First, I was struck by Basso’s insight that knowing different things about a place can make it a very different “place-world” to different observers. He uses the example of Kronberg Castle in Denmark: the castle is a very different place to those to know that Shakespeare’s Hamlet ‘lived’ there than it is to those who don’t. Those who are acquainted with Shakespeare’s creation may imagine “a darkly compelling place-world in which the walls of the castle [echo] in an alien tongue, a shaded courtyard nook [gives] notice of the troubled human soul, and Hamlet uttered his anguished cry, ‘To be or not to be.’” (6). However, those ignorant of Shakespeare’s Hamlet may simply see Kronberg as just another castle.

Likewise, during my research on queer youth homelessness in New York City, I found Pier 45 to be a place that took on different significances depending on the passersby knowledge of the region. To the upper-class residents who went to the pier to suntan, it was a patch of grass on which they could relax and shape their body; however to the queer homeless youths who also hung out in the area, the pier was an almost sacred space imbued with the pain and struggle of low-income queer youth of color who had claimed the space as their own for decades. Thus, conflict over the definition and control of spaces is not necessarily always sparked by opposing interests; sometime, it may simply develop out of unequal and different knowledge about a place that leads to contrasting place-world conceptions.

I also found the Apache descriptive place names interesting, because they seem to freeze a place in time at the moment when it becomes a place, with significance to Apache society, rather than just a space. In Apache culture, that one specific moment achieves enormous significance; the way a place is described at that moment becomes a benchmark against which change at that place is measured. Although change is continuous, it is the single moment at which a space becomes a place that is frozen in time.