

A Thief of Time Tour by Ginny Wheeler

Theme: How does the landscape inform art and literature?

Hillerman: *An author knows his landscape best; he can stand around, smell the wind, get a feel for his place.*



Disconsolate Ghost Richard Hozchuh

- **How is Leaphorn like this ghost who can't be consoled?**
- **How do elements in this picture enhance the ghost-like atmosphere?**

QUOTES:

Leaphorn kayaking down the river: *As he rested with his arms relaxed, he became the stick figure ... bent over the paddle, pulling his weight against the water, he was Kokopelli, with his hunched back full of sorrows.*

Emma's ghost: *Leaphorn's career had made him immune to the chindi of the dead, immune through indifference to all but one of them.*

- **Leaphorn remembering:** *Emma's absence always intruded. When he raised his eyes, he saw the Gorman print she'd hung over the fireplace. They'd argued about it. She liked it, he didn't. The words would sound in his ears again. And Emma's laughter. It was the same everywhere he looked. He should sell that house, or burn it. It was in the tradition of the Dineh. (dih NAY) Abandon the house contaminated by the dead, lest the ghost sickness infect you, and you died. ... the Navajo Way.*

Key Points:

- Kokopelli: fertility god, trickster, Watersprinkler, healer
- Chindi: the ghosts of the dead who leaves the body with the last breath; it is everything bad about the person, everything that the person couldn't bring into harmony. People are buried outdoors so the chindi can disperse.
- The landscape exudes ghostly and mysterious elements dating back to the beginning of the Pueblo people.

Alternate object for introduction:



Worm, Kiki Smith, 1954

- Look at the relationships among the elements in this picture. How might they relate to the ideas in Hillerman's book?

QUOTES:

Leaphorn kayaking down the river: *As he rested with his arms relaxed, he became the stick figure ... bent over the paddle, pulling his weight against the water, he was Kokopelli, with his hunched back full of sorrows.*

Emma's ghost: *Leaphorn's career had made him immune to the chindi of the dead, immune through indifference to all but one of them.*

Key Points:

- Fetal position - death and birth
- Hozro - Everything in the universe is connected; harmony and balance created beauty
- Emma or Ellie near death; Leaphorn's grief as he remembers Emma
- Worm suggests the natural world order; with death comes life
- Stars in the sky referenced many times; Anasazi's reliance on the stars
- Strings - the frogs tied together
- Flowers - Chee's Blessing Way is a celebration of life



Black Place I, Georgia O'Keeffe , 1945

It has been described as a mile of elephants, a remote planet, the backs of whales, the Museland of Georgia O'Keeffe, mysterious. O'Keeffe called it *The Far Away*.

- **O'Keeffe calls this place The Black Place. What does that suggest to you?**
- **All of the main characters in this story experience a black place. What are those losses each experiences? (Leaphorn, Chee, Houk, Elliot)**
- **How does O'Keeffe show life in this work? (Each of the characters will experience death and life or rebirth. Perhaps this Museland was that which gave O'Keeffe life - or even a re-birth after leaving NY.)**

Nakai's Sermon: *Everybody here remembers somebody dying. And then there's the four days when you don't do nothing but remember. And nobody speaks the name of the dead...Because there's nothing left of them but the Chindi, that ghost that is everything that was bad about them and nothing that was good. ... We learn this story about how Monster Slayer corners Death in his pit house. But he lets Death live. Because without death there wouldn't be enough room for the babies, for young people.*

Key Points:

- Bisti Badlands in NW New Mexico - O'Keeffe's museland
- Today - rich in natural gas
- Also called the Checkerboard as the land is a checkerboard of tribal, federal and state land.
- Grey-black is the iron and manganese in the ash; white are ancient riverbeds
- Photographer Walter Nelson: "It's very mysterious. It kind of puts you in awe." Nelson is trying to have part of this area protected from drilling and fracking.
- Photographer Walter Nelson at the Black Place, Bisti Badlands in the San Juan basin, gas plant in background
Black Place II at the Met
- Checkerboard: Federal land, state land, reservation - - plus mineral rights.
- A mythic element: With death comes life.



**Bisti Badlands at O’Keeffe’s Black Place
Gas plant in the background**



The Destroyer, Arthur Wesley Dow, 1911-1913

- Dow called his painting *The Destroyer*. What is the destroyer? Notice how the artist distorts perspective with the river.
- Both O’Keeffe and Dow gave their paintings titles that suggest something ark and even sinister; yet, both pictures evoke the opposite. Looking at these pictures, how does each artist evoke life?

QUOTE:

Chee describes Nakai as part of the landscape: *Behind Nakai the sunset had darkened from glowing pale **copper** to dark **copper**... Nakai was looking down the trail, westward. Chee studied his face. The copper light gave it the look of sculpture. Metal. But Nakai wasn’t metal. He was worried.*

Key Points:

- The land has mica from minerals in it. That determines the color of the rocks and the clay that the Anasazi made pots out of. Look at the various colors among the three paintings.
- O’Keeffe’s teacher. The student surpassed the teacher. O’Keeffe took abstraction to new heights and in new directions.
- Studied in Paris, influenced by Hokusai prints as assistant curator of Japanese arts at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Dow merged 9C landscape painting with Japanese style of abstraction.
- Grand Canyon
- **Dow:** I hoped to give the sense of the vastness--the immense scale of everything there.



Canyon de Chelly in the evening



Canyon Portal, Edgar Payne, 1935

- **Besides the mystery of Ellie's disappearance and the Backhoe murders, Hillerman's landscape evokes mystery too - what happened to the ancient Anasazi? What might someone wonder about just looking at this painting?**
- **Looking at the three landscapes, how does each capture the idea of vastness, scale?**

QUOTES ABOUT MYSTERY:

Davis on the Mystery of the Anasazi: *That's the really big deal out here...Where'd the Anasazi go? The big huge mystery that all the magazine writers write about.*

Elliot on the Mystery: *Among a couple of other big questions. Like why they built roads when they didn't have wheels or pack animals, and why they left, and why they lived in this place in the first place with so damn little wood, or water, or good land...the more we learn the more we wonder.*

Chee: *He knew what attracted the Anasazi. A cliff faced to catch the winter sun and shaded in the summer, enough floodplain to grow something, and a source of water. That, particularly the water, narrowed it a lot.*

Key Points:

- Studied at Art Institute of Chicago, became a successful CA Impressionist plein-air landscape painter.
- Canyon de Chelly in northeastern Arizona. The portals of sheer red sandstone cliffs mark the beginning of 18 tortuous miles of desert canyon five or six million years old
- **Note:** compare the colors of the three landscapes. The color of the native clay pots we will see will reflect the color of the soil.
- **Note:** the colors and the brush strokes. We will see these same colors in native weavings.

TRANSITION: We are going to go downstairs to how landscape informed native artists.





Mesa Verde (Anasazi village 700 AD)



Dark Kiva, Mary Giles, 1994

- **Look closely at the outside and the inside. What is the sex of the skeletons?**
- **The book addresses questions we won't answer: Who do ancient relics belong to? Should we disrupt sacred land to study skeletons? If so, who and under what circumstances?**

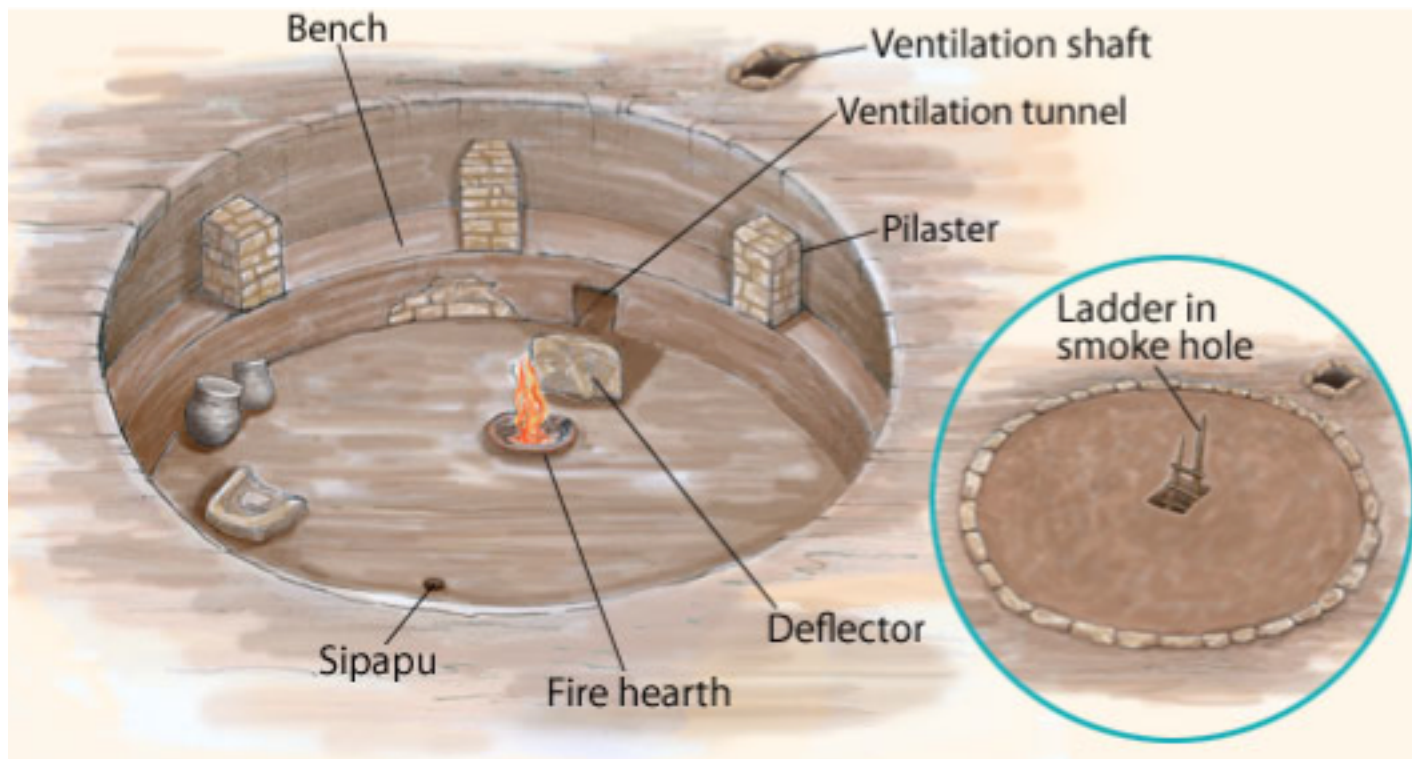
QUOTE:

Elliot on Anasazi culture: *Anasazi culture had risen on the Colorado Plateau, almost certainly a progression from the small, scattered families of hunters and seed collectors who lived in pit houses, and somehow learned to make baskets, and then the rudiments of agriculture, and then how to irrigate their crops by controlling runoff from rain, and probably in the process of caulking baskets with fire-dried mud to make them waterproof---how to make pottery.*

Key Points:

- Mary Giles is from St. Paul.
- Fuses traditional basket weaving material with hand-hammered iron drops. (Reference to mica in the soil, clay pots that came later, mining for minerals?)
- Created in a circular fashion like the coil method used to make pots.
- Earliest known people were the Basketmakers 200BC-750AD
- Evokes the Ancient Puebloan kivas from Chaco Canyon, NM, abandoned in 1250 mysteriously (drought?)
- Native anthropologist has a theory: the people are simply stopping here temporarily.
- Like modern kivas, they were entered by a ladder from the roof down to the center of the kiva floor.
- During ceremonies today, the ritual emergence of participants from the kiva into the plaza above represents the original emergence by Puebloan groups from the underworld into the current world
 - Kivas had an enclosing wall with a built-in bench
 - A packed earth floor
 - A vent in the wall to provide fresh air
 - Kivas had a firepit at the center
 - Pillars to support the roof
 - A flat roof of kivas was supported by hewn logs

- The roof is covered by small branches, matting, and a layer of earth
 - The walls are decorated with murals of mythological figures of symbolic significance
 - Kivas are entered through a roof hatchway by means of a ladder whose poles extend well above the flat rooftop
 - A small hole or indentation in the floor of kivas called a 'Sipapu' symbolizing the portal through which their ancient ancestors first emerged to enter the present world.
 - The spiral that might represent the *sipapu* from which humans had emerged from the womb of Mother Earth, the line of dots that might represent the clan's migrations, the wide-shouldered forms that the ethnographers believed represent kachina spirits.
- Spiral = hole





Kiva



Great Kiva at Pueblo Bonito in Chaco National Park



Blessings of Rain, DY Begay, 2015

- **How does this evoke the landscapes we saw in the America galleries?**

QUOTES:

Hillerman: *Being Indian is not blood as much as it is culture.*

Leaphorn thinking about the rain outside of MOMA: *Like all dry-country people, Leaphorn enjoyed rain---that rare, longed for, refreshing blessing that made the desert bloom and life possible. He sat with his head full of thoughts and watched the water run down the bricks drip from the leaves, form its cold pools on the flagstones, and give a slick shine to Picasso's goat.*

Leaphorn even remembered what Emma said about that goat: *Look. The mascot of the Navajo Nation. Perfect for us Dineh...It's starved, gaunt, bony, ugly. But look! It's tough. It endures.*

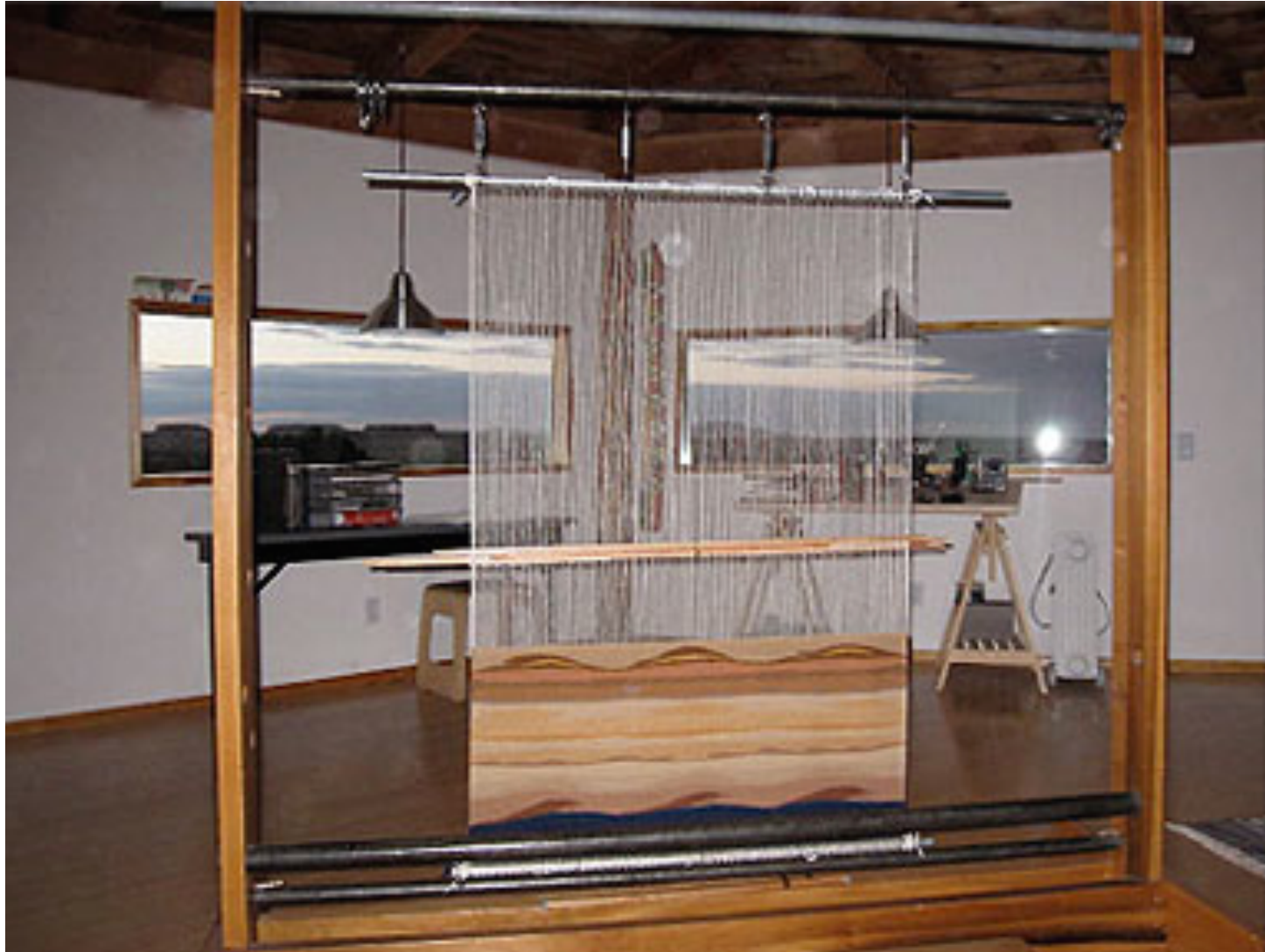
Yes. That gaunt goat would have been the perfect symbol. Something to put on a pedestal and display. Miserable and starved, true enough. But it was also pregnant and defiant---exactly right to challenge the world at the entrance of the world....

Key Points:

- Rain is a blessing - something to celebrate!
- This piece won the 2015 Best in Show at the Santa Fe Indian Market.
- Begay is 4th generation Navajo weaver. Uses a traditional Navajo artistic expression: all natural, all hand created.
- She sings Navajo songs when she weaves. The intellectual is part of the weaving too.
- Communal affair as her family helps her with the process of preparing the wool: Her father, nieces and nephews harvest the plants she uses for her colors, her sister helps spin the yarn, and she uses fleece from reservation sheep.
- She creates everything she uses, the dyes and the yarn, from the reservation sheep and plants.
- Spiritual connection to the plants, natural dyes to capture the natural beauty of Mother Earth.
- Explores new ideas, personal vision.
- There is no word for "dying" in Navajo - so she would have to explain it as a color process.
- 10 natural green colors in this piece.
- Notice the layer of embroidery on top that gives the weaving even more texture.
Close-ups of *Canyon Portal* by Edgar Payne



Picasso's Goat



D.Y. Begay's Studio
Windows overlooks the reservation in Tselani, Arizona



Blanket, Dine, 1855-85

- **Introduce the pictographs and petroglyphs. How does this artist reflect the idea of Hozro (balance and harmony)?**

QUOTE:

Chee recalls Nakai's aphorism: *Remember, Boy, when you're tired of walking up a long hill you think about how easy it's going to be walking down. Which was Nakai's Navajo way of saying things tend to even up.*

Key Points:

- Embodies Navajo concept of Hozro (HAHZ roh) ---a complete balance in your life that leads to harmony, often referred to as "Walking in Beauty."
- **Chee on Hozro:** *Chee was conscious of his lungs at work, of open pores, supple muscles, or his own vigorous health Here was his hozro---his harmony with what surrounded him.*
- The motifs create balance, centers, borders are triangles, circles, crosses, squares
- The dyes in this blanket were from cochineal that originated in the SW.
- Yarns were dyed in England and Spain and then shipped back to America during the 1800s.
- The **spiritline**, the Navajo weaver's pathway, or the spirit pathway. Navajo term: the way out.
- The spiritline connects the weaver to a symbolic world, to the inner world
- The weaver's thoughts go into making the rug and reside within the object itself. Thus, part of the maker resides in the weaving. The pathway provides an exit for a weaver's thinking, what weavers call "a way out" that allows weavers the chance to actively disconnect from their woven work that is intended to be sold.
- Pathways can improve concentration, as it releases the weaver from previous thinking and the thoughts that once resided in completed textiles. The weaver can then remain present and focused on current and future weaving projects, and not be "stuck on" or "tied to" earlier woven work.
- **Hillerman:** *Everything is connected. The wing of the corn beetle affects the direction of the wind, the way the sand drifts, the way the light reflects into the eye of man beholding his reality. All is part of totality, and in this totality man finds his hozro, his way of walking in harmony, with beauty all around him.---* Hillerman in *The Ghostway*
- **Hillerman:** *The Navajo word hozro ... means a sort of blend of being in harmony with one's environment, at peace with one's circumstances, content with the day, devoid of anger, and free from anxieties.*



Canyon de Chelly



Bowl, 900-1200, Hohokam - oldest pot in the galleries

- The Hohokam had some of the best developed sociopolitical organizations in all of the ancient Southwest. They lived in pithouses dug into the ground, and created an extensive and complex irrigation system of canals that made large-scale agriculture possible in their arid environment.
- Hohokam artists are particularly known for including spirals in their designs, as seen in this large bowl.



Mimbres Bowl, 1000-1150

- Kill hole = spiked with a sharp object or “killed,” placed on deceased head to release the spirits
- Dark and light evoke struggle, energy



Pot (Olla), 1000-1300, Ancestral Pueblo 1860

- Pueblo potters developed large storage jars, called ollas, to hold food and water.
- These vessels were carefully hand-built using coils which were smoothed together into a strong thin wall.
- The interlocked lines of small white squares with a dot in the middle represent a traditional three-step cloud motif and also refer to lightning, which heralds the summer rainstorms.
- The square and dot design evokes rows of maize kernels, a staple food source for the Ancient Puebloans.



Santa Clara Pot, Effie Garcia, 2015

- Effie comes from a long line of potters and is married to a potter. Both are often SWAIA winners.
- Carves the pot while still damp. Ancient motifs; shape of a kiva



Bowls, 1100-1300, Four Mile 1350-1400The differences between the major cultures of the ancient

- This bowl is an excellent example of what is called the Four Mile style (Area by Four Corners)
- The black painted design in the center of this finely made ceramic depicts a stylized long-necked bird, perhaps a crane. The red and white step motif is a reference to sacred architecture and rain clouds.

POTS and BOWLS

- **The book highlights controversies surrounding archeology today: Who should these ancient artifacts belong to? Do collectors bear some responsibility for stolen relics? Should ancient burial sites be excavated to answer questions about the past? Who should be allowed into these sites and under what terms?**
- **Who are the Thieves of Time?**

PROP: We see the petroglyphs over 2000 years. We can see the arrival of the Europeans or Beleganas (Silly white people) and even the recent graffiti noted in the book. **NOTE:** how large the petroglyphs are.

QUOTE:

Arnold on Dr. Bernal and Thieves of Time: *She's an anthropologist. You translate the word from academic into English and that's what it means: ruins looter, one who robs graves, preferably old ones. A well-educated person who steals artifacts in a dignified manner. Somebody else does it, they call 'em vandals. That's the word for the competition. Somebody gets there first, gets off with the stuff before the archaeologists can grab it, they call 'em Thieves of Time.*

Key Points:

- Southwestern United States can be distinguished by the unique designs found on their ceramics.
- All the pots in this gallery were coil method.
- Each family or potter had his/her own spot for clay.
- The color of the pot was determined by the color of the clay, the amount of mica or minerals in the clay, and the amount of oxygen during firing. **NOTE:** the pots with the most mica.
- Contemporary artists use traditional methods: outdoor fires, cow dung
- The thinner the pot, the more valuable/artistic.
- All of the designs on the pot were painted freehand, showing the artist's great talent and skill.
- **NOTE:** Curio traders from Santa Fe bought pottery from the Pueblos in the 1850s. The designs became more complex. The RR was built through the heart of this country in the 1880s. These labor intensive pieces were still produced, but more for tourists than for domestic use.
- Most bowls and pots were for everyday uses EXCEPT the Mimbres pot with the kill hole.
- Describe the funeral of Emma.



Chaco Canyon



Untitled, Ernest Whiteman, 1991

- **Harmony once again becomes a theme in Native American art. How does Hillerman bring the story full circle in terms of each of the main characters: Leaphorn, Chee, Ellie, Elliot, Brigham Houk?**
- Arapaho from Wyoming
- Heartline provides balance and harmony - provides balance between what is given to us (rain) and what we take from the earth (crops)
- Made of hard steel yet floats like a spirit = balance
- Gesture - digging crops; communication
- **Whiteman:** It's like a path or the journey. No matter how many twists and turns are in that path or journey, it lines up right in the middle at the end, with the central portion of the heart.
- **Whiteman:** As a child, I used to go up to the mountains of Wyoming where there are rock writings. It felt like going into a large cathedral or a temple.

Our story begins with Ellie described like an ancient petroglyph, the flute player Kokopelli and other imagery that references the last chapter, the conclusion: *The moon had risen just above the cliff behind her. Out on the packed sand of the wash bottom the shadow of the walker made a strange elongated shape. Sometimes it suggested a heron, sometimes one of those stick-figure forms of an Anasazi pictograph. An animated pictograph, its arms moving rhythmically as the moon shadow drifted across the sand. Sometimes, when the goat trail bent and put the walker's profile against the moon, the shadow became Kokopelli himself. The backpack formed the spirit's grotesque hump, the walking stick Kokopelli's crooked flute. Seen from above, the shadow would have made a Navajo believe that the great yei, Watersprinkler, had taken visible form. If an Anasazi had risen from his thousand-year grave in the trash heap under the cliff ruins here, he would have seen the Humpbacked Flute Player, the rowdy god of fertility of his lost people. But the shadow was only the shape of Dr. Eleanor Friedman-Beral blocking out the light of an October moon.*

Leaphorn is described as he is kayaking to find Ellie: *As he rested with his arms relaxed, he became the stick figure ... bent over the paddle, pulling his weight against the water, he was Kokopelli, with his hunched back full of sorrows.*

Leaphorn to Chee at conclusion: *I would like to ask you to sing for me.*



Dinwoody, Wyoming

CONCLUSION:

So Emma's Aphorism proved true after all: *Only yearling coyotes think there's just one way to catch a rabbit.*

Emma was Leaphorn's soulmate, someone who honed his thinking and tested his logic.

Leaphorn decided to retrace the rabbit's path and get inside the rabbit's mind.