A number of years ago, on a sabbatical leave, I had the opportunity to present a paper in the Geography colloquium series at the University of California, Berkeley. The day after the colloquium, Allan Pred took me out for lunch at his favorite Thai restaurant just off campus. He was interested in pursuing a number of issues that the talk had raised, and I found the conversation stimulating, provocative, probing, and enlightening. In that encounter (and several others over the years), Pred displayed an engaging and penetrating curiosity, a sharp intellect, and a lively eagerness to challenge, question, and push toward unconventional understandings of the world. Though my face-to-face conversations with Pred were (too) few, my connections to his written work were more sustained and frequent. His wide-ranging work provided a great deal of foundational material for many years of my seminars on geographic thought, and his insights found their way into my own work on common sense, taken-for-grantedness, power, and social change. As the present volume attests, I am far from alone in my appreciation for Pred’s illuminations.

The 12 essays (plus a brief, personal introduction by Paul Rabinow, who co-taught with Pred at Berkeley) that comprise *Spaces of Danger* are divided into five sections that begin to catalog (but do not nearly exhaust) Pred’s persistent areas of interest: critical spatiality, situated practices, the urban and the spectacular, historical geographies of the present, and a biographical montage of the present. An underlying theme of much of the work here (and in Pred’s own scholarship), reflected in the book’s title, is Walter Benjamin’s notion of “moments of danger”. In their introductory chapter,
Heather Merrill and Lisa Hoffman (p. 5) offer Benjamin’s own formulation of this concept:

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “state of emergency” in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. (Benjamin 1999: 248-249)

For Pred (and, to a large degree, for the contributors to this volume), what this meant was an attentiveness to the radical contingencies of place and subject making; an acute skepticism of the taken for granted, common senses of everyday life (including language and other forms of meaning making); and the trialectic of meanings, situated practices, and power relations.

In the opening essay, the editors utilize the July 2011 attacks in Norway by Anders Breivik to articulate a contemporary “moment of danger”, as well as many of the ideas that will appear in the subsequent chapters. In addition to highlighting many of Pred’s scholarly concerns, by way of overview of the book, the introduction also usefully links these themes to the individual pieces and makes clear how the contributors engage with Pred’s work. In the editors’ words, the book takes up:

…various Predian theoretical threads that seem vast but are linked through an insistent critique of that which goes unnoticed such as the way the past and the present enfold within one another, everyday life and spectacular capitalism,
biography and the making of identities and places through lived geographies and bodily engagements in locally situated practices, the relationship between language, spatiality and power, capitalist space economies, the culture and materiality of the state, and the production and contestation of racialized collective identities. (p.10)

To this list, the individual chapters also add in issues of memory and forgetting, temporality, “situated ignorance”, citizenship, precarity, and the ongoing relationships between knowledge and power.

Without going into a detailed summary of each chapter (unnecessary in my view), it is easily possible to give a sense of the breadth of the volume’s engagement with Pred’s work by enumerating the topics taken up. Only one of the essays (by one of Pred’s former colleagues at Berkeley, Dick Walker) deals with Pred’s foundational work (beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing into the 1980s) on urban economic geography. In the first half of his career, Pred (a student of another major figure in this subfield, Brian Berry) conducted path-breaking research into several areas that, Walker argues, are still central to ongoing scholarship in this sphere of geography: globalization, urban clustering, and innovation. Walker usefully guides readers through Pred’s contributions, and makes clear the continuing relevance of these early insights to contemporary, live debates.

The other essays (with one exception) make explicit the linkages between Pred’s work and the evolution of the authors’ own thinking and practices. Most of the pieces exhibit a pattern that begins with an explication of some of Pred’s key perspectives, and
then applies these to a particular case. The pieces, however, vary considerably in style from the personal to the more analytic.

In the first section of the book, “Critical Spatiality”, Katharyne Mitchell begins with Benjamin’s and Pred’s notions of time and temporality, and then applies these notions to a case study of place making and subject formation among young people in Seattle, Washington. Gunnar Olsson, in a quite personal set of reminiscences, takes up Pred’s interrogations of language, meaning making and cultural (re)presentation in both a museum exhibition (that he attended with Pred), a film, and the haunting painting by Titian entitled “The Flaying of Marsyas”.

The next section, “Situated Practices”, begins with Gillian Hart’s (another colleague of Pred’s at Berkeley) “drawing on Pred’s work on racism and nationalism” to examine the complex interplay of history, memory, spatiality, sexuality, gender, race and nationalism in post-apartheid South Africa. Her starting point is a controversial 2012 painting of South African President Jacob Zuma, an especially vexed example of cultural (re)presentation. In a quite salient piece, Heather Merrill next takes up questions of whiteness, racism, gender, belonging and citizenship in contemporary Italy, where recent immigration by persons of color and Muslims are deeply troubling “common sense” notions of “us” and “them”; a ubiquitous issue at the moment. Damani Partridge’s contribution completes this section with his exploration of memory, forgetting, racism, and nationalism through a close reading of the planning, development and impacts of a Holocaust memorial in Berlin, Germany.

In part three of the book, “The Urban and the Spectacular”, in addition to Walker’s piece described above, Shiloh Krupar provides an assessment of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Employing an inventive (and playful) notion of soil

4
hermeneutics, Krupar literally excavates the toxic history of the site of the exposition using “Allan Pred’s insights on denaturalized consumption and situated spectacle”, as well as his analytical approach of “historical geographies of the present”. In the analysis, in addition to the investigation of the materialities of the site, Krupar is also able to interrogate the complex relationships between evolving, situated techno-knowledges and sedimented, everyday practices of power.

Part four, “Historical Geographies of the Present”, begins with Michael Watts’ (yet another of Pred’s colleagues at Berkeley) contribution on the rise of two similar, yet distinct insurgencies in Nigeria: [i] the Muslim fundamentalist-based Boko Haram movement in the North; and [ii] the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the South. Though the two insurgencies have quite different etiologies, logics and goals, Watts uses their emergence and practices to help readers understand one of Pred’s key concerns—“the making and contesting of regions and places”. In the next essay, Nancy Postero explicitly takes up one of Pred’s sustained concerns—the issue of racism. The title of her essay, “Even in Plurinational Bolivia”, is a direct reference to one of Pred’s most trenchant pieces on the topic: Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination (Pred 2000). In this essay, Postero utilizes Pred’s insights in order to “consider how race and racisms are being reworked [in Bolivia] as capitalism undergoes yet another transition in the contemporary era”. The final piece in this section (alluded to above), by Derek Gregory, only refers explicitly to Pred twice. The essay, however, is an embodiment of both Pred’s concerns and a poignant animation of the book’s title. The spaces of danger entailed here are the rapidly and endlessly expanding spaces of the drone war. In a careful exposition, Gregory traces
the evolution of these present practices out of their antecedents in previous forms of
(particularly) aerial warfare.

The final section, “Biographical Montage of the Present”, contains a single essay
by Cindi Katz, entitled “A Bronx Chronicle”. Utilizing a favored technique of Pred’s–
montage–Katz is able to illuminate the highly interconnected notions of time, memory,
place, practices and biography. The essay also highlights the notion of montage on the
page by interspersing quotes, remembrances, and photos to recuperate the various
meanings that a particular section of the Bronx, New York, had (and have) for the author,
for her family, and for Allan Pred, along with his sister and brother who also grew up
there. It is an effective and affecting way to end the book.

Overall, *Spaces of Danger* is a fitting tribute to an original thinker in Geography.
The individual essays each hold the reader’s interest, but more importantly they provide
an interwoven web of key theoretical, analytic, methodological and conceptual insights
into some of today’s most vexing problems. In this volume, the past (i.e. the thinking of
Allan Pred) is very much alive in the present and the future.

References

Benjamin W (1999 [1968]) Theses on the philosophy of history. In H Arendt (ed)
_Illuminations_ (pp245-255). London: Pimlico

Geographical Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press
Marv Waterstone
School of Geography and Development
University of Arizona
marvinw@email.arizona.edu

April 2016