(Opening his eyes)* I was in a place where the beings had only heads! I had to go deep into the earth to get my body back! Deep down into the ground. And keep my eyes closed and not look around! I had to get my body back!

COYOTE: What did you see down there?

TRICKSTER: I kept my eyes closed.

COYOTE: Right! Did you feel anything?

TRICKSTER: Going down, I didn't have no body. Coming back, I grew bones and meat stuck to them. My skin tightened on the heart. I could feel the nerves, taste the blood, sense the pulse. (*Stops, convulses*) I have my body! (*Rhythmically jerks and stomps.*)

COYOTE: (*Referring to the ground*) Don't scratch it!

TRICKSTER: I have my body!

COYOTE: Don't scratch it! Leave it alone!

TRICKSTER: My bones rattle when I dance! My bones rattle when I dance! My heart has a skin! I —

COYOTE: (*Pointing*) There! (*TRICKSTER, shocked out of his dance, assumes his protective posture and grunts; COYOTE struts; TRICKSTER looks up into the tree with some bemusement.*)

TRICKSTER: Did you break any bones?

COYOTE: No.

TRICKSTER: That was quite an interesting fall.

COYOTE: You could see that?

TRICKSTER: I could hear it. It was like the thunder.

COYOTE: It was from another world! Way above the snow line! Coyote returns from the upper world by sliding down the spider web!

TRICKSTER: (*Looking up at the net in the tree.*) Is that what that is, a spider web?

COYOTE: No. It's twine netting.

TRICKSTER: (*Recovering*) This is a nice spot. I'm glad I came up here.

COYOTE: It's right along the trail. People ride by on melancholy horses. (*Musing*) Melancholy horses....

TRICKSTER: What did you see up there?

COYOTE: (*Pretending*) Where?

TRICKSTER: In the upper world.

COYOTE: Woodchucks fuckin' in the trees.

TRICKSTER: Outasight. Woodchucks fuckin' in the trees. Outasight.

COYOTE: Yeah. (*Pause*) Where'd you come from? Originally, I mean.

TRICKSTER: (*Pointing*) THERE! (*COYOTE is startled but takes his protective posture. TRICKSTER smiles, dropping the point; looks up into the tree.*) That was some fall. My father fell out of a tree when he was a kid. Hasn't been the same since. At least, that's the story. I— (*COYOTE points*)

COYOTE: There! I feel strong! I feel strong enough to go on the warpath!

TRICKSTER: (*Recovering*) Who are you mad at?

COYOTE: You don't have to be mad to go on the warpath. You just go on the warpath. You don't need to make any excuses.

TRICKSTER: (*Offering his hand*) My name's Smith.

COYOTE: Brown. What's your personal history? Tell me about yourself.

TRICKSTER: I have no personal history. I've given it up.

COYOTE: You got any spare change? (*TRICKSTER rummages, produces coins.*) Thank you. What do you do for a living?

TRICKSTER: I hunt. I stalk. I track people down.

COYOTE: You hunt people?

TRICKSTER: I always get my man.

(COYOTE makes a big show of berating and destroying one of his weapons.)

COYOTE: WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU ARE A USELESS BURDEN! I AM TIRED OF CARRYING YOU AROUND ALL THE TIME! TAKE A HIKE! Etc. *(Throws the broken weapon away. To TRICKSTER:)* You'll never get Coyote! *(Crosses to TRICKSTER'S hole.)* Tell me what's down there.

TRICKSTER: Where?

COYOTE: *(Pointing down into the hole)* In the lower world.

TRICKSTER: It's kinda sandy. Hot. *(He moves away, avoiding the hole.)* I don't know. My eyes were closed... *(He is snapped about as if by a force in the hole.)* Hot! Savage hatred! Anger! Vengefulness! Helpless... *(Pulled by his navel toward the hole)* I saw tracks. Man tracks. I was coming from a place where the beings had only heads. A voice said: "See, foot markings. Not the bear, not the wolf. Where have they come from? Where are they going? See if you can follow." I put my face in the dust and closed my eyes. I felt unarmed. I was vulnerable. I thought, "Who is this man? Where is he leading me?" But I followed the tracks. I am a hunter. I was compelled. It was my fate. *(Falls to his knees above the hole)* I went down, down. I came to a lake. There, on the other side of the lake, was the man, standing on a buffalo head, pointing at me! The buffalo head was shining white, white as the salt flat, hot white! The man was pointing at me! I looked up: it was the roof of a cave, sky-blue! "DON'T KILL ME!" the man shouted...!

COYOTE: *(Pointing)* There! *(TRICKSTER leaps to his feet, taking his protective posture.)* When Coyote goes on the warpath, he goes alone! *(Makes a big commotion while destroying another weapon.)* Here's another one! He's very sensitive! He's very emotional! He's insulted! I'm tired of it! Take a hike! Etc.

TRICKSTER: I don't see how anybody can go on the warpath and be as dumb as you are.

COYOTE: I don't need it. It's just clutter. Useless clutter. That stuff just gets in the way, drags me down. I don't need no weapons! When you go on the warpath, you go on the warpath! It's clean! *(Waves a hand at TRICKSTER, who takes a step back and sizes him up.)*

TRICKSTER: Can you do anything well?

COYOTE: I know plants. I'm a master of plant life. (*Blurting*) I got things planted around here.

TRICKSTER: (*Sly*) What kind of things?

COYOTE: (*Offhand*) Things to remind me. Mementoes. Plants are voices, messengers to Coyote. They tell him where he is, which way he's going, what's behind him. (*Finds a solitary cactus*) This plant here calls to me. He has something to say to me. (*Assumes a listening posture*) Yes, little brother?

(*TRICKSTER finds a stump or rock to sit on upstage and becomes the "voice" of the plant.*)

TRICKSTER: Don't listen to me, Coyote. My tale is a sad one, a story that kills.

COYOTE: Coyote always wakes up again.

TRICKSTER: It is killing to the spirit.

COYOTE: The spirit of Coyote is as unquenchable as the waterfall! He is not afraid! (*For a moment TRICKSTER becomes OWL, causing COYOTE to become a frightened HARE.*)

TRICKSTER: The Owl never sleeps.

COYOTE: Is that your animal? The Owl?

TRICKSTER: When the Owl is heard, someone dies.

COYOTE: Coyote can't die!

TRICKSTER: I'll tell you a thing or two, but try not to listen.

COYOTE: Coyote can eat it!

TRICKSTER: My nature is sorrowful. My great Mother weeps, and no one hears. The stars see her distress, but they cannot help her. They are too far away. My Mother's hair is torn from her head by the roots. She has steeped her eyes in burning ashes. Her body is

swollen, her blood has turned sour. Sharp edges are in her genitals, her breasts bleed, her womb is collapsed.

COYOTE: What have they done!

TRICKSTER: The Sun takes pity on her, the Moon wobbles in its grief. My Mother's anger is a terrible thing! She longs to tremble, she longs to defecate, she wishes to vomit! She wants to purify herself. But out of compassion, she refrains. Out of charity, she remains still. Out of love, she accomodates herself.

COYOTE: (*Going berserk*) Those assholes! They've pissed on my mother! They've shit in her face! They've poured acid into her liver! They've dumped garbage into her stomach! They've poured filth into her veins, dust into her lungs, disease into the marrow of her bones! Those assholes! Treacherous maniacs! Rip-off artists! Hustlers! Ingrates! Stinking animals! Insensitive beasts! Blind! Selfish! Ferocious dogs! Stupid! Slavish! Ugly, heartless assholes! I'll destroy them all!

TRICKSTER: (*Pointing*) There!

COYOTE: My God! I've fallen into my own shit! I didn't mean that! (*Walks away. TRICKSTER approaches the Audience.*)

TRICKSTER: I'm a traveling man. I'm a hunter, a stalker, a spy. I've seen that there's no escape. We're in the soup. My stomach is full of bad songs. (*Starts away, then turns suddenly with the aspect of an angry old man*) Revenge! Revenge for the torture! Revenge on the grabbers! Revenge on the know-it-alls! The smug! Those smegma heads! (*COYOTE rushes downstage to re-capture the Audience's attention.*)

COYOTE: I'll tell a Coyote tale!

TRICKSTER: (*Menacing*) Watch out for the Owl, Coyote! Watch out for the Crow! (*Flaps his wings, caws, and retires upstage. COYOTE ignores him.*)

COYOTE: One morning Coyote woke up and his blanket was gone. Then he looked into the sky and he saw a banner in the sky. He said, "Oh boy, must be feast day! They only fly a banner when it's feast

day!" So he jumped to his feet. And it was then he realized that it wasn't a banner at all: it was his blanket on the end of his penis! So he said to his penis, "Little brother, if you keep this up we'll lose the blanket!" And he rolled his penis up and put it in a box on his back and he folded up his blanket and he went along. And he came to the shore of a lake. And there on the other side of the lake were *women...* swimming! And one of the women was the Chief's daughter. Coyote said, "Now is the opportune time. I will have intercourse!" So he sent his penis across the lake, but as it went it hit the top of the water and made waves! So he reeled it back in, and he said, "No, no little brother! If you do it like that, you will scare them!" And he took a fine rock and he put the rock on the end of his penis and he sent the penis across the lake. But the rock was too heavy, and his penis hit the bottom of the lake! So, he brought the penis back again and he took that rock off and put another rock on and this rock was just right. And he sent his penis across the lake and it went so fast that it hit some of the women and upset them. So they swam for the shore, but the Chief's daughter was too slow and the penis went right in her! Now all the women were frightened and ran to get the men! Who are strong! But they couldn't get the penis out! They had to find the Old Woman who knew what to do in matters of this kind. And she came and recognized Coyote right away. She yelled across the lake, "First-born, come out of there!" But of course, he wouldn't! They had to hire a Chipmunk to come and take care of it. The Chipmunk went right in there and chewed the penis into little pieces. And Coyote came across the lake and he gathered up all the pieces and he went running through the forest throwing the pieces around and wherever they landed was food! One piece was potato and one piece was artichoke and one piece was sharp-claw berry and one piece was rice... And that is why our penis is shaped the way it is!

TRICKSTER: (*Dryly*) Where were you in '68? (*He musically supports COYOTE'S ensuing riff by joining him on the phrases in caps.*)

COYOTE: Traveling. I was sitting by the waterfall trying to describe the waterfall it was the most lovely waterfall trying to get a grip on things describe the waterfall in my notebook on the bridge only goddamn it I have lost my right hand I HAVE LOST MY RIGHT HAND trying to describe the waterfall as it goes MY RIGHT HAND in the current my head sucking air UP UP How did I get into the

water I was sitting on the bridge with my notebook in my LEFT hand as it goes into the water cool and strong flows past WHERE IS MY RIGHT HAND courses through me I mean actually courses through me THE ROCKS watch out for the rocks goddamn it But I have got my head up I have got my head up Watch out for the rocks MY RIGHT HAND the water is COLD it has got COLD under the bridge deep green cold fast nobody knows where it goes how deep goddamn it MY RIGHT HAND Has God got my RIGHT HAND Has God got my right hand Who is God that he should have my right hand when I am alone in the river Give me my right hand back God there is no God there is no right hand but I need my right hand my LEFT hand is busy keeping me in the water How did I get into the water How could I go into the water without my right hand trying to describe the waterfall the SPEED of it no that is not true that is not an accurate description of the waterfall see the waterfall has no TIME in it the waterfall has no TIME in it and I must be STILL therefore I must be still If I am still I will get my right hand back No no that is not the reason I must be still my LEFT hand is busy too busy to describe the waterfall trying to get a grip on a ROCK grab onto a ROCK if I am still I will SINK no no that is not the reason The water is moving me I am being moved in the water that is not true either There is no MOTION in the water There is no MOTION in the water That would not be an accurate description of the waterfall to say something about the waterfall with my RIGHT HAND while the LEFT hand is keeping me up in the water busy keeping me up in the water then the RIGHT HAND—

(He stops, staring at his right hand. TRICKSTER points.)

TRICKSTER: There! *(COYOTE takes his protective posture.)*

COYOTE: I heard that! I have heard myself! Why have I done this? I have made myself suffer! *(To Audience)* I know—Coyote's RIGHT hand fought his LEFT hand for the buffalo meat... *(He retires, pondering, as TRICKSTER approaches the Audience.)*

TRICKSTER: Here's a Trickster story! A long, long time ago, way before people painted their lives onto cave walls, Earthmaker had made earth "just so." People had nothing to worry about. Earthmaker took care of everything. In the morning you opened your window and there was breakfast, already made. In the afternoon, there was lunch, and in the evening, dinner. Everything

was "just so." There was no pain, no suffering. Everyone smiled and was happy. Everyone, that is, except Coyote/Trickster. He was BORED. He walked around with a sour face all the time. One day, when he couldn't stand it anymore, he stopped everything and everybody and screamed, "Why are you so happy? Why do you walk around with those bovine, stupid grins on your faces? What is there to smile about? Nothing, NOTHING is happening!" "What do you mean nothing is happening?," the people said, "Nothing needs to happen. Everything is JUST SO." Coyote/Trickster looked up at Earthmaker and howled, "Ahhooooo." "What would you like to happen?" the people asked him. He paused, thought a little, and then answered: "I know. What we need here is Death." "Death? What do you mean, Death?" the people said. "I mean Death. The end. Over and out. You put a limit on life and perhaps you assholes start paying some attention to living. Put some meaning into the middle. Stop that stupid grinning." People shrugged their shoulders and went on with their lives, happily smiling as always and soon they'd forgotten the whole thing. Except for Earthmaker who never forgets. A few days or years later, there was a footrace and everyone was in it, including Coyote/Trickster's oldest son, who was one of the fastest runners. And he was running and running and passing people and he was just about to win when BAMM he stepped on a rattlesnake and keeled over and stopped breathing. This had never happened before, so people told him to get up and run. But he wouldn't. So they called Coyote/Trickster and he came and shook him and shook him and said, "Wake up oldest son of mine. This is no time to sleep. This is a time to run and win and bring honor to your family." But he wouldn't wake up or start breathing. It was then that Coyote/Trickster remembered his outburst from before. So he looked up at Earthmaker and shouted, "Earthmaker, what I said a while back was a joke! I didn't mean a word I said! I was joking! So you just wake my oldest son up and make him breathe again! That way he can win the race and bring honor to his family and we forget the whole thing! What do you say, Earthmaker?... Earthmaker? (*Long Silence. TRICKSTER howls. Pause.*) And since that time there has been Death on Earth.

(*COYOTE rushes over to show the bag he's been wearing.*)

COYOTE: Hoho! You know what this is?

TRICKSTER: No, what is it?

COYOTE: It's a bear bladder. Can you imagine that? When the bear takes a leak, he takes a leak! The bear can out-piss the Coyote any day of the week!

TRICKSTER: What you got in there? You carrying bear piss around with you in there?

COYOTE: You wanna look inside?

TRICKSTER: No.

COYOTE: What I have in here is tiny little children.

TRICKSTER: Oh?

COYOTE: Right.

TRICKSTER: Who are they?

COYOTE: The sons and daughters of my brothers and sisters. My brother the Silver Fox, my sister the Chipmunk, my sister the Antelope, my nephew the White Buffalo, my brother the Sphinx, my —

TRICKSTER: How many of them are there?

COYOTE: A couple hundred...

TRICKSTER: What are you doing with them?

COYOTE: If I ever get stuck somewhere with no food, I can eat them.

TRICKSTER: Wily of you.

COYOTE: Right.

TRICKSTER: Show me one.

(COYOTE reaches into the bladder and produces an invisible child.)

COYOTE: You can't see them. They're quite small, and they're not

made of flesh, they're made of power. (*TRICKSTER reacts.*) I suppose you can hardly wait to taste one. (*COYOTE puts the child back into the bladder.*) Well, you can't have any.

TRICKSTER: Why not?

COYOTE: Your stomach is full of bad songs... (*Wanders away... to himself*) Yesterday I saw smoke... Outside Alamagordo... I had to lead a whole bunch of people back through a hole in the sky... (*Jerks and trembles like a dog*) I have to lie down and rest now.

(*COYOTE lies down, cradling the bladder, places his silver arrow so that it points out from his anus. He closes his eyes and appears to be asleep. TRICKSTER observes him and then advances.*)

COYOTE: (*Continuing*) Stay back! This spot is guarded. We've got you covered! My little brother, the asshole is on the case! He is the toughest cop this side of the Rocky Mountains! One false move and you're in the shit! (*TRICKSTER stops in his tracks. Considers.*)

TRICKSTER: You know, Coyote, I'm hip to where your honey spots are.

COYOTE: Honey spots?

TRICKSTER: You know what I'm talkin' about. I know where each of them spots is.

COYOTE: No you don't. Your sense of smell is dead. Your sense of place is dead. You can't tell one spot from another.

(*While COYOTE suffers, TRICKSTER digs up, one by one, a series of five small figurines buried in the ground, each revelation accompanied by a specific, appropriate, gesture and sound.*)

TRICKSTER: They don't call me Trickster for nothing. See, I watched where you buried your goods. (*Tears come to COYOTE'S eyes.*) I am a bounty hunter. I work on a piece basis. And I always get my man.

(*COYOTE jumps to his feet and angrily breaks his arrow.*)

COYOTE: Useless! Useless suffering!

(TRICKSTER approaches him holding the figurines.)

TRICKSTER: These are your honey spots. These are the moments of your buried love. Here are the moments of passion, of sweet affection, of tenderness. Here is the blood, the pulse, the nerves of the body, the sex. Here are the deep feelings — joy and pain. The face of the beloved, the voice of the beloved, the beloved as she comes to you, as she opens her arms to you. The kiss of the beloved. Here is your grief at separation. Here also is your fear, your jealousy, your greed to possess.

COYOTE: You thief! You voyeur! You lousy spy! Why don't we stop fucking around and prepare for battle? Coyote and Trickster, one on one!

TRICKSTER: I don't want to fight, I want to eat. I've become a human being. I'm a person now, and I have to learn how to eat.

COYOTE: Can you eat the food that is prepared for you, Trickster? Look what you have in your hands already. Can you eat? Do you have the stomach? Can you bear it? This is powerful food you got there in your hands, very special stuff, stuff of the spirit.

(TRICKSTER cautiously sniffs, then touches the dolls with his lips.)

TRICKSTER: They're made of straw.

COYOTE: You must know how to eat them. Are you a human being?

(TRICKSTER licks them, tries to take a bite.)

COYOTE: Hoho! You want to know what those things are? You know what those are? Ha! When the chipmunk bit off my penis, he buried the pieces here on this spot! You've just been eating my dick! Hoho!

(TRICKSTER flings the figurines away.)

TRICKSTER: To death, Coyote!

COYOTE: Coyote cannot die!

(TRICKSTER becomes CROW. COYOTE points when the CROW loses

power. COYOTE finds a spot and becomes BLUE JAY. TRICKSTER points when the BLUE JAY falters.)

TRICKSTER: I'll bring it into your feet! Into the groin! The bowels!
The lungs! The head! I'll stalk you to death!

COYOTE: Coyote is immortal! His home is in the upper world, while
Trickster wanders forever in the earth!

*(TRICKSTER finds a spot and becomes OWL. COYOTE points when the
OWL wavers.)*

TRICKSTER: No! Not forever!

COYOTE: Forever, Trickster! As long as Earth lives, Trickster lives!

*(COYOTE becomes COYOTE. TRICKSTER points. The battle is over.
COYOTE takes his posture which he holds until his final speech.)*

TRICKSTER: No! I want to get out of my body! I want to go back to
the place where the beings have only heads! I don't want to be flesh.
I want to be a clean white bone sticking out of the ground! I want
to be a line! I want to be a sign, a scrawl, a circle on a rock! I want
to be a rock!

COYOTE: You have to get way above the snow line... on the
mountain peak. In the sky. Way above the snow line...

(TRICKSTER is trying to crawl back into the earth.)

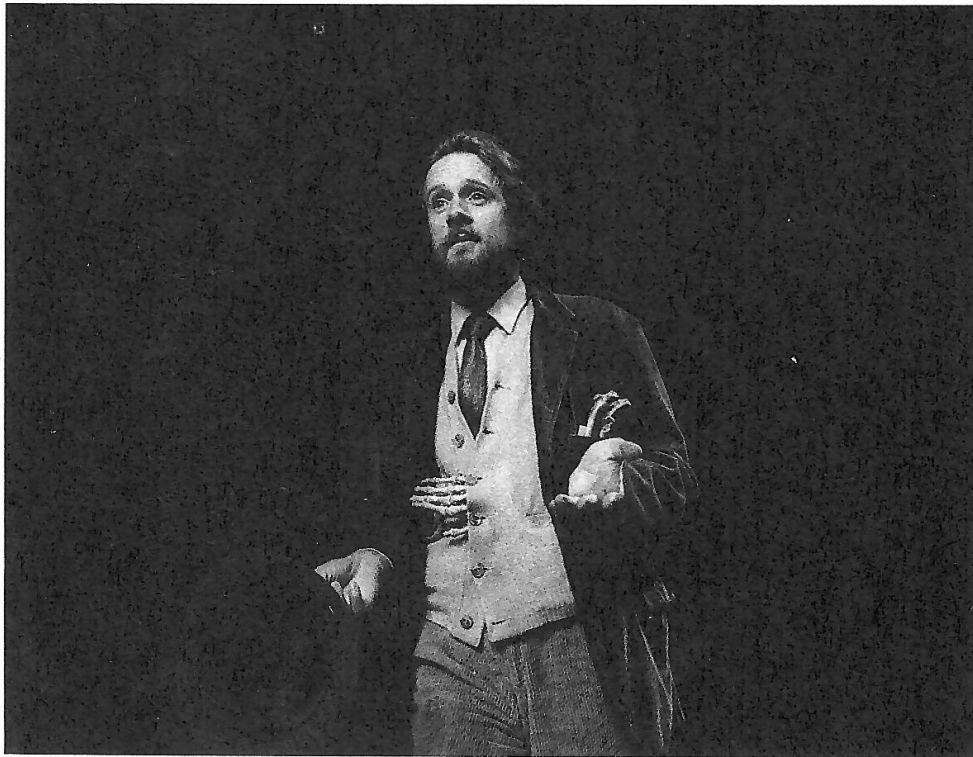
TRICKSTER: I want to go down! I want to go down into the earth!
Into the ground! Down into the center of the earth!

(COYOTE gently retrains him in the darkening twilight.)

COYOTE: No Trickster. Stay. It's all right. Listen. It's quiet. Look,
all around us it is beautiful. Look, we're here — in the middle.
(Gestures.) The waterfall comes to earth. It's all right.

*(He makes the spiraling movement... Then they disappear— COYOTE back
up the tree, TRICKSTER into the earth.)*

END



Norbert Weisser as TRICKSTER in *Pointing*.