Memories of the future: (post) Steve Redhead, Cultural Studies and theories for a still-born century

Prologue by Tara Brabazon

NURSE: 'He's dead, Tara.'

Pause.

TARA: 'Do you need the room?'

Post-beginnings

Beginnings matter. Endings matter more. *The End-of-the-Century Party* was a book of beginnings: of post-youth culture, post-leisure studies, Popular Cultural Studies, law and popular culture, entertainment law, and Post-Political Pop. It also revved the engine of Steve Redhead's career. It made his name. It set a trajectory. It was a personal and professional satnav that directed academics to a different way of conducting research, of doing knowledge, with an innovative intellectual destination of post-disciplinary scholarship. Following *Sing When You're Winning: The Last Football Book*,¹ Steve Redhead gathered and revealed the research interests that would propel the next generation of Cultural Studies scholars he would inspire and instruct, directly or indirectly. The title of *The End-of-the-Century Party*, remixed from Jean Baudrillard, crunched high theory into popular culture. It was James Brown's 'The Funky Drummer'² to the Stone Roses' 'Fools Gold'.³ Even more significantly, Steve Redhead summoned an intellectual

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resurrection of Baudrillard, using unpopular theory to shape popular culture. Before *The End-of-the-Century Party*, Baudrillard had been discarded into the slop bucket of postmodernism without justification, expertise or explanation. It was (and remains) easier to dismiss Baudrillard than to sweat and seethe through his sentences, with their hot controversies and chilling analyses.

Steve Redhead had a gift delivered to him at the beginning of his career (and life) that was never granted to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies or permitted to those of us with our nose pressed against the window pane of intellectual life. Most scholars are destined to watch exciting places that always seem out of reach. He was in the right place at the right time. He lived and worked in Manchester when it was the popular cultural capital of the world. As Manchester became Madchester and then Gunchester, it was the dancing, drugging, lolling archetype of post-industrial urbanity. There will never be a better city to explore city imaging and city regulation, city music, urban degeneration and regeneration, and popular culture.

Redhead graduated from elite universities and law programmes. He then melted this intellectual discipline into a political consciousness energised by a specific time and place. He followed a conservative, black letter law degree from Manchester University with a deeply controversial Masters of Laws research degree, exploring the class-based consequences of mediation through tribunals.⁴ Using Irving Goffman's *Presentation of Self*⁵ and *Encounters*,⁶ he explored how class intervenes, interrupts and jags this supposedly more equitable mode of conflict resolution. His PhD was the first sports law doctorate in the world, investigating professional footballers and their contracts. At a time when the wages earned by footballers were a matter of debate by the corporate forces dominating the game and wanting to exploit the players as workers, Redhead summoned hard-edged, cool Marxism to investigate the football industries as workplaces.⁷ This doctorate would never be published

as a monograph, but was remixed and revisited in *Sing when You're Winning* and *Football with Attitude*.⁸ Warwick University provided the home for this PhD research, providing an innovative view of the burgeoning Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, but also an agitatingly exciting and independent intellectual environment where sociology, law, Cultural Studies, Media Studies and Marxism bucked and hooked into his scholarship. His colleagues of the time, including Simon Frith, developed an array of significant interdisciplinary sorties, such as the sociology of rock.⁹

This academic story, of qualifications and scholarship, is public, proper and verified. Yet for this prologue to *The End-of-the-Century Party*, a reissued publication from that pivotal year and year of pivot – 1990 – something else is required. This book was commissioned to be republished after Steve Redhead's death on March 8, 2018 of pancreatic cancer. Therefore, this book of life and laughter and dancing and MDMA and pleasure is reframed by death and tears and disease and morphine and Oxycontin and brutalising horror.

I have been asked to write this prologue by the editorial team at Manchester University Press. It is a privilege and honour to do so. But who am I? Again, the professional biography is clear. I am the Professor of Cultural Studies and the Dean of Graduate Research at Flinders University in Australia. This is the university that housed Steve Redhead for his last academic appointment, a professorship in Cultural Studies. Therefore, I can write of his post, in the post.

That is not the story.

Beginnings matter. Endings matter more.

I am his last wife. I am his post-wife. I am his widow. I am defined by the death, as I was defined by the life and the love. Over a decade before I met him, I read this book in a small popular culture reading group comprising young scholars in Perth, Western Australia, half a world away¹⁰ from Manchester. This group had discovered *The End-of-the-Century Party* and found the researcher that could lead a new generation of humanities scholars to something innovative,

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quirky, odd, passionate, young, real and questioning of the benevolent facade of elite universities.

If this was the new, edgy academia, then I wanted to be a part of it. Rankean-framed history had nothing on this. I had never met Steve Redhead, but recognised him as the leader of the type of Cultural Studies that could transcend the legacy of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, be authentically international, and arch beyond the disciplines of English Literature and Sociology. Steve Redhead was the Pied Piper of Generation X Cultural Studies scholars. He transcended the Piper of Manchester as his research marinated multiple disciplines, degrees and scholars.

There is more. This is also the story of two people who did not know each other, separated by geography, history, nationality and class, yet somehow found a meaningful and important relationship. Right time. Right place. Both of us walked on the jagged rocks of wild beaches in our lives, literally and metaphorically. But this relationship and marriage also tracks and shadows the undulating history of our universities, Cultural Studies, academic publishing and research since *The End-of-the-Century Party* was published.

My words loop in this prologue between the academic and the personal, the book and the life. I move between sections on 'Redhead' the scholar and 'Steve' the man. Italicised text signals the movement into the personal. This prologue is an autobiography of a scholar, but also the epistemology and ontology of a monograph. My words may interest you, dear rubbernecking reader, curious about the strange death of Steve Redhead. The silence. The secrecy. The corporeal disappearance. The digital afterlife. Yes, endings matter. But this man – in his end – gave us so many beginnings. *The End-of-the-Century Party* matters so much because it was the beginning of a new way of 'doing' humanities research. Perhaps this reissue and second edition can enable us to renew once more.

This prologue summons another imperative. A warning. A challenge. A hope. It is a reminder of where we thought we were

heading in those early passionate 1990s. It snakes through what has happened to international higher education. It offers an inventory of what we have lost and what we could be doing while reading pointless emails cc'd to half of Lancashire and attending strategic planning meetings that organise Away Days that develop Key Performance Indicators that – supposedly – measure research ‘quality’, ‘engagement’ and ‘impact’. Most importantly, this prologue asks that we – as intellectuals – claim our place and time, show courage and continue to dance with and through theory. These are Theoretical Times.¹¹ It is time – again – to stretch, punch, challenge, agitate and transform.

There are (at least) three Steve Redheads. Tony Wilson, the great impresario of Manchester music, via his re-representation in *24 Hour Party People*, stated that,

I think it was Scott Fitzgerald who said: ‘American lives don’t have second acts’. This is Manchester. We do things differently here. This is the second act.¹²

Appropriately, Steve proved Tony Wilson wrong. He left Manchester only to welcome a third act. Steve’s first act was propelled by *The End-of-the-Century Party*. He was the scholar of youth, music and football. He was Professor Rave. But this period of professional success was hooked by personal and academic losses. His book at the cusp of the new century – *Repetitive Beat Generation*¹³ – was the ‘meta’ reflection on this period: Steve was releasing himself from writing about youth, music and sport, while ageing.

His second act emerged when he left Manchester to live in Australia. He rebirthed himself as one of the most innovative and provocative scholars of Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio. He found, ‘new heroes in the zeros’.¹⁴ The empirical – the ethnography – was cut away. Theory became the soaring phoenix from the ashes of youth culture. The third act – accompanied by academic jobs in some of the weirdest and most venomous universities in the world¹⁵ – was a rebirth as a digital intellectual. His research was conducted, written

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and disseminated through the online environment via podcasts and vodcasts, tweets and blogs. He existed digitally, like a Mancunian Max Headroom, but without the stutter. In the third act, he applied both Virilio and Baudrillard to his own academic life. His dissemination was accelerated and he was re-represented as Simulacrum Steve. He had disappeared to Australia, but was digitally omnipresent. From his antipodal bunker,¹⁶ he summoned a fully fleshed claustropolitanism and *Theoretical Times*.

These three acts had a beginning, in this book. *The End-of-the-Century Party* is spectacular. It was so good, I married the author. I read it when I was twenty-one years old. It changed my life. Through reading this book I knew the type of writer – the type of scholar – the type of person – that I wanted to be. I wanted to be Steve Redhead. The only problem was that I was young, a woman and I only experienced the Hacienda of my imaginings. Yet – unknown to me at the time – that was probably the most appropriate way to ‘know’ this mythical nightclub.

And you, forgotten, your memories ravaged by all the consternations of two hemispheres, stranded in the Red Cellars of Pali-Kao, without music and without geography, no longer setting out for the hacienda *where the roots think of the child and where the wine is finished off with fables from an old almanac*. Now that’s finished. You’ll never see the hacienda. It doesn’t exist. *The hacienda must be built*.¹⁷

Steve Redhead, through *The End-of-the-Century Party*, *Rave Off* and *Unpopular Cultures*, built a Hacienda that floated, travelled beyond Manchester and transcended popular culture. While Ivan Chtcheglov’s summoning of the Hacienda is rightly famous and heavily cited, the subsequent paragraph is even more profound when republishing and rethinking *The End-of-the-Century Party*.

All cities are geological; you cannot take three steps without encountering ghosts bearing all the prestige of their legends. We move within a *closed* landscape whose landmarks constantly draw us toward the past. Certain *shifting* angles, certain *receding* perspectives,

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allow us to glimpse original conceptions of space, but this vision remains fragmentary. It must be sought in the magical locales of fairy tales and surrealist writings: castles, endless walls, little forgotten bars, mammoth caverns, casino mirrors.¹⁸

That last sentence captures Manchester's Hacienda more accurately than an architectural drawing. I summon the shards and fragments, the landmarks of the past, and the receding perspectives. But this prologue is not a work of nostalgia. There is no past in the history of ideas, only possibilities to rediscover. Time bounces. Places collapse, burn and are rebuilt. Mirrors return a cruel, warped and bitter visage from the portrait in the attic, rather than the young and beautiful Dorian Gray. Therefore, this prologue loops between the life and the death, the party and the silence, the writing and the disappearance.

Manchester, 1990

Joy Division. New Order. The Hacienda. Acid House. Tony Wilson. Factory Records. In 1990, Manchester was the popular cultural capital of the world. The beats, fashion and attitude transformed the home of the Industrial Revolution into a house party for the end of the world. 1990 was the compass point of endings and beginnings for music, politics and youth. Acid House fractured into techno, trance and trip hop, with jungle and drum and bass surfacing from the foundation of the mix. Ecstasy challenged the assumptions about drugs, crime, work, leisure and law. It was not an addictive drug. This reality washed over the dated policing of drug use and required a much more careful and customised legal and social response. From the energy of these controversies and musical revolutions, Manchester's universities were heaving with students enrolling in the most exciting city in the world.

In 1990, Manchester University Press accepted and published *The End-of-the-Century Party: Youth and Pop towards 2000*. It was appropriate that an alumnus of the institution would write a book

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that could not have been researched, written or published anywhere else in the world. Working at Manchester Metropolitan University, Redhead understood and amplified the theoretical and musical play of the time. The prose was sharp, with a rhythm that A Guy Called Gerald would envy. It was spatially aware, summoning ‘artefacts from the industrial past’,¹⁹ a decaying Manchester enlivening warehouses and welcoming loft living. Starting with a postscript and following with five chapters, *The End-of-the-Century Party* was a generational howl to move from ‘my generation to regeneration’. Reworking the summers of love – 1968 and 1988 – Steve Redhead created a new theory of pop time. Not satisfied with this innovation, he crushed the conceptualisation of subculture into dust, and along with it, thousands of doctoral theses, refereed articles and much of the legacy of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. No longer looking for the ‘new punk’, Redhead argued that the ‘image’ was not separated from life. We live in the simulacrum. Even today, the scope, scale and clarity of this interrogative intervention is profound. One man could write this book. One city could incubate this book. One publisher could summon the courage to publish it. To cite Tony Wilson, ‘this is Manchester. We do things differently here.’²⁰ Wilson and Redhead knew each other, having met through this book, and Wilson would later be on the Board of Directors for the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture. They used to bump into each other as they bounced around Manchester. Wilson was the would-be intellectual and actual popular cultural icon. Redhead was the actual intellectual and the popular cultural fan.²¹ In the year 2001, they met for the last time, as Wilson stepped off the escalator at Manchester’s Marks and Spencer. Wilson offered prescient words for himself that were incorrect for Redhead: ‘I’ll never leave Manchester, Steve. Neither will you.’ A year later, Wilson was still in Manchester. He would die there. A year later, Redhead would marry an Australian. He would die in Australia.

A furniture designer and a goalkeeper went into a bar ...

Before death – before endings – there are beginnings. Prologues to the postscripts. Steve's grandfathers tell the tale of his life.²² John Parkinson Hully, his maternal grandfather, was a furniture designer and part of the Bauhaus movement. A cool modernist, he worked with Marcel Breuer in Bath, but was born and lived his early life in Lancaster. Bauhaus and Art Deco – although countervailing design movements within modernism – both provided trajectories through war, industrialisation and urbanity. Both movements would frame and contour Steve's life, research and writing. J.P. Hully died before Steve was born, but his interest in the man who is a minor footnote in the history of British design and the British Bauhaus would result in a grant from the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund via the Furniture History Society,²³ enabling an article that gathered the historical residues of his life.²⁴ Steve's grandfather on the paternal side of the family was a goalkeeper for Morecambe and Lancaster during the amateur days of 'money in the boots' for the players.²⁵ Steve would often talk about his gentleness and kindness, and photographs remain of Steve as a toddler kicking his first football with what appeared to be a giant of a man, with enormous goalkeeper's hands.

These small Northern towns and cities were important to Steve. Born in Shifnal, Shropshire, he grew up in Blackpool as his father taught in schools and later at Preston Polytechnic, which would become Central Lancashire University. His father was a chemist and rugby coach, but Steve – although he played rugby and cricket – preferred football like his grandfather. But growing up in Blackpool meant he saw a version of leisure – a hedonism in hard times – that was different from the rest of us. He lived in a place that tourists left. He saw the transitory nature of holidays in relation to work, and saw hardship under Blackpool's petticoats. He left the family home in Blackpool at eighteen to attend the University of Manchester and never returned. He would not move cities again for nearly twenty-five years. He became associated

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*with Manchester, part of the fabric of music, football and the universities. Wherever he lived, he remained a Northern Man, and nicknamed one of his later research projects MANC: Mobile, Accelerated, Nonpostmodern, Culture.*²⁶

Some of this life in a Northern town was recorded in a podcast ten days before Steve left the United Kingdom for what would be the last time. As we spent our last weekend in Morecambe, Steve reflected on his grandfathers and the specialness of these Northern towns. He described Morecambe as, 'a spiritual place to return to'.²⁷ A man without any formal religion or faith structure, the North would continue to call him. Like the Hacienda, this North was not real. It was a disappointment. Universities, as an institution and 'the project' to which he had dedicated his life, had become lost, struggling to find a purpose, like Johnny Marr without a guitar.

Back to the future with Baudrillard

The End-of-the-Century Party was the first of Redhead's career-long engagements with Jean Baudrillard, who was viewed as an unpopular and discarded scholar. Redhead described Baudrillard as 'that most perplexing and infuriating of cultural theorists'.²⁸ Yet the inspiration behind this party at the end of the century – a decade early – was configured by Baudrillard. He argued that we jumped from 1989 to 2000, skipping ten years. The 1990s were not needed.

This leap and loss of a decade gave Redhead the opportunity to critique and break the domination of subcultural theory on sociology and Cultural Studies. The linear litany of subcultures – mods, rockers, skins, punks – was as simplistic as the class-based analysis that emerged from the theory. Redhead argued that pop time was not linear. It was not a narrative progression. Instead, it was looped, mixed and remixed. Time could be dubbed.

The debates summoned in *The End-of-the-Century Party* were bigger than postmodernism. What makes Redhead's career so

interesting when reviewing all eighteen monographs is that they dance and dialogue in different ways. *The End-of-the-Century Party* is the touchstone that started and fuelled so many academic careers, including the intellectual journey of the author of this prologue. But Redhead re-affirmed the argument about postmodernism twenty years later in the pithily titled, *We Have Never Been Postmodern: Theory at the Speed of Light*.²⁹

As the end-of-the-century party dreamed up by Jean Baudrillard finally closed and pre-millennial tension gave way to a post-millennial hangover, new cultural, economic and social theories have emerged at the speed of light to describe supermobile modernities, globalised markets and international mobile city cultures.³⁰

Redhead used Baudrillard in a way that was always bigger and greater than postmodernism. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was the clear example for Redhead that the neo-liberal project had failed. The hangover is always worse than the binge drinking at the party. The irrationality of capitalism and capitalists was confirmed when the failed systems, businesses and corporations gained public funding – a ‘state bailout’ – because they were ‘too big to fail’. De-regulation and anti-statism had created the GFC. The state was required to intervene after the GFC so that corporations could survive. Then – with depleted funding for health and education because of the corporate bailouts – neo-liberalism returned as a zombie ideology to reinfect both financial markets and real estate markets. Suddenly, the public sphere – the state – that had saved the economy and social structures was once more a problem.

The GFC was the archetype, trigger and example of Redhead’s key shift in interpretation between 2008 and his death a decade later. He argued for the movement from cosmopolitan sociology to claustropolitan sociology. Joy Division’s ‘Digital’ was the soundtrack for this shift. We feel it ‘closing in’.³¹ There is no escape, optimism, progress or happy ending. The hope remained in theory. If a future was

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to be summoned, then it would be 'non-postmodernity' and would require 'a rethinking of modernity after neo-liberalism'.³² Requiring theorisations of deglobalisation, immobility and demodernisation, the sociological assumptions and trajectories from Scott Lash, John Urry and Ulrich Beck would not suffice. *We Have Never Been Postmodern* is the 'late style'³³ Steve Redhead is talking with his younger self in *The End-of-the-Century Party*. *We Have Never Been Postmodern* is as fine as polished silver. Funny. Brilliant. Edgy. Provocative. It is situated at the cusp of new knowledge. This was the moment where the scholar of sport, music and youth – with significant sojourns into Virilio and Baudrillard – became somebody different, moving from the second to the third act. Like Bob Dylan at the Crossroads, Redhead suddenly seemed at the centre of the world. The GFC was the engine – the spark and fire – to create a new way of thinking about society and culture. In *Football and Accelerated Culture*, Redhead described 'a contemporary cultural condition where scholars and citizens are starting to feel "foreclosed", almost claustrophobic, wanting to stop the planet so we can get off'.³⁴ The movement from cosmopolitanism to claustropolitanism gave his theories an intensity. There was beauty and seductive power in the brutality.

Filaments and filigree

It was 1991. One of those university coffee shops that pretended to be posh, while the reality was as awkward as scraping chairs on sad seventies linoleum. The cookies were too big. The coffee was too weak. We did not know any better. We were young. We were clever. The whole world seemed exciting. Radical. Endless possibilities. New paradigms. New perspectives. On this occasion we were in the right place at the right time. Just this once, we were going to 'do' knowledge differently.

The paradigm for this exciting future – strained through the gauze of confident and cocky youth – was present if under-defined and a bit

try-hard. Cultural Studies dragged all the dissatisfied, angry, fabulous, fashionable and brilliant postgraduates from their tired, sexist, racist and empiricist disciplines and offered a Yellow Brick Road to Oz, where politics were tougher, the beats were bigger and the hair was higher. The problem was the state of Cultural Studies at the time. One set of 'great men' in our traditional disciplines had been replaced with others: Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Paul Johnson, Paul Gilroy and – yes – even Angela McRobbie. Their names were whispered like apostles genuflecting to Stuart Hall's Jesus. Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams played the interchanging roles of John the Baptist. I was uncomfortable about the validation of such 'great men'. When reading the books from the fabled Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, two variables struck me: firstly, most of the books were incomplete, offering a thrust of an idea but not following it through. Secondly, the 'culture' they discussed was weird. It was either an odd re-fashioning of the textual fodder in conventional disciplines or bizarre re-writings of television, magazines and films no one cared about. It was dated, tired and bourgeois. And so terribly English. The rest of the world was merely an audience for this English intellectual show. They published at us, not with us. We had no knowledge to share.

Writing these words now – even now – seems scandalous. To this day, in Cultural Studies journals, any critique of Stuart Hall or his American emissary Lawrence Grossberg results in referees responding as if I have set fire to holy relics. Invariably the scholars who venerate the 'great men' of Cultural Studies have not read the texts or are not prepared to let the incomplete revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s nestle into the past, alongside their tired theoretical sorties.

The other problem with Cultural Studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s was that it was punctuated by tired and banal Cultural Studies textbooks. Petit bourgeois banality was rendered more significant than it was, or could ever be. John Fiske and John Hartley made careers on the backs of applying basic literary theory that sometimes moved into simplified Saussurian semiotics, but without the Robert Hodge and

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Gunther Kress correctives.³⁵ Television became a synecdoche not only for popular culture, but the world. Popular music was marginalized and irrelevant. So was sport. Fiske and Hartley validated – celebrated – the suburban, the procreative, the middle class and the conventional. It was as safe as television, rather than arching into the new screen environments that were starting to create provocative and troubling networks of self and community. Odd emissaries and prophets were deified, such as the Australian Meaghan Morris.³⁶ Yet when reading the work produced by these supposedly celebrated scholars through the passage of time, the resultant research seems simple, a bit odd (Lacan and Kristeva did that to people), and did not connect with the lived reality of the next generation of students, citizens and scholars. Indeed, Cultural Studies was – and is – incredibly deficient and incompetent in incubating its next generation. Because of that lack of intellectual generosity and attention to teaching and learning – rather than selling textbooks – Cultural Studies is in the mess it is now.

But I digress. The baseline of Cultural Studies was present for an overthrow of tired and pathetic disciplines that lacked the sharpened bladed edge of method and theory. We were young scholars and wanted an intellectual culture that was exciting and edgy like the French theory we were reading, while also capturing anger and a desire for change after Thatcher and Reagan. We wanted a theory that could dance, could bounce with the energy and excitement – the modernity – of the new music erupting in clubs, rather than on conventional and safe televised music programmes like Top of the Pops, Solid Gold and Countdown.

*This was our howling wish from the intellectual margins. A scholar appeared. My reading group at the University of Western Australia found him. We read *The End-of-the-Century Party* and everything changed. It was as if black and white had turned to colour. We then read *Sing when You're Winning*. Then we read everything that was cited in these two books, and threw ourselves into the Ashgate Popular Cultural Studies series. Steve Redhead was my generation's Stuart Hall. He mattered. I did not know how much at the time.*

The research centre that House built

Subcultural theory, by 1990, had reached the stature of the commandments. The Birmingham Centre scholars and students had based their careers on the concept. Stuart Hall and Dick Hebdige gained international fame through conceptualisations of homology and resistance. The first major critique of their model emerged in *The End-of-the-Century Party*. Not only was 'subculture' problematic theoretically – particularly after ten years of Margaret Thatcher's prime ministership – but Acid House proved its flaws empirically.

Acid House was not a subculture. It was popular music, un/popular culture, a dance genre, legally inflammatory and socially disruptive. Acid housers were not anti-consumerist. They maintained no punk sensibility. They bought into consumerism, rather than critiqued or disconnected from it. They confirmed that there was no 'outside' to capitalism. Deviance and resistance are part of capitalism, requiring the commodification of difference.

The simplest answer to the question 'whatever happened to punk?' which pervades this book – in other words, what became of pop's seemingly perennial connection to deviance – is that a whole series of new authenticities have indeed been produced, each corresponding more or less to market segments, each subject to increasingly speedy change and transformation.³⁷

The confusion of categories – insider/outsider, citizen/consumer, drug taker/worker – created new spaces for socio-legal studies, law in context and entertainment law. Acid House 'entrepreneurs' – as Good Thatcherites – made money from pleasure. Therefore Acid House critiqued the authentic discourses encircling 'rock music' through the 1970s and 1980s. It was post-authenticity, post-youth and post-rock. *The End-of-the-Century Party* critiqued 'rock' and 'rock writers'. Redhead attacked the ideologies that fuelled rock: 'racism, sexism, masculine aggression and greedy self-aggrandisement'.³⁸ But Acid House was not nirvana run by the local shaman DJ. Instead, it signified 'the end of youth culture'.³⁹

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The End-of-the-Century Party mattered for many reasons. At its most original and significant, it (re)configured popular cultural time and history. This reconceptualisation of the pop clock remains Redhead's first, major innovation in Cultural Studies. He stated, in one of his most frequently cited phrases, 'Pop time has, in many ways, been circular rather than linear'.⁴⁰ While Cultural Studies, with its configuration of subculture, style and music, 'shrink-wrapped ... the pop culture archive',⁴¹ Acid House sliced the plastic and allowed the rhythms, fashion and awkward political affiliations to move, dis-associate, regroup, dance, bend and confront.

Through *Football and Accelerated Culture*, Redhead looped back to his theorisation of pop time in *The End-of-the-Century Party*. He stated that, 'what marks out post-subcultural practice is that it is inscribed within a cyclical rather than linear perspective'.⁴² He argued that, 'pop history after the punk years though was starting to turn back on itself, creating a feeling of intense claustrophobia, as if nothing new could be created. By the late 1980s, a fully-fledged post-modern pop culture looked as if it only had the regurgitation of the past to work with'.⁴³ Cyclical pop time was offering a key explanation for the looping of culture, the appropriation, the poaching, the theft and the banality.

The status of punk in this book is important. It was no 'originating' or 'authentic' moment for Redhead. It was one more subculture claim by scholars and journalists as 'deviant' and 'radical'. He stated:

This misreading of punk, and by implication the wholesale romanticisation of the origins of previous youth styles, led to a whole new mythology in the writing of youth culture histories and biographies which has persisted into the present.⁴⁴

Redhead realised that punk was not authentic. It was important, but it was also a continuation of the rock legacy that it was supposedly critiquing. John Lydon went on to advertise butter, with an after-taste of colonial British bitterness.⁴⁵ *The End-of-the-Century Party*

summoned this future-yet-to-be-born: post-youth culture, post-rock music writing and post-linear time. That is a potent achievement from a second book. The stylish and smooth movements between high and low culture – indeed high and low popular culture – enabled provocative commentaries on the state of Cultural Studies. It bubbles with subtle anger at the inability of Cultural Studies scholars to ‘move on’, to transcend tired tropes, and remove themselves from the ridiculously fenced-in fairy tale of postmodernism.

Redhead realised that the commitment to stretching and challenging interdisciplinarity is lost in conservative times of international research frameworks, university league tables and journal gatekeepers. By 2015, having witnessed the chaos of international higher education first-hand, he stated that ‘in academic life globally, discipline after discipline has agonised over whether the tenets of yesteryear still hold good, and whether or not we need to return to the beginning or origin.’⁴⁶

The End-of-the-Century Party, as an origin, book and idea, was so strong it created a research centre: the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC). The MIPC had a remarkable history and a significant academic context. It was formed in 1992 through the amalgamation of Steve Redhead’s Unit for Law and Popular Culture and Derek Wynne’s Centre for Urban and Cultural Analysis. The goal was for the MIPC to be an international centre, with post-graduate students at its core. The Institute would have a second phase after 1995, moving into cultural policy. Yet that first MIPC was committed to high theory and rejuvenating ethnography as a methodology. The project was enabled by PhD students, but it was built on the success of Redhead’s book, which he remembered, ‘had already created a stir’.⁴⁷ *The End-of-the-Century Party* initiated a space, created a project of interest to international scholars, grant agencies and postgraduates, and agitated (in) a city that provided scholarly momentum. It made Cultural Studies popular – without apology or caveat – and celebrated and researched popular culture,

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not as a handmaiden to inappropriate theory, but for its pedagogic functions. What does popular culture teach us about bodies, regulation, masculinity, femininity and (post)politics?

Like *The End-of-the-Century Party*, the MIPC was a riff off – and a commentary on – the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. It volunteered a tender if targeted smack at their disregard and dismissal of popular culture. Stuart Hall was clear in his views. He once stated that he is only interested in popular culture because it is a place of struggle between the dominant and the subordinate. If that struggle did not exist then he ‘doesn’t give a damn about it.’⁴⁸ Steve Redhead and Derek Wynne, the first directors of the MIPC, ‘gave a damn’ about popular culture for many reasons beyond reified, Gramscian, hegemonic war of position. There were other narratives to explore and other stories to tell, enabled by a divergent range of theorists and theorising. The MIPC became known for both theoretical and empirical research in contemporary popular culture. The Institute was also critically engaged with a diversity of cultural geographies, probing – decades before debates about research impact and engagement – the relationship between a university and its local, national and international environment. The researchers would work with Manchester Council, Tony Blair’s government, assisting the development of *A Sporting Future for All*⁴⁹ policy, and international engagements through student and staff mobility. This was an urban project, with the MIPC building innovative relationships between popular culture, city cultures and consumption. The MIPC and its enclosed researchers ‘gave a damn’ about popular culture because it was popular culture. It held different roles and functions in understanding work, leisure and capitalism beyond the role of the ventriloquist’s puppet for sad performances of dumbed-down Gramscian theory. Through Baudrillard and Virilio in particular, new frameworks were created. New researchers were trained who were embedded in their fields of study and working in and beyond conventional academic writing. The MIPC was a research centre with postgraduates at its heart and core. It would start the career

of scholars who went on to professorships and research projects that transformed the humanities.

While the MIPC was born and grew, Acid House ended its reign. The Hacienda closed. Yet Manchester remained a popular cultural hot spot and student city. Music pumped from the clubs. Odd fashions tumbled their combinations. *The End-of-the-Century Party* became the greatest hits album for Madchester. Redhead's gift was to recognise its intellectual value in real time, and know when the party was over. He would revisit *The End-of-the-Century Party* through the rest of his career in different ways. Within two years, *Rave Off* became the triumphant first book in the Ashgate Popular Cultural Studies Series. Redhead, the scholar of accelerated modernity, realised the export value of British styles through academic publishing. When reflecting on *The End-of-the-Century Party* only a few years later, he described it as,

a provisional theoretical account of youth and pop at the fin-de-siecle. It radically reworked what had become the orthodox approaches to global pop culture by the end of the 80s.⁵⁰

By 1993, he summoned 'the end of the end-of-the-century party'.⁵¹ This end (of the end) was explosive and controversial. The theorisation of Ecstasy reached a new level of complexity, understanding it as a 'weekend drug'.⁵² He also questioned how MDMA was transforming the struggle for identity, social justice and meaning. He prised open 'the ecstasy of politics'.⁵³ The public success of *The End-of-the-Century Party* and *Rave Off* gave Redhead confidence to operate in his present, to understand it with relish, but to avoid being pulled to old theories and paradigms.

Raving on the margins

Rave Off changed Cultural Studies and created a generational split that is yet to be reconciled in the paradigm. I was twenty-three when

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Steve published this book, and was about to commence my first full-time academic job in Wellington in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I read this book and it provided the framework, the foundation, the propulsion, the fuel for my PhD which was titled 'From Revolution to Revelation: A Reconfiguring of Youth Culture in Thatcher's Britain'.⁵⁴ That thesis could not have been written without Rave Off.

As a young scholar, it motivated and inspired me. Reading it again – a quarter of a century later – I still see the attraction. It is as fresh and bold as a new summer day. It laughs at nostalgic renderings of youth, music and politics. It mocks the scholars and the journalists trying to make new music and new culture fit into tired and redundant theories and paradigms. The End-of-the-Century Party and Rave Off recognised something substantial. Empirical research must always be tempered and trained by theory. These books commit to a proper understanding of drugs and drug culture, beyond the 'folk devils' and 'moral panics' of the 1960s. They also capture the passion of a PhD supervisor and his students. One man – in the right time and place (1990s Manchester) – with stunning, brilliant and courageous PhD students – took on establishment research. Challenged Cultural Studies. Ridiculed lettuce-leaf weak ethnography.

And Bez was dancing on the cover.

Rave Off is the moment when old Cultural Studies lost. The Birmingham Centre lost. Yes – these zombie tropes and theories would continue through textbooks for decades. They still remain, celebrating mediocre theory and redundant politics. But those of us who were in the right time and the right place – and the right age – to read Rave Off as it was published know that this book called us to a future that was ours to take, ours to grasp.

We failed in the conceptualisation, delivery and dissemination of this project. The sad state of our universities in the subsequent twenty-five years meant that nostalgia won. Empiricists won. Banal prose and dull arguments won. Textbooks won. But for one moment, we experienced that thrill knowing that courage could be sieved

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through academic life. The big ideas could be published and find an audience.

Rave Off remains a testament to and of Steve as a PhD supervisor as much as a researcher. He knew that PhD students could change the world through their research. It also remains a tribute to a courageous independent publisher – Ashgate – who believed in this new voice. We are a long way from this courageous time and place now. Rave Off is a reminder that we can snatch this present – and shake the hell out of it.

Closure/erasure/disappearance

On August 31, 2006, the MIPC closed. It outlived Acid House and techno. It could not outlive Tony Blair. Appropriately, the Institute finished with a bang – the MIPC Discontinued Party. How such an influential research centre could disappear less than five years after the Birmingham Centre was closed confirms not only the changes in British universities, but the losses to a research culture of consultancies and enterprise, individual 'esteem', outcomes and indicators. The MIPC remains – appropriately – a marginal and silenced tale/tail in the history of the humanities. Its influence transformed higher education. Because Baby Boomer Cultural Studies scholars were evangelically committed to the Birmingham Centre, they missed the passion, the fashion, the deep and seductive interdisciplinarity that arched far beyond the sociology–literature–history hybrid. A specific group of scholars from law, criminology, leisure, sport, media and communication drank from the well of the MIPC. It gave them courage to enact a new way of reading, researching, summoning research methods and writing. The gumption to 'do theory' without apology in empiricist times remains significant, as is the commitment to a new mode of ethnography, so well revealed in the powerful and potent movement into ultra-realist criminology.

The MIPC was an institutional commitment to postgraduate students. It granted a talented group of new scholars light, space

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and support during this energetic time for both popular culture and universities. Perhaps the time was right for its closing. After Derek Wynne's death in 2002, both Steve Redhead and the last director, the incisive and radically interdisciplinary Justin O'Connor, left to take up professorships elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and then both ended up with chairs in Australia. Redhead, Wynne and O'Connor built a matrix of popular cultural scholarship that taught hundreds of students directly, but also informed and influenced thousands of readers and writers around the world.

Their legacy remains, not only in the way that researchers understand popular culture, but in an institution that continues their project. Substance – www.substance.net – is a not-for-profit organisation and worker cooperative. Three of the four members, Adam Brown, Gavin Mellor and Kath O'Connor, were research fellows at the MIPC. The other member, Tim Crabbe, is Professor of the Sociology of Sport and Popular Culture at Sheffield Hallam University. Their goal as a 'social research company' is to generate good policy in sport, urbanity, youth and popular cultures. In modelling new ways of thinking about social problems like 'binge drinking', 'urban decline' or 'inner city crime', they aim to give a voice and present the views of those too often excluded from political debates and governmental policy. Their maxim is a significant one: 'we help organisations that do good, think smarter'.⁵⁵

While working through this global spread, they are based on Ducie Street in Manchester. Operating outside of universities, Substance assesses and questions modes of social exclusion and how to build sustainable and more equitable communities. It seems appropriate as the MIPC closed and Substance opened that there was a research document to signal this passage. Their report, *Football and its Communities*,⁵⁶ was released for the Football Foundation in May 2006. While the report had many recommendations, the overarching goal was to increase the training and awareness of both coaches and policy makers into the specific needs of minority ethnic

communities, people with a range of physical and learning difficulties, and young people with a history of public offences. The function of sport for these groups, and for the wider personal development of excluded men and women, was verified through careful collaborative research with these communities.

Using the word Substance – and deploying a Peter Savillesque crisp design for their promotional materials – hints at the cultural reference points of the primary researchers. Substance has become the academic equivalent of New Order to the MIPC's Joy Division. They are collaborative risk-takers who are part of many communities but beholden to none. Just as New Order arose from the ashes of Joy Division and the death of Ian Curtis, so has Substance survived the closure of the MIPC, the deaths of Derek Wynne and Steve Redhead, and the resignation and migration of Justin O'Connor. By staying in Manchester, they have kept alive not only a narrative of political dissent and industrial innovation, but also maintained the pilot light of the MIPC.

While Substance is a continuation of this bright and dynamic popular cultural story, there is a well of sadness punctuating its designs and rhythms. With all this remarkable research work and community building, through their policy interventions and the commitment to social justice, the British university system could not include this type of work within its boundaries and portfolios of scholarship. Studying popular culture could no longer be supported within higher education. Yet through the MIPC, Manchester's 'other university' became famous around the world. Bristling academic managers preparing for the RAE and REF never grasped the international scale of this success. That Substance had to be formed outside of the university sector – that there was no place to conduct this important work on popular culture, sport and social exclusion – is a statement about what constitutes research. Similarly, this reissue of *The End-of-the-Century Party* serves as a reminder of a moment where radical, edgy research emerged from a university.

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There was a time when academic outsiders could remain inside a university. Academic history is filled with tales of gritty defiance, steadfastness through managerial ambivalence and incisive interventions in injustice. E.P. Thompson's clashes with Warwick University⁵⁷ – from within – triggered a critique on corporate takeovers of educational institutions years before many would routinely sell their words and ideas to the highest bidder. Edward Said began his critique of the West by clipping articles from daily newspapers that – like an endlessly dripping tap – betrayed damaging and seemingly unconscious assumptions about the Arab world.⁵⁸ Similarly, the courage of Howard Zinn, in cutting through class-based bias, has meant that those too often discarded into the dustbin of history – particularly indigenous peoples, citizens of colour, women and the working class – have a language and space to commence writing their own stories and narratives through tropes of struggle, resistance and survival, rather than loss, defeat and destruction.⁵⁹ That all three men maintained an uncomfortable relationship with their universities adds credibility to their critique. This moment in the history of higher education is behind us. Steve Redhead's generation was the last where the outsider could remain inside a university, but write from the margins of it.

Disappointed of Manchester (and Perth)

One of the under-appreciated side projects from the original New Order quartet was the group Electronic. Formed by the Manchester core of Johnny Marr and Bernard Sumner, both members of the Pet Shop Boys – Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe – would join them for particular tracks. 'Disappointed'⁶⁰ was a minor hit in the United Kingdom. Propelled by Marr's percussive guitar and the relentless rhythm from Sumner's synthesizer, Tennant's melancholic voice ensured that listeners and dancers knew there would not be a happy ending. Once more, we would be disappointed.

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The 1990s was like that. There was a brief hint of optimism – that there may just be a happy ending – only to be crushed by twits, trivia and temper. And that was just Liam Gallagher. In Sing when You're Winning, published in 1987, Steve presented the narrative of his own life in the third person.

He was born in the fifties, grew up in the sixties, got disillusioned in the seventies, only to stay alive in the eighties: just like modern English football and also – to a lesser extent – pop culture as a whole.⁶¹

After Sing when You're Winning and The End-of-the-Century Party were published, he would go on to be gouged by the 1990s, digitised through the 2000s, and die in the 2010s. Trump outlived him. What a bastard.

Steve understood disappointment. He would conceptualise, theorise and apply this knowledge. The 1990s – Baudrillard's redundant decade – eviscerated Steve's private life. He was running through a metaphoric razor factory. He was bladed by events and the cuts were deep. Relationships and friendships were burned by emotional acid. My 1990s was not much better. Both of us believed in love and were romantics in different ways. We were looking for intelligence, progressive politics, laughter, music, sport, kindness and compatibility. But that belief in finding a companion through life meant we were both shattered by disappointment. Optimism was crushed. The 1990s – for both of us – was a time where trust was broken, and any hope for happiness was lost. It was like being trapped in a Fleetwood Mac music video.

Through the 1990s, we 'met' once, via letter. I had won a Commonwealth Scholarship to undertake my PhD in the UK. I had to list on the form the three universities where I would like to enrol, and the prospective supervisors.

- 1 Manchester Metropolitan University, Steve Redhead
- 2 Sussex University, Alan Sinfield
- 3 University of Birmingham, Richard Johnson

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I wrote to Steve to ask if he would be my PhD supervisor. We had never met. I had read all his books and kept the Mixmag where his work at the MIPC was mentioned. In our present time of impact and engagement, we forget what it meant to be mentioned in Mixmag. I was in awe. I was a fan. But in 1994, I was heading to Manchester. Finally I would be at the centre of something, rather than dancing on the edge. I was desperate to learn, to think, to read and to move away from a place where, if aliens landed, they would not be noticed.

Steve wrote back to me on MIPC letterhead, confirming that I would be able to complete my PhD at the MIPC and he would be the supervisor. Years later, when we met, he told me he remembered the letter because it was from Australia. While the Australian origin was unusual, he was receiving hundreds of requests from around the world to complete a PhD with him. That fame was based on The End-of-the-Century Party. Thousands of students from my generation read it and wanted to be somewhere – anywhere – where an exciting intellectual life was emerging. But he also remembered my distinctive handwriting and unusual name.

How our lives would have been different if we had met in 1994, in the midst of his Fleetwood Mac video and before my personal Rumours album had started, will never be known. My life was to take another path away from Manchester. The week I received his letter, I also accepted a job offer: a one-year contract at the Victoria University in Wellington, in Aotearoa/New Zealand. From my background, the rule was always clear. If a job was offered, a job was taken. That rule has found me a lot of trouble in subsequent decades. I left Perth, in Australia not Scotland, and travelled horizontally rather than vertically. My thesis was finished quickly so I could take another job at the conclusion of the Wellington experience. My Manchester wish would never materialise. My MIPC dream was over. Hard work began. Happiness was over. I was post-youth. Life would be tough from here.

Unpopular theorists for popular culture

The End-of-the-Century Party was Redhead's first deep engagement with Virilio. At this time, Virilio was 'simply' a theorist of speed, with the early tendencies of what would become Internet Studies and Digital Cultures using him as its fuel. Baudrillard had a much rockier positioning in the international academy. Baudrillard was intellectually naughty, ignored disciplinary rules and was unpopular in his engagement with popular culture. While theorists like Derrida and Kristeva gained solid credibility for their – supposedly – deep and convincing ideas, Baudrillard confronted a key problem in his movement from the French to the Anglophone academy. There was a gulf between the French publication and the translation into English of his scholarly monographs. The most troubling example of this problem, with both a seismic impact on his profile and the frame of *The End-of-the-Century Party*, was the lag between the publication of Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*,⁶² in French in 1976 and the delayed launching in English in 1993. *Simulations* was published in French in 1983 and in English in 1994.

Therefore the innovations of *The End-of-the-Century Party* were clear. The embryonic Popular Cultural Studies had found a shaman in Jean Baudrillard, and a DJ in Steve Redhead. Having read the French originals, Steve realised that Baudrillard's fascination with life and death, disappearances, multiple endings and agitated time was ideal to frame and theorise Thatcher and Reagan, and their aftershocks. Similarly, Redhead saw Virilio as much more than a scholar of speed. It was always his theorisations of space that intrigued him. The oblique – as a trope and tendency – remained the foundational plane for Redhead's life. Everything was a bit unpredictable. Somewhat angular. Unstable under our feet. Unexpected. The bunker, similarly, was more than a metaphor or architectural formation.⁶³ It was the design for the end of the world. Decades later,

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he would work to develop bunker archaeology as the foundational trope for claustropolitan sociology.⁶⁴

The End-of-the-Century Party was the key introduction in how theorists could be used to understand popular culture and politics. By intellectually walking with these two wayward, contrary scholars before they were widely translated, Redhead established a theoretical palette that would change Cultural Studies, socio-legal studies, Leisure Studies, Media Studies and sports sociology. ‘The post’ became possible. Unpopular theory could enable popular culture.

What took you so long?

After the failed attempt to complete a PhD at the MIPC, our paths crossed a couple more times. After a few contract posts, I attained a tenured position at Murdoch University in Western Australia. Like the MIPC, a group of incredibly talented PhD students gathered to work on popular culture. One of the early students researched electronic dance music. Steve was the obvious examiner. That was at the end of 1999. The end-of-the-century party was commencing. Steve was disappointed because – unaware Australian universities did not have a viva – he would not have the chance to travel to Australia. The following year, Steve was asked – unknown to me – to be a referee for my University of New South Wales Press book, Ladies Who Lunge: Celebrating Difficult Women.⁶⁵ This book relished the (self-) mocking operatic tragedies of being a heterosexual woman. Popular culture played with the argument, which is probably why Steve was contacted as a reviewer. After the formal process concluded, I received an email from him telling me how much he had enjoyed the book.

These two interludes meant that I suggested Steve Redhead as a keynote speaker for the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference in mid-2001. I was a minor member of the

organising committee, but this suggestion was accepted. Steve travelled to Australia in the last week of June 2001. The committee members were too lazy to retrieve him from the airport, and two hours before the long-haul flight landed, I was instructed to manage the keynote speaker and drop him at his accommodation. I was disgusted that someone so famous – who had travelled so far – was treated so disgracefully. I contacted my father who could get me to the airport and a hotel at such short notice. We both searched online – in those pre-Google days – to try and find a picture of Steve so that we could recognise him in the arrivals lounge.

There was nothing.

Searches for ‘Steve Redhead’ resulted in pictures of ‘Steves’ that liked ‘Redheads’. I saw some images that I could never ‘unsee’. The pornography sites particularly enjoyed oversharing the Redheads liked by Steves. But what was clear is that Steve Redhead did not want an online profile. Even in these early years of the read–write web, he had judiciously kept himself digitally disconnected. He was hiding, and not in the light. Even his university profile at Manchester Metropolitan University was close to invisible. So my father created a whiteboard sign – ‘Redhead’ – and we used that to locate the visiting professor and keynote speaker.

We made it to the airport as the flight was landing. My father held up the ‘Redhead’ sign. As it turned out, I did not need it. An impressive, tall man strode through the customs doors at Perth Airport. So cool. Style to burn. I knew it was him. After that initial recognition, my second thought was, ‘I’m going to marry that man’.

Conveniently neither of us were married to other people at the time. Considering the state of our 1990s, that was a minor miracle in itself. But we met. It was pretty clear my feelings were shared, but nothing was said. I introduced his keynote at the conference. I explained his significance, his extraordinary international contribution, and what he had given to my generation of scholars. Only in retrospect do I remember with sadness his joking comment as he started his

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talk: 'that introduction was so good, I hardly recognised myself. Let's hope it's not my obituary.'

No Steve. Not that time. That would happen seventeen years later.

I held a party for him and my students after the three-day conference concluded. He signed all his books in my possession – the full set – during the party. At the end of the night when he helped me wash the dishes, he quietly said, 'I've fallen in love with you, you know'.

I turned to him at the sink. 'What took you so long?'

He returned to Manchester the next day. We wrote to each other between July and December. We spent Christmas together in Perth. He asked me to marry him on New Year's Eve, 2001. He returned to Manchester on his birthday, January 5. Then on February 7, he boomeranged back to Perth once more. We married on February 9, 2002. With the 1990s forgotten, it was time to start a different kind of party for a new century.

Thatcher's boys

Steve Redhead was a men's studies scholar in everything but name. Almost all of his books offered a biting, hard engagement with the excesses of masculinity. Derived from a tall, imposing, heterosexual scholar of football, this critique found weight and momentum. From *Sing when You're Winning*, the chauvinism of English football rubbed – chaffed – against the chauvinism of English men. His complicated theorisation of football supporters did not permit either the label 'hooligan' or 'fan' to sit comfortably. Margaret Thatcher's dis/engagement with the working class created ambivalent roles for football fans. Redhead confirmed that, 'there is clearly a sense in which the 1980s lads, and many players and managers and administrators in the modern game, are Thatcher's boys'.⁶⁶ The impact of regional inequality and underemployment was scarring men, and Redhead believed that football and football supporters were part of 'a backlash of wounded masculine certainties'.⁶⁷

Gender and sexuality were empowering variables through *The End-of-the-Century Party*. This white, heterosexual, male academic, with qualifications in law from elite universities, understood feminism. *The End-of-the-Century Party* was a celebration of diverse sexualities and gender experiments. He argued that pop was always more welcoming of the contrary, defiant and different when compared to rock. Redhead argued that, 'Post-Political Pop [is] worth taking seriously'.⁶⁸ Feminism and non-heteronormative identities were given space, meaning and respect.

He continued this trajectory through *Football with Attitude*, where the 'fragile identity'⁶⁹ of men is provoked and probed. In this book, Redhead unpicked the lock of masculinity. This book – operating at a key moment in globalising, corporate football – revealed the textures and undulations of men and football, particularly in the North of England. This was a book about football. It was a book about fandom. It was a book about fanzines. But it was also a book about how men change in and through leisure, and how that provides a learning space – an enabling space – for the rest of their lives.

Feminism must patrol masculinity

When I met Steve he was already a professor. Internationally known, he had changed multiple disciplines and birthed a few others. Yet from this position of power, he argued throughout his life that men's behaviour must be patrolled by feminists. When the Donald Trump 'pussy grabbing' tape emerged, his response was an intriguing one. While a range of feminist-affirmative men decried and denied the language and the sentiment, Steve was staunch: 'that is exactly how men describe women. Trump is not unusual. That is masculinity as normal, as expressed by men. I've been in football change rooms. That is the language used.'

Steve, with intent and consciousness, chose alternative pathways through masculinity. Schooled by 1970s feminism, feminist sociology

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and feminist jurisprudence including the work of Beverley Skeggs, former head of Sociology at the University of Manchester, who was incredibly influential to his research and politics, Steve decided to occupy a different mode of masculinity, and that decision was transformative for thousands of scholars. He supervised the first transgender PhD student, using his stature as a white straight man to provide credibility and protection for this student and the important research. He supervised more women than men through to PhD completion, and he supported men in universities who wanted to live, teach and research in different ways.

Steve had done all of this work in thinking, consciousness and application, heavily influenced by feminism, before we met. I was a humble senior lecturer and had just published my second book. But he made a decision to support me and my career. He said so often through our marriage, 'I've made so many mistakes through my career. Let's get this right for you.'

He left a professorship and a university role he had held for twenty-five years to move to Australia to help me and my career. We moved around the world – together – because I was not receiving the opportunities he thought I deserved. Australian higher education is patriarchal and hardwired in favour of the hard sciences. The leadership posts are granted to men with a background in engineering and the lab-based sciences. That is also the group that is promoted. The humanities disciplines are treated as an amuse-bouche to the main scholarly meal in Australia, an inconvenient, fluffy degree where the graduates are unemployable. The academics in these areas are tolerated, but not awarded, rewarded or respected.

We left Australia to see the world – together. It was a weird experience, but brilliant. We saw the worst of higher education, and the best. As a husband and wife team, we often had to accept two jobs at a lesser university to be together. That decision then created its own problems. Together, we often had more publications than the rest of the faculty combined. Steve had his share of bizarre incidents where men and

women in senior posts would perform as if they were in a Quentin Tarantino movie. After decades of stability for Steve at Manchester Metropolitan University, the cold, noxious winds battered higher education. Our goods – books, clothes and household items – remained in storage for years as we tried to find a stable university environment in which to work and live. We were searching for a reality that no longer existed: a well-run, judiciously managed, financially secure university where brilliant people gathered to create new knowledge. It was a Hacienda of a different kind. Searching for it, we bounced for years between toxic institutions. Steve had excrement slid under his office door in one institution. He was accosted by a male professor in a carpark, ridiculing and riling him to punch him. Steve – a ‘big unit’ as he was described by our colleague Brian Morris at the University of Bolton – merely held back the fists of his combatant, pushed him into his own space, and walked away. He managed multiple questions about the ‘authenticity’ of our marriage, even from his former students. His expertise as he created and validated an innovative law degree in a regional Australian university was monitored in meetings by police/academics with a controversial past in the United Kingdom.⁷⁰ We lived a precarious life. We saw the worst of international higher education, including the suicide of colleagues and deeply deranged academic management.

Through this profound unpredictability, Steve remained staunch in his support of me. When we married, we melded our book collection. There was an overlap of about a quarter of the collection, but once fully mixed, over 15,000 books filled our library. Houses had to be bought for the shelf room. We had the best Cultural Studies collection of books in the world and it meant that Steve had an infusion of new ideas, particularly on digitisation and colonisation, that he had not seen. I was able to read the original versions of all the key theorists from the last two centuries. But his help, advice and support were crucial as I moved to the United Kingdom and published *The University of Google*.⁷¹ This book – suddenly – gained a public profile. Steve, using his experience

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from publishing The End-of-the-Century Party and Rave Off, knew how to control the publicity and press interest, and he ensured that I made the most of those press opportunities, but also that I knew how to turn off the media tap and move to the next project. Through Steve's careful monitoring and advice, I was able to move the success and profile of The University of Google into a weekly column for the Times Higher Education. This was a privilege, one that I will never forget or take for granted. As trolls and weirdos responded to these articles, Steve remained even and focused on the quality of the journalism, and making a difference to international higher education. We talked. We read. We thought. We wrote. We moved through our life, always together.

The marriage itself became well known. While academics frequently marry each other, it is rare that they are both senior academics. Two married professors in the British system are rare. The relationship featured in the Times Higher Education in an article titled 'Marital Bliss'.⁷² It captures so much of who we were at the University of Brighton, me in my first professorial role in media, Steve as the chair of sport and media cultures. But the humour, the relationship, the connection was clear. We laughed a lot. For the first time in our lives, we could relax into a relationship, giving everything to the other person selflessly and without borders, barriers, walls or inhibitions. The trust was absolute and the deep merging of our lives created a foundation for the ludicrous period that we described as our 'world tour of toxic universities'.

We learnt in our tour that the problem with the lesser-known and ranked institutions is not the academic staff, the administrative staff or the students. The problem is the 'academic managers'. Only two types of 'scholars' move out to regional environments to 'manage' these institutions: those that cannot obtain a management job – or any job – anywhere else, and those who use it as an ego-fuelled stepping stone to another location, moving as quickly as possible. This results in aspirational students in tough locations and committed, often early career staff, dodging chaotic, irrational, selfish managers. We bounced

around the world, mouth open, watching how neo-liberalism scarified our universities.

Through this chaos, I achieved three professorial posts in the United Kingdom and Canada. So did Steve. His support for me had truncated into five years what – for many women – would take a lifetime to achieve. He advised. He protected. He made key decisions when it was clear institutions were about to implode. But the consequence of being a part of the detritus of higher education is that I decided that I would not sit back and watch as student after student and staff member after staff member were abused, attacked, ridiculed and – for some of our colleagues – suiciding because of the behaviour of ‘academic managers’. So we decided that our next leap would be an attempt to move into university management.

Because I am an Australian, a woman, and in the humanities – the exact opposite of a ‘triple’ threat – it meant that few chances were given or opportunities provided for me to lead in stable organisations. It was necessary to start absolutely at the bottom of the higher-education heap. I found such an institution and an available post. The University of Bolton, by league tables, is one of the lesser-rated in the United Kingdom. They granted me my first management job. The students were remarkable and I experienced the most creative and interesting workforce I have ever seen. But once more, the trend we were observing – the regional and lesser-known universities hiring ineffective senior executives – was in place. We had to move as a train wreck approached, but I had shown that I manage universities well, and indeed I could lead. Steve attained one of his more unusual academic titles at Bolton – Visiting Professor of Accelerated Culture⁷³ – and supported this tough university through truly bizarre ‘leadership’ practices.

From that initial experience, we were able to secure posts back in Australia. I was appointed a head of school and Steve became the ‘super-sub’ of the institution. A regional university was able to hire two scholars that could fulfil most tasks required in higher education with

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ease while maintaining an international presence. Steve went on at this university to become the Associate Dean of Research, Sub-Dean of Graduate Research, a Head of School of Human Movement, and wrote and validated a law degree from scratch, moving it to an operational qualification in eight months. We shared our working day and the same building. It was a passionate and peaceful three years, once more crushed and truncated by dire academic management in a regional Australian university.

We were to be rescued by a Scot with a Manchester connection. Steve had known quite a few of these in his career. But this combination meant that his last Vice Chancellor would be his best. After head-of-department and school roles in the United Kingdom and Australia, I managed to achieve the job I was probably born to do: Dean of Graduate Research. It is the only post in a university that requires equal measures of excellence in both teaching and research. As I describe it, we are the goalkeeper of the university. There is only one, and we are invisible most of the time until a moment of crisis, when we can either lose or win for the university. My line manager was the remarkable and inspirational scholar Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) Robert Saint. Our Vice Chancellor was Colin Stirling. Although born in Glasgow, Stirling worked his way through the ranks to senior leadership at Manchester University. He personally reviewed Steve's CV when I became Dean of Graduate Research, and appointed him as a professor at Flinders.

With hindsight, the Australian component of Steve's career was always odd. Noting the exception of Flinders University, Steve was treated oddly and pretty badly by other men in Australia. There were many reasons for that. Intellectual jealousy, certainly. But increasingly – people did not know who he was, because the Australian humanities had disconnected from international debates. The insularity created brittleness and insecurity. So often other male Australian academics said to me, 'Oh Tara, I believe your partner has a new book coming out?' Steve Redhead did not have a name. By the end of his career – and at the height of his intellectual power – he became 'my partner'.

Male academics disrespected Steve because his wife was a senior academic. Supposedly that was a reflection on him, that he would take a 'secondary' role to his wife.

Upon Steve's death and the international response to it, there was a fair amount of surprise in Australian higher education. A journal article, submitted to an Australian journal before his death and published after it, resulted in bizarre conversation about his biography. I was asked to provide further information about him, 'in case Australian Cultural Studies scholars don't know who he is'. I was asked by an editorial assistant if his biography should include his role as Professor of Cultural Studies at Flinders University. I replied, 'if people working in Australian Cultural Studies do not know who he is, then it is a bit late now'. The title remains. He died as a Professor of Cultural Studies at Flinders University. What would they prefer? Professor of Cultural Studies in Elysium?

If someone as senior and well-known as Steve is undermined by other men – eighteen books, millions of dollars, pounds and euros in funding, hundreds of articles – then what is happening to other men who choose different ways of living and working, both inside and outside our universities? As his wife, I was left embarrassed at how other Australian male academics treated Steve. In response, he just laughed and used the old Tony Wilson line in response, 'If you get it, great. If you don't – that's fine too. But maybe you should read more.'⁷⁴ Right until the end of his life, Steve had a strong sense of himself as an intellectual, a scholar, a teacher and a man, and he focused on the feminist task of helping me help students and staff and commit to high-quality doctoral education.

Every day of Steve's professional life, he focused on improving universities. He believed in the project of higher education. He believed in an intellectual life. When he was an Associate Dean for Research, he was the only person to hold that title to travel to Dubbo, a dusty regional city with a commitment to indigenous studies and education. He spent time enabling early career researchers, composed overwhelmingly by

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women and indigenous scholars. He changed their lives and their careers. As Linda Ghys, a lecturer in Australian Indigenous Studies, remembers,

Steve was so generous with his time and talent when he came to Dubbo and sat with a group of ECRs who really had no idea what they were doing. By the time he left, we thought we could fly.⁷⁵

Steve dedicated the latter stages of his life – his late style – to enabling innovative marginalised scholars and supervising fine students that the system had often discarded, producing the most innovative, difficult and courageous scholarship at the edge of knowledge, and supporting me to try and improve the quality and integrity of doctoral degrees. He was a different kind of man. He did not live the narrative written for middle-class English academics. He did not live the career that was expected of a man who had graduated from Manchester and Warwick Universities.

One man, one courageous, brilliant man, can occupy a different space. His career was a performance-art experiment in challenging masculinity narratives. Men can hold power and use it in different ways. The university system from which Steve graduated no longer exists. It has been replaced by contract and casual labour, Key Performance Indicators, and research impact and engagement. But one man – one scholar – can stand for something. Different ways of being a man in universities are emerging. Steve, once more, was ahead of us.

Right populism

Redhead had a tendency to be ahead, decades ahead. While the last book written while he was alive – *Trump Studies: An Intellectual Guide to Why Citizens Vote against Their Interests*⁷⁶ – explored populism from the right, and its consequences, *The End-of-the-Century Party*, written at the fag-end of Thatcher's rule, had discovered these tendencies at their emergence. He described, 'the specific economic, political and cultural changes over the last

decade which have made it possible for this “right” populism to become popular.⁷⁷ One of these ‘changes’ was a disavowal of theory, with either a capitalised or small ‘T’. The empirical spilled into empiricism with ease, as research from the lab was (over)valued more than the field or the desk.

This era of populisms has – as Redhead realised – ‘an avowed resistance to theoretical analysis.’⁷⁸ Instead of acquiescing to this movement, Redhead took it on. The last book published while he was still alive was *Theoretical Times*.⁷⁹ It is a masterwork. It creates more concepts, ideas, tropes and tactics than most scholars offer in a career. While *The End-of-the-Century Party* played with ‘post political pop’, Redhead realised the time for playing was over. The hopelessness of the 2010s, what Zizek described as the ‘new dark ages,’⁸⁰ promulgated fear and exhaustion. Therefore the politics of theory became the focus and the imperative.

Digital Redhead Studies

After the conclusion of Steve’s second act and his provocations through Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, his third act would apply both scholars in an agile, digital, deterritorialised and disintermediated fashion. When we returned to Australia, we lived in country New South Wales and then Adelaide, the capital city with an airport that is classified as ‘regional’ because of the low-level of arrivals and departures. But size, distance and time zones no longer mattered. The internet had reached a level of saturation where Virilian acceleration in ‘the city of the instant’⁸¹ could collide.

Steve’s digital sojourn was a surprise. When I met him at Perth airport in 2001, he did not have an online profile. There were no pictures of him. He was a digital phantom. I – conversely – had just completed a qualification in Internet Studies. I was digging into digitisation. Half my books have ‘digital’ in the title. Steve had to be dragged to the internet. Within a year of our marriage, he had a personal website. I convinced him that it would profile his books. One of my PhD

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students developed that first site for him when we lived in Western Australia. Steve could see its value.

But then something odd happened on the way to and through podcasting. I was one of the first academic podcasters. Our house in Eastbourne had an entire room dedicated to my experiments with microphones and software. But slowly, I convinced him to start podcasting with me. Right from the start, the results were innovative. I appreciated the flexibility of podcasts, particularly with regard to length. They were a highly experimental space and in many ways, still are. But when we were teaching at the University of Brighton, I wanted to enhance our online learning strategies. So we started to record what we termed 'micro-interviews'. I would ask one question – like 'What is post-youth culture?'⁸² Steve would answer it. Two minutes in length, they could be embedded into learning management systems and played in lecture theatres. Again, he could see its value. This micro-interview genre expanded to wider discussions, many of them teaching-led innovations.⁸³ We started to conduct reflexive weekly recorded sessions with our PhD students, enabling their learning and profile. We then moved into longer and deeper conversations about research.

Perhaps the most remarkable podcasting genre we invented encircled Theoretical Times.⁸⁴ The Christmas and New Year of 2015 to 2016 resulted in us recording eleven podcasts in eleven days. Each podcast discussed a theorist or new concept. I would edit and upload them at the conclusion of each Antipodean day. Steve would then post them on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Overnight, he would receive feedback and commentary from friends and colleagues. Then we would record another one. These discussions would provide the foundation, frame and bedrock for the book Theoretical Times. For an experienced and senior researcher to create a new research process beginning with podcasts demonstrates his innovation and capacity to take risks. His final podcast was recorded on December 31, 2017, on the 'Rescue Doctorate'.⁸⁵ Although tired, his excitement and interest in the capacity of podcasts to narrowcast new ideas to the world was clear. After his

death, I received thousands of emails, cards, tweets, posts and letters from around the world. The most devastated people were our podcast listeners. They had shared hundreds of hours of their lives with Steve. His voice was an accompaniment through commutes, walks, good times and bad. His voice had lived with them. They were distraught.

Through this period, Steve tweeted with an excitement of a labrador when confronted by a burger, and loved the 24/7 mode of communicating with his friends and colleagues around the world. He blogged with style, energy and idiosyncrasy. In the final five years of his life, he entered the world of YouTube. He was always a great media talent, but the conversational style of YouTube and vlogging suited him. He conducted a series of vlogs and training sessions with me, once more assisting me with my dean role at Flinders.⁸⁶ But we also recorded one of my most precious memories, and it conveys much about our relationship. I was completing work on white-male music fandom and completist tendencies. I was also watching ‘unpacking cultures’, where people film themselves opening new technology, fashion and boxed editions of music after they ordered it online. Steve bought The Cutting Edge, and I recorded a video of him opening it. The resultant footage is funny, but also demonstrates his brilliance, comedic timing and our relationship.⁸⁷ It was used as the practice-led component of a refereed article, with a melancholic ending as it was accepted and published after Steve’s death.⁸⁸ The videos that Steve created with me span a range of functions. He trained supervisors and offered advice to PhD students. He discussed how to manage academic publishers, but also offered short sessions on emerging interdisciplinary fields.

Steve was also able to use the read-write web and social media for teaching and research. These interfaces suited him as they were international and immediate. But also, Steve transformed his approach to teaching and learning through our marriage. Steve cared about teaching, but he became an academic primarily to write and create research. One of the debates we ran through the entirety of our marriage was about the importance of academics holding teaching qualifications. Through

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sixteen years of marriage, I managed to convince him that the widening participation agenda has transformed higher education, and much more attention to curricula design, learning outcomes, multimodality and information literacy is required.⁸⁹ Steve delivered some of the best teaching and learning I have ever seen as we moved around the world. The course we taught together at Murdoch University – around his Repetitive Beat Generation – was in some ways the subject offered at the end of the world.⁹⁰ It was a staunch curriculum, difficult and taught without apologies. Exhaustive levels of reading, independence and research planning were required to complete the assignments, and we maintained high expectations. Every student enrolled in that subject went into a higher degree.

Perhaps Steve's best undergraduate course was offered in Canada. He was teaching the fourth year subject in legal studies: the Cultural Studies of Law. As the man who created this field, there was no one more appropriate to teach this subject, and the students in that course knew it. We worked on the curriculum so that a cascading assessment was put in place. The improvement in the students – who had experienced little jurisprudence through their undergraduate degree – was stellar. Andy, one of the students, was taught by both of us. He was a legal studies major with a communication studies minor. One morning, as he was coming out of Steve's office, I asked him how he was going. Steve leaned on his door frame and replied that Andy had improved 15 per cent between the two assignments. I congratulated him. But I will always remember Andy's words to us, appropriately inspired by Canadian ice hockey: 'Before I met you both, I was being taught by the rookies. I didn't know that. But now I'm taught by the A Team. And I now know the difference.'

Steve's postgraduate supervisory career is even more stellar. He supervised the challenging students, the students written off by the system: older students, women, GLBT students, students of colour and indigenous students. His fundamental core of decency and respect for these men and women was profound. I learnt so much from him.

Memories of the future

He improved and transformed policies, practices, guidelines and procedures. He changed lives by believing in students when everyone else had walked away. He accompanied them on their intellectual journey and they became successful. In his third and final act – the digital scholar – the postgraduate podcasts meant he became a supervisor to the world and for the world. He has even been mentioned in the acknowledgements of theses, far beyond his final home in Adelaide, Australia.⁹¹ Digitisation enabled the application of his theories and the amplification of his research to new audiences.

Disappearances

Jean Baudrillard denied his own death, even when he was alive. He once stated that ‘dying is pointless ... you have to know how to disappear.’⁹² ‘The post’ did not attract the scholar – incorrectly – aligned with postmodernism. He continued his theme at a New York event 2005. Responding to the death of Jacques Derrida, the interlocutrix asked, how would you like to be remembered? The ageing scholar replied with relish, consistent to the end: ‘What I am, I don’t know. I am the simulacrum of myself.’⁹³

Steve Redhead was fascinated by the late Baudrillard and particularly the posthumous Baudrillard, where fragments and shards of ideas were published in new forms. Writing and publishing *The Jean Baudrillard Reader* just after the death of the in/famous scholar, Redhead confirmed that, ‘once the rather ghoulish media fascination with his own death has died down it is surely the case that, for decades to come, Baudrillard will be studied even more avidly than when he was alive.’⁹⁴ Subsequent books, particularly *Theoretical Times* and *Trump Studies*, agitated the posthumous Baudrillardian writing and how it reflected on and problematised the acceptable interpretations of the scholar.

Redhead realised that, ‘even before his death, Baudrillard’s own disappearance was characteristically set up.’⁹⁵ To plan – not for

death – but disappearance offered a staunch negation. The denial of identity, life and living creates a cycle of disappearance, rather than death. Even in *Post-fandom and the Millennial Blues: The Transformation of Soccer Culture*, Redhead summoned multiple disappearances: of youth culture, hooliganism, and – productively – law. He argued that, ‘the theme of “disappearance” is central to the present book. In fact, much of what has been taken as useful from Baudrillard’s work is paralleled – and frequently, as Baudrillard explicitly acknowledges, originates – in the work of the much less known French theorist, Paul Virilio.’⁹⁶ Baudrillard’s fixation on disappearance had its origins in Virilio’s *Esthetique de la disparition*.⁹⁷ Such intellectual friendship and exchange mattered to his work, and the relationship between Baudrillard and Virilio – the two outsiders of French intellectual life – was poignantly drawn by Redhead.

This disappearance also mattered to disciplines. Redhead’s radical interdisciplinary challenges included one of his most provocative statements:

The media, youth deviance and law are intertwined in the area of sport, that law itself has partially ‘disappeared’ – becoming ‘translaw’ – into forms of popular and post-realist, post-youth culture.⁹⁸

Through this early engagement with ‘disappearance’, *Post-fandom and the Millennial Blues* transformed sports studies, leisure studies, football studies, sports law and fan studies. It demonstrated how high theory provided the mortar to align disparate spheres and paradigms like youth, sport, music and law. The exploration of ‘translaw’ and the ‘hyperlegal’ is potent, as is the emerging matrix between popular and post-realist culture. Where the book remains important and incisive in its interventions today is in fan studies, which is not in a strong state. Most of the research offers bizarre fixations on identity and representation. ‘Post-realism’ demands more of scholars.

Theoretical death and the last punk

Steve was devastated by David Bowie's death. The idea that Bowie had kept his illness secret, with his death announced on Twitter, had an enormous impact on him. So did his 'funeral'. Bowie selected a direct cremation. There would be no public marking of his passing. He wanted no ceremony or memorial at the end. A direct cremation. A private death, where this moment is merely a pause in understanding a life that was lived. Blackstar was a soundtrack in the house for months and the video for the title track shook Steve.⁹⁹

Alan Rickman died four days after David Bowie, again keeping his illness a secret and actioning a private, direct cremation. Rickman survived five months after his diagnosis with – you are ahead of me, dear reader – pancreatic cancer. These remarkable men – these popular cultural icons – created defiant spaces around their life, illness, death and privacy. There was no death. Just a disappearance. At the time, Steve said to me, 'that's the way to go'.

Even before Bowie, Rickman and Steve's own diagnosis and death sentence – he was obsessed by Jean Baudrillard's post-death, and indeed the multiple disappearances. He was fascinated by Baudrillard's almost Northern pessimism that life is really another form of death, but death does not really exist. It is just another form of disappearance. Steve's books through the 2010s mined the posthumous Baudrillard publications with deep and sustained engagement. The reason Trump Studies is so theoretically punchy and our analysis so accurate is through the careful readings of the scarified fragments of the posthumous Baudrillard.

When confronted by his own pending death, I knew what was coming. His fixation on Baudrillard's reversibility meant that death would be a disappearance and disappearance would be a death. Analogue Steve would disappear. Digital Steve would occupy the simulacra.

It all started so normally. Well, normal for us, which was always pretty relative. Steve went yellow. There was no other signal that

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anything was wrong, worrying or problematic. One day, he just turned a jaundice yellow. Unaware of the seriousness of this symptom, while organising a doctor's appointment, I made Donovan jokes and sung 'Mellow Yellow' and 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' throughout the day. After a sojourn through Dr Google, I'd ascertained it was gall stones. I should have known better. No excuses. I wrote The University of Google and Digital Dieting. Never trust the bloody internet.

I was so wrong. The yellowing of the skin connoted the death sentence. After the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, the first week was rough. I nearly lost him. We waited in brown, beige and cream-coloured consulting rooms as specialists described 'multi-disciplinary teams' to assess his case. By the face of these specialists, rather than the words, the 'treatments' they outlined were offered but without enthusiasm. Steve was the archetypal nightmare case. There were no symptoms of any illness of any kind. The first symptom meant death, and soon.

Steve's tumour in the pancreas was drawing energy from a pretty impressive blood supply. He returned from the hospital after the blockage was cleared and a stent inserted. He took a taxi home. He would not let me pick him up. The tall, imposing, suited – if yellow – man who left the house to insert a stent and remove some gall stones returned to our home ill-shaven, and wearing his Unknown Pleasures t-shirt. Dragging his overnight bag behind him, he stopped and stared at me just before walking through our front door. Then he stepped into our house, turned to me as I closed the door, and offered me one phrase.

'I'm a dead man walking.'

Stunned. Confused. Shocked. Shaking with fear. We collapsed into each other and cried. I tried to feed him, and failed pretty spectacularly. We sat on the lounge suite trembling with despair. But he had one more horrifically beautiful phrase to offer me on that devastating Friday.

'All day, all I could think was I'm going to miss you. I'm just going to miss you.'

Memories of the future

Our relationship shifted and morphed immediately. Life had been taken away from this brilliant man. I had one remaining job. I had to return choice and agency to him during these final days. We did not know how long it would be. Dr Google delivered frightening predictions of a few weeks. So, from the vantage point of June 28, 2017 – the dead man walking day and also the anniversary of when we met sixteen years earlier – I put some targets in place. Let's get him to Christmas. He loves Christmas. Then my birthday (January 3), his birthday (January 5) and then our anniversary (February 9). Then, as I said to him, 'bets are off' from there.

The only hope with this illness – the Whipple procedure – was not possible for Steve because of the positioning of the tumour in relation to a pretty impressive array of blood vessels. The cascade of hope from hopelessness tumbled from the mouth of specialists in those first few days. Supposedly, if they gave Steve chemotherapy, the tumour may shrink and then a Whipple may be conducted. No guarantees. No odds provided. But there would be counselling. Great. Just great. Steve was asked to attend once a week to talk through his feelings with patients and social workers.

No chance. When the worst happens, it is stunning how it is assumed through the excesses of neo-liberalism that if we can all over-share, talk through our feelings and think positively, then the world will right itself. Steve was dying. He deserved space. He was a brilliant man. He had a right to a period of 'thinking time' and as much agency as I could give him. He could not choose an alternative to death. But he sure as hell could choose how he lived. His music tastes became stranger than usual. Crowded House – Neil Finn in particular – seemed to speak to him through the sixteen years of our marriage. He played and sung their songs (badly), but 'Four Seasons in One Day', 'Fall at Your Feet' and 'Don't Dream Its Over' spilled from his headphones most days as I checked on him in his office after the diagnosis. But Oasis, New Order, Joy Division, Bowie and the Stones were constant companions. Laughingly, we could not fathom that Steve would die before Keith

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Richards and Joe Walsh. Hell, even Ringo Bloody Starr was going to live longer than Steve. But – obviously – for a dying man, there is only one soundtrack: Elvis Costello. If you want music to accompany you through the fag-end of life, then Elvis is it.

We sat quietly through the second weekend after the diagnosis. All the doctors had offered their views. Multidisciplinary teams had provided still-born 'options'. Now – as always – it was just the two of us. No interruptions from anything outside the house. We talked and binge watched Outlander. By mid-Sunday afternoon, he said that 'I've made a decision'. He confirmed what I knew as I watched a cloud of terror pass over his eyes and then clear. 'I'm not going to turn up to the chemo tomorrow, or the damn pass the talking stick circle.'

He was on the lounge suite. I was sitting cross-legged on my bean bag in front of my computer. I looked up at him. 'Babe, are you sure?'

'Yes.'

'Right. So tell me what's happening now.'

'I support you in the job. I write. I read. I finish Theoretical Times. We write Trump Studies. I watch football. I listen to music. I don't want anyone else involved except us. I want to be at home. I don't want to be in any more of those damn waiting rooms where the carpet smells of death. I'm going out in private. And I love this house. You and me. Let's do this. No one else knows. Until the end. You manage my death like you've managed my life.'

I didn't cry. Well, not in front of him. Never in front of him. No anger. There was never anger. No howling at the moon at the unfairness of this extraordinary mind being deleted from the world. I had one job. Protect him so he could go out exactly as he wanted to exit. He deserved that. Theoretical Times meant so much to him. He must finish it and see it published. Somehow, that was the deal we made with the reaper. We had always been very private. We never entertained in the house. We never plugged in our landline and rarely used a mobile phone. Our home was our sanctuary. So now, the last gift I could give him was privacy. I would be calm, keep life moving for him, create

Memories of the future

normalcy and balance even from the living hell of the worst thing that would happen to either of us. My only release – which became a pattern – was a one-minute stretch of road on the way to work each day. My eyes would fill with tears with the scale of the loss. Prescient grief. I knew the pain was coming. I would blink back the tears. Some would escape. Every morning, that was the only grief I would permit myself. Then my eyes would clear. I would park my car. I would work my day. I would return to Steve. We lived as the reaper danced around the house. There would be no happy ending.

That house became his posh prison for the next eight months. He never complained. We attended a five-minute general practitioner appointment once a month, where increasing strengths of morphine patches and Oxycontin were prescribed for him, along with a laundry list of medication for breakthrough pain. I tried to protect him from the chemists on these monthly trips. Those prescriptions were given to a dying man or woman. He may as well have had ‘Yes, I am dying’ tattooed on his forehead. So the pity in the eyes of the chemists was not good for him. I wanted him to remain Steve Redhead – brilliant, impressive, passionate and strong – right until the end. I did not want him defined by his illness. He was not pancreatic cancer.

Even in our present, dear reader, I’ll be damned if he is reduced to an illness. Do not reduce the life of the mind, the books, the adventurous intellectual spirit, to the tragedy of the death. Do not do that to him. Remember the disappearance, not the death. He was a scholar that changed the world. He deserves respect not pity. He had lived so much of his life with a punk diffidence to authority. I wanted him to continue that snub at the system as long as possible. He must have choice. No one must know. That is what he wanted. He could move through his digital life as Steve Redhead, tweeting, podcasting and writing without the reaper being seen by his friends, colleagues and students. The physical changes – the catastrophic weight loss, the morphine dreams and the slowing down of his walk and movements – were nothing compared to the emotional changes. He was devastated. He was producing the

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best work of his life. He was happily married. He lived in a beautiful house and the sun was shining. Manchester City would win the league. And he was dying so quickly. Therefore we lived each day binging weird television, listening to interesting music, and watching the train wreck of Trump's first year in Office. We still laughed a lot.

The medication was only unable to manage the pain three times during his illness. We ended up in hospital three times when it became unbearable. The first time, where the pain was so great that his heart rate lifted to dangerous levels and was taken to emergency, was a shocker. I stayed with him through much of the night. At 3am I went home to pack him a bag of clothes, toiletries, books and his iPod touch, to get some sleep and record a vlog on 'Epistemology' for my students. I went to the gym at 6am for an hour to sort out my thoughts. On the treadmill I received a call. In panic and fear, I answered it. 'Barry has been moved to the private hospital.'

Pause.

'Who's Barry?'

'Your husband.'

'Unless I am living in a parallel universe, my husband's name is Steve. Steve Redhead. I am Tara Brabazon.'

'Oh so sorry. Yes. Steve. Steve was wheeled to the private wing early this morning.'

'Why?'

There was a pause. 'It is best for him.'

'Just to clarify, he was admitted to emergency in the public hospital for pain relief, to reduce his heart rate and get his medication back on track. And you've wheeled him to a private hospital?'

'We'll expect to see you soon.'

Click.

I hurtled to the hospital with the clothes, toiletries, music and books, and found him in a private ward.

'OK what is going on?'

'Don't know. They wheeled me here at 5:30 this morning.'

'Darl there are no drips in you. What meds are you on?'

Memories of the future

'Antibiotics.'

'For what?'

'Don't know.'

'What about the pain relief babe?'

'Don't know.'

In comes a nurse. 'Why is he on antibiotics?'

'For an infection.'

'What infection? He was admitted to emergency for pain relief.'

'Don't you worry. We'll get Barry organised in the next week.'

Nurse leaves without comment.

'What the hell is going on, Steve? A week. I'm not leaving you here for a week. And who the hell is Barry?'

Steve remained calm, as always. But that was to be short-lived. I went to work on Monday and gave him a call at 9:15 before I had to run to teach an intensive mid-candidature session for our doctoral students.

'Darl how are you? What's happening?'

'Get me the hell out of here. It's gone postal.'

'Darl I can finish the intensive by 2:30. Can you last until then? I've got students waiting for me now. But darl, if it is a complete mess, I can cancel everything and come.'

'No that's good. Let me just quietly read and then gather my stuff and play the good patient. Then at 2pm, I'll get changed back into clothes and quietly wait for you.'

'Darl I'll be there at 2:40 if it kills me. Shit. Sorry about that.'

At least that got a laugh.

When I hurtled into the hospital at 2:37, it was like entering One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Steve was Jack Nicholson. He was sitting fully dressed in his chair. Rigid. Relief washed over him when I arrived.

'Babe these people are mad. They know I know they are mad. Get me out of here.'

The advantage of Steve marrying an Australian is that we are a people that approach every problem with an open mouth. I pressed the nurse button, and with some delay, a nurse appeared.

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'Hello. My name is Tara Brabazon. I am Steve's wife. We are leaving the hospital now. Please prepare the discharge paperwork.'

'Oh no Mrs Brabazon. He's not leaving.'

A bloody hospital has become the Hotel California.

'Oh yes he is. You have five minutes to prepare the paperwork or we are leaving anyway. Not a threat. Reality. And by the way, I am Professor Brabazon. He is Professor Redhead. He is a lawyer and I'm a media professional. If I don't get that paperwork in five minutes, I'm phoning Today Tonight from this room and you'll be on tonight's news. No threat. Reality.'

Steve smiled happily through this. I couldn't see the bloody joke.

In comes a doctor. 'Mrs Brabazon, I believe you want to discharge Steve.'

'Not want, Doctor. The clock is ticking. I'm getting very bored now. We're walking out shortly.'

'Mrs Brabazon, Steve is dying.'

'I know that. But he's not dying here, let me tell you.'

'Mrs Brabazon, he's a danger to society.'

I looked at the registrar. Stunned. But then started to laugh, raucously. 'Doctor, you have five minutes to get the release paperwork organised. And to confirm. I am not Mrs Brabazon. I am Professor Brabazon. He is Professor Redhead and the scale of the slander you have just summoned could have profound consequences for your career. We're going to wait by the nurse's station while he's discharged.'

Steve was smiling broadly now as we slowly walked to the station. They were hurtling about the reception area, hands shaking and they offered all sorts of warnings. 'Mrs Brabazon you are taking full responsibility for him now.'

'Yes. I always have. I always will.' Sign.

Driving home, I felt that I had broken him out of jail. He was calmer now. And quiet. I turned to him at a red light.

'Well darl, not many dying sixty-five-year-old men are told they are a danger to society. Well done lad. You're such a punk. The last punk.'

Through the subsequent months, we continued to laugh that – right to the end – Steve was a danger to society. His thoughts – his thinking – were always dangerous. But it became clear, even from the first week after his diagnosis, that Steve was summoning his own death as a theoretical moment. I could see the popular cultural narratives of Bowie and Rickman, and the theoretical provocations of Baudrillard, intertwine. Steve had lived a life of theory. Death would continue his theories of disappearance. Steve continued to write Theoretical Times. The pages are soaked in the language of disease, death, claustropolitanism, decay, denial, despair and pessimism. Leave it to a dying man to theorise the end of the world. But no one knew or even suspected. Steve played with digitisation to remain present, even as he disappeared. His final few tweets, sent in the last week of his life when he was losing strength and focus, held one constant: David Bowie's life and death.¹⁰⁰ The death was predicted before the disappearance.

The personal is political is theoretical

Steve Redhead skirted around personal matters. Besides his Manchester City fandom, the pains, the losses, the disappointments of his personal life were invisible within his scholarship, locked into the margins of dedications and acknowledgements. That is why it was no surprise that Paul Virilio's complex and cloaked private life was of attraction. Virilio had famous friendships, such as with Claude Peron and Jean Baudrillard, but any other personal matters were locked tightly outside of his prose.

Virilio was a curious talisman for Redhead. It was an odd combination. But it was the flaws, the incomplete thoughts and the radical flits between disciplines that seemed most engaging. Virilio played with architecture, communication systems, art, photography, war,

theatre and television. He completely ignored the arbitrary borders of disciplines. There were also paradoxes, Redhead as a mature scholar wrote long chapters in his books, sustaining complex arguments through the calibre of his prose. Redhead's *Paul Virilio: Theorist for an Accelerated Culture*¹⁰¹ was composed of five sustained and intricate chapters that carried the spine of the book, from 'Remember Virilio' to 'Forget Virilio'. Conversely, Virilio was pithy, offering idea bombs and then retreating back to his metaphoric bunker. While Redhead showed that 'the personal was the inspiration for the theoretical', the configuration of 'the private' for Virilio was cleaved away from his intellectual work.

The personal, then, is a domain to which Paul Virilio has had trouble accommodating. In reality, relatively little is known in the international academy about Virilio's own personal life and the impact it may have had on the work he had done since the 1950s.¹⁰²

Male scholars have an ability to settle comfortably in the public sphere. The work can 'speak' for the intellectual, without being lapped by personal and familial issues. For Redhead, how the personal inspired the theoretical is similarly masked. Yet two variables ensured that Redhead configured a more complex relationship between the personal, the political and the intellectual. It was a passion for football and music that heightened Redhead beyond a conventional if important scholar of high theory. Those fandoms challenged him to incorporate irrational, emotional commitments into research. But secondly, social media stripped away many of the masks of an empowered, white, successful scholar. Disintermediation required honesty from scholars as they directly engaged with their readers. Unlike Virilio, Redhead was able – in his third act – to transform into a blogging, tweeting, Facebooking intellectual. The private was still guarded. But what he recognised in Virilio in 2004 – 'the personal was the inspiration for the theoretical' – was conceptualised, packaged and delivered by Redhead in the subsequent fourteen years.

(Post) Steve and the living liminal

Something happened on Friday night. He fell over in the lounge room. He called out to me. He could not get up. Apparently nothing broken. He could not stand. He could not walk. He could not get up the stairs to our bedroom. One hour earlier he had been walking and moving freely. Then that reality slipped away.

Bugger.

I blew up the air mattress that I hoped to never use and rolled him onto it. I visited him every hour through the night, watching him sleep. Looking back, I did not think we had shared our last night sleeping together. I thought he had lost mobility. We will change his medication. He may be in a wheelchair. But we would go again. I bought two walking sticks online during the night so he could leverage himself out of a chair. He must have agency. Movement.

He slept well but the next morning I could not lift him from the mattress to the lounge chair. He was six foot two inches. I was a foot shorter. He was a big guy, even with the cancer. I just could not manoeuvre him. It took four hours to position him comfortably in a chair. What was happening?

Saturday morning turned into night. I watched him watching his beloved Manchester City. He didn't know I was there. Gentle – sad – yelps of 'Yes' greeted the goals. When the game was over, I walked into the lounge room. I kissed him and said, 'Good win. That's the title.' I rubbed his back and he slept.

I walked back upstairs to bed and covered my face with the pillow and sobbed. What was happening? This was not good. He did not seem himself. He seemed to be phasing. Seemingly in the present, but then disconnecting from the moment.

No faith. No hope. No time.

We managed the Sunday together and I arranged for him to gain hospice care on the Monday to sort out his medication and organise a wheelchair. As the ambulance left our house on Monday afternoon,

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I did not think for one moment that this would be the last time he would leave it.

'Do you want me to come to the hospital sweetheart?'

'No beautiful. You prepare for the meeting tomorrow morning. I'll see you after it.'

'Love you sweetheart.'

'And I love you.'

I waved him through the window of the ambulance. We both kept waving until the driver turned left off our street.

The following morning, a meeting that should have lasted ten minutes took an hour. One staff member decided that they were going to disagree with the majority. He argued about it for an hour, and then gave in to the initial outcome decided in the first five minutes.

I drove to the hospital, speared into a carpark and ran to the hospice level.

'Hello, I'm Tara Brabazon. I'm here to see Steve Redhead.'

A nurse looked at me, left, and then returned with another nurse.

'We've been calling you. He may still be alive. You may just have caught him.'

What? My brain processed this information slowly. When the ambulance picked him up the day before, he could not walk, but he could speak, was thoughtful and talking about ideas. I had even packed the new Alain Badiou book for him to read.

They led me into the room. I did not know who that was in the bed, but it was not my husband. Eyes half closed. Mouth open and a rasping breath. A morphine pump pounding drugs into him. Absolutely still. This was not Steve Redhead. But it was Steve Redhead. Disappearance. Grief melded with confusion and anger.

'What the bloody hell has happened here?'

'He's dying. At least you are not too late.'

I immediately responded 'You need to get the hell out of here. I had a bloody job to do. I work for a living. And that man sacrificed a lot so I could do that job. Get out of here. Now.'

Memories of the future

I touched his arm, whispering over and over again, 'I'm so sorry Stevie. I don't know what's happening. I'm so sorry Stevie.'

Then they sent in the Greek chorus of social workers. Obviously. Angry woman. Dying husband. Nurse behaving badly. This woman could create a scene. Let's hug this out. They introduced themselves.

'Can we help you organise the funeral?'

They are saying this in front of a man that is still alive: who I know is terrified of death. I remember thinking what poor training these women must have received. I hoped their degree was not from Flinders University.

'No that is fine. We have talked about it. We're having a direct cremation. Please don't talk about this in front of Steve.' They treated his immobile, morphined body as if it did not house a person. Even before death, we lose the dignity of life. We lose selfhood. Everything I wanted for Steve through his illness was lost at the end. I was disgusted.

'Can we give you a hug?'

'No. Just leave me alone with my husband please.'

'Can we call anyone for you?'

'No. There is no one. It is just us in Adelaide. Please leave.'

They scurried away.

'What the hell is going on, darl? I am so sorry.'

His eyes flitted around the room and his lips started to move.

The door opens with another interruption. What fresh hell is this?

A doctor introduced herself. I had one question.

'What happened in the last twelve hours so that a talking, active man is now lying here like this?'

'He declined very quickly. All I'd say to you is that he stayed at home up until the last minute he could. You both did very well. When he arrived, he became disoriented. But he was also quite agitated and cross.'

A smile passed over my lips. A danger to society.

'What happened to make him agitated?'

'We tried to take his t-shirt off and then we had to cut it off.'

'Which t-shirt was it?'

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The doctor looked confused and walked to the wardrobe. She pulled out the Unknown Pleasures t-shirt, sliced at the back.

'You sliced up his Peter Saville. No wonder he was agitated. I'm furious. Are you going to medicate me?'

I looked down and I could hear a throaty giggle.

I winked at him.

The doctor was stunned and checked Steve's morphine pump. 'He hasn't been responsive for hours.'

'Doctor, he was waiting for me. I told him I'd be here after the meeting. I'm here after the meeting. Now darling which t-shirt do you want. I packed another Unknown Pleasures, or do you want Movement?'

The voice was not his, but a gurgle at the back of the throat. 'Movement',¹⁰³ although it came out as 'oov-ent'.

'Good. Let's get you sorted.'

He died in that t-shirt. An immobile man in Adelaide. Still moving. Still Manchester. Movement.

The doctor asked if there was a specialist or a care team she should notify. I simply replied that we are alone in Adelaide and we managed the illness as the two of us, at home, with a monthly visit to the GP, who wouldn't know us if he met us on the street. She left, confused. I heard her tell the nurse and social workers in the adjacent reception that no other family members would be joining the dying man in room five. No medical staff to be notified. Just the two of them.

Alone. Together.

From that point, none of the staff looked me in the eye. The piquant characteristic of death is that so few talk about it and it is always predicted, but it never comes. That diabolically dreadful nurse said Steve had less than an hour to live. In the desire to shame another woman, she used the line that is laser printed in my mind: 'You may just have caught him.' She had no way of knowing how many times we caught each other. But she did not know how long he had left to live.

She was just being an incompetent, disrespectful fool. None of us will ever know how many hours of life we have left.

I can tell you now. Steve had thirty-six hours and twenty minutes left. We spent every minute of it together. Once more, it was just us, with four interventions by nurses to move him around the bed and check the morphine pump. It is an odd way to live, through dying. Every minute could be the last, and what does 'the last' – the post – actually mean? But through this twilight time, the scale of the tragedy confronted me. This great man. That provocative mind. All that education. All those thoughts. Slipping away. Dying. He did not even look like himself. I now understand why the phrase 'death mask' is used. The familiar features of the face are lost. The body is clawing onto life, losing its battle, rasping with breath. We lose our individuality – our life force – through death. Perhaps death is the greatest moment of social justice. Nothing matters at the end. Nothing.

During those thirty-six hours and twenty minutes I would cry two entire boxes of tissues. I did not know it was possible to cry an entire box, but I accomplished it with ease. But I kept talking with him, about music, football, the craziness at work, the new Badiou book that arrived. I talked and talked and talked. He grunted, offered high pitched sighs, clicks of his tongue and single vowels in response. As light became dark on the last day, I said, 'Babe I don't know if you've heard any of this. But you need to know just how much I love you and appreciate the time we've had. And I'm pissed it ends like this.'

A slow response emerged from Steve. An odd sound between the rasps – Steve but not Steve – a voice from the edge of life – the edge of death – gathered every fibre of strength. Slow and precise. His grip tightened on my fingers one last time. 'Yes. Tarz. Every. Word. Love. You.'

I sobbed and sighed and laughed and was relieved. As I washed him and we listened to music, I apologised. 'Steve I am so sorry you're going to die in Adelaide. Christ, it's hard enough living here.' A throaty giggle jutted from him. The man who had written The End-of-the-Century

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Party at the centre of a throbbing metropolis was dying in a city at the end of the world.

Backwards

Steve Redhead published with Manchester University Press twice during his career: for *The End-of-the-Century Party* and *Unpopular Cultures*. Five years separated those publications, and the dialogue between them is overt and provocative. Redhead stated that 'it is, unavoidably, the case that parts of *Unpopular cultures* could have appeared in *The end-of-the-century party*, and vice versa ... Where one text in a writer's canon finishes and another one begins is in a sense highly arbitrary.'¹⁰⁴ His interest in reversibility, which would fascinate and dominate the third act of his life, made an early appearance for Manchester University Press. But beginnings and endings became significant tropes through *Unpopular Cultures*. This focus offered a key reflection on his earlier book.

Redhead argued that *The End-of-the-Century Party* was oddly constructed. As a second book, the writer and researcher is still learning how to stitch ideas into meaningful combinations. But the inexperience often – very often – creates innovation and new ways of thinking and creating. Redhead, from the vantage point of half a decade later, stated that, 'the book itself was, to an extent, constructed backwards.'¹⁰⁵ The beginnings and endings were accelerated and compressed. This floating clock and drag-queen-like denial of the linear progression of time meant that the book did something extraordinary. It conveyed the excitement of a riveting present. In popular cultural terms, few moments are as engaging and provocative as Acid House, writing from the capital of a musical moment and movement at its height of popularity.

By *Unpopular Cultures* though, the trajectory of innovation was different. Redhead was wrong in seeing the scale of reversibility and dialogue between the books. For law, legal studies and criminology

scholars, *Unpopular Cultures* is frequently the first stop in probing the ontology and epistemology of the discipline. This book stands for something different from *The End-of-the-Century Party*, and it is courageous. It is dangerous knowledge. Such a book could probably find no place in a higher education bricked in by research excellence frameworks and research assessment, even when supposed 'peers' offer commentary on the 'quality', 'impact' or 'engagement' of the work. Redhead was an intellectual adventurer. He not only walked the path less travelled, he hacked at the underbrush of impenetrable terrain so that those that follow would have an easier journey.

The reasons for telling the stories in this book are, essentially, twofold. One is a desire to refute a widespread view that research and teaching at the margins, or the edges or well-established academic disciplinary boundaries, such as law, is in some ways less weighty or serious and therefore less worthwhile than scholarship supposedly concentrated at the centre, or mainstream, of such disciplines.¹⁰⁶

From here, the discipline of law and popular culture, sports law and entertainment law would grow from an unpopular, tacky and marginal area and into a field that is taught in black letter law degrees, has its own journals and its own association. When an intellectual has the courage – and perhaps career-suicidal mettle – to enjoy 'dancing on the edge',¹⁰⁷ then others follow. But this book did much more than ponder law and popular culture, and the regulation of pop. Although, from the vista of 1995, Redhead thought he was dialoguing with *The End-of-the-Century Party*, he was actually speaking – loudly – to his own future.

Almost every sentence in *Unpopular Cultures* spurted a new field, discussion, paradigm, radical rejoinder or avid disagreement. Stating that 'this book is a story about theory',¹⁰⁸ he offers a characteristic throw away Redhead phrase, the 'jurisprudence of post-modernism'.¹⁰⁹ The book continues with these intellectual thought bombs, including 'post law'¹¹⁰ and 'unpopular cultural studies'.¹¹¹ When reviewing it in the context of both his career and the sad,

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maddening and disappointing trajectory of Cultural Studies since it was published in 1995, his prescience is even more profound. Through the MIPC in its first iteration, theory, Cultural Studies and knowledge was sexy, popular, passionate and provocative. The organic intellectual has never been more seductive than when dancing. Yet currently, Cultural Studies after its infectious sorties with creative industries, is shambling about in a tired, shabby silver polyester suit, pretending the paradigm is down with the young people. There has never been more popular culture. Cultural Studies has never been less interested in it. *Unpopular Cultures* was a trajectory that could have been followed. Socio-legal scholars and ultra-realist criminologists absorbed these lessons with relish. Cultural Studies scholars continued to worship at the altar of tired Gramscian hegemony and homological 'methods' to study long-dead youth culture.

The lonely hour of the last instance

'He's dead, Tara.'

Pause.

'Do you need the room?'

Pause.

'No. Take as much time as you need.'

'12:20am. He died at 12:20am.'

Time mattered. Time stopped. It did not loop. It stopped. Steve lived (just) into the start of a new day.

The nurses left and returned to their station. The door clicked. Nothing to say.

The rationality for my irrationality struck me retrospectively. He had died. They would need the room for another person who would also die there. I was trying to not be inconvenient. Death is inconvenient. No tears. I was now redundant. I did not belong here. My reason for being here had died.

Memories of the future

Alone. White room. No more breathing. Really alone. He was here. HE was here. He WAS here. He was HERE.

He is not here now. The most alone any of us will ever feel is being alone in a room with our dead husband at the moment he left life. That is alone. That is the point when I had to weigh and measure how much of me died with him.

Is there enough of me left to walk out of this room?

Uncertain.

After our final minute, where I said nothing and just gently touched his hand for the last time, I grabbed the sports bag I packed for what I thought would be his short stay in the hospital. I was carrying a dead man's clothes, phone, wallet and watch. I walked to the carpark with these dead objects, carrying aloneness more powerful than gravity. I drove home. Hyper sensate. The blackness of the night was the final brutalising hug from the reaper. Not another car in sight. It was over. I let myself into the house, dumped the bag and walked into the kitchen. Numb. In shock. But with a job to do.

I was charged with managing the digital death. Post-Steve had given me one job. My night had just begun.

I had one analogue task to complete first. I removed my wedding ring. I had not slid it off my finger since Steve put it there sixteen years earlier. I had been a widow for fifteen minutes. This was an important gesture for me. I needed to do this now – right now – for some reason. It was a statement that all those vows, all those promises I fulfilled were meaningful. The marriage meant something. Until death us do part. For richer or poorer, in sickness and health, and forsaking all others. We had done it. I had done it. Few can say that they lived those vows so literally. But it was over. Death had parted us. I had to go on living (through) his death. I did not know how to do this. I still do not know how to do this.

I kissed the ring, put it away and climbed upstairs.

12:45am in Adelaide (2:15pm in Manchester). Time to action the process on which we had agreed. I emailed Steve's sister. I emailed my father.

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12:55 (2:25pm). The obituary that I wrote on the iPad in the hospital and read to Steve at his bedside was posted on Facebook.¹¹² A truncated version was posted on LinkedIn.¹¹³ Three tweets announced the death, noting – separately – his contribution as a writer,¹¹⁴ an intellectual, and a husband.

The response was immediate. Shocked. Shocking. Devastated. Devastating. The aching cries of sadness were international: from Manchester to Mumbai, from Toronto to Townsville. As his colleagues, friends, former students and people who had only known him by reading his work or listening to his podcasts started to wake up, the digital wave became a tsunami of sadness, confusion, shock and support.

Louis Althusser was wrong, and yet he was right. He is always both. It is damn infuriating. But Althusser wrote in *For Marx*, published the year I was born, that ‘from the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the “last instance” never comes’.¹¹⁵ That lonely hour of the last instance did come. Death is contagious and the reaper is a greedy bastard. That ‘last instance’ gouges and gorges on the living. Those of us who have had the privilege and the horror of being with a husband or wife at the last instance know – don’t we? – that death drags most of us into the darkness. We lose ourselves on that night. That ‘last instance’ takes something and leaves a nothingness that either remains vacant, voided and empty or becomes a seeping, septic wound dripping with despair, confusion or gruesome images playing in a loop. Large chunks of us die. The weight of those chunks hangs off the carcass of the living.

But then. But then. The lonely hour of the last instance looped. Time is not linear. It is cyclical. It did not stop. That impossibly long Adelaide night became day became night. Our friends clustered – digitally – around me and post-Steve. The lonely hour passed. Althusser was right.

Post-Steve was in for a hell of a ride from here. I returned to work.¹¹⁶

Post-disciplines

Redhead's research career salvaged mobility, ambiguity, liminality, reversibility and aloof disconnection from the garbage bin of postmodernism. He used these terms and processes to create new relationships between disciplines, leading into what may be his last but more important conceptual development: claustropolitanism.

Such standard ways of reading the relations between subcultures, youth culture, pop and deviance in particular social formations dissolved in the 1980s as the fixed identities and meanings of youth styles gave way to a supposed fluidity of positions, poses and desires and a much-hailed (in postmodernist circles) transitory, fleeting adherence to lifestyles – for some theorists, the sign of postmodernity ... Contemporary youth styles daily deconstruct the meaning of these moments in the cultural histories embodied in a variety of academic disciplines such as leisure studies, Cultural Studies, sociology of deviance and criminology. They also reconstruct them in and for the present.¹¹⁷

From this early realisation, Redhead discovered that this replacing, re-purposing and re-construction was delivered at a cost. The ideas decay, shrivel and die. Not surprisingly, one of the most radical paradigms in contemporary academia – ultra-realist criminology – deployed Redhead's work, starting at *The End-of-the-Century Party*, burrowing deeply into *We Have Never Been Postmodern* and stretching and bending *Theoretical Times*. Claustropolitanism is the key term, trope and concept to understand the end of the world. What happens in a post-work, post-leisure, post-politics age, when racism is normal, women who suffer sexual abuse are still put on trial and not believed, and the calm surface of civilisation oozes and weeps injustice, decay, ignorance and confusion?

Intellectual reorientation is required. Emerging from the challenging period of Tony Blair's rise to the prime ministership, Redhead published *The Club Cultures Reader* and *From Subcultures*

to *Club Cultures*. Both betray a tone of disappointment, but dogged determination to find a lens that enabled a ‘replacing’¹¹⁸ and harder, tougher ethnography. The separation of popular culture and populism was overt, and important. This separation allowed scholars such as Steve Hall, Simon Winlow and James Treadwell to research and write tough and unapologetic arguments such as the remarkable *Rise of the Right*. The racism of the working class is revealed with cold clarity and brutalising dispassionate and jarring juxtaposition.¹¹⁹

Redhead’s writing was toughened by the late 1990s, through the loss of his directorship of the MIPC and the radical changes to Manchester Metropolitan University. The prose from these two books published in 1997 has the quality of crazed and cracked concrete. The claustropolitanism that would dominate the latter stages of his career surfaced from those cracks. There is a closing in of knowledge, institutions and intellectual discovery.

The frigid, confronting analysis of Hall, Winlow and Treadwell continued this cracked concrete style. The desolation seen in *The Club Cultures Reader* and *From Subcultures to Club Cultures* is because Redhead was aware – in real time once more – that the opportunities for the creation of new ways of producing knowledge had been lost. His academic experience at this point meant that he understood the consequences of that loss. These books are a presentation of what Popular Cultural Studies could have been, with any form of institutional support. The dismissal of the Birmingham Centre and old-school Cultural Studies is clear. The weakest chapter in the *Reader* is from Lawrence Grossberg, where he is trying to ‘reconcile’ and move between the BCCCS (Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) and the MIPC (Manchester Institute for Popular Culture). That reconciliation is not possible. It is a break – politically and theoretically. Grossberg through his career has continued to be wedded to the nostalgia of Stuart Hall and the Birmingham Centre, granting them the quality of a fairy tale.

The Birmingham Centre was never the Birmingham Centre summoned by its cheerleaders. Through remaining electronically tagged to a very narrow parameter of theory and politics, the legacy of the Birmingham Centre suffocated Cultural Studies. This flighty, flimsy, naughty child of the humanities became the impoverished dowager, patrolling the morality and ethics of its intellectual village.

There was another option. Is it too late? Probably.

These books demonstrate the productive hybridity of theory and the empirical. Popular Cultural Studies, if a space had been found for it in Cultural Studies, would have changed the humanities with the effectiveness of a switchblade to tissue paper. University managers did not support it. Scholars remained wedded to long-dated theories from the 1960s and 1970s. That was safe and funded knowledge. Now – because this incisive critique was not initiated in the late 1990s – scholars are left with pedantic textual analysis, reified representational politics, Foucauldian theory from people who have read little Foucault and do not grasp his neo-liberal tendencies, and ‘suck it and see’ engagements with capitalism. The disconnection from life, sweat and exploitative underemployment, discrimination of the different, the streets, and disquieting and disturbing pleasure has had an impact on classrooms, library collections, research, publishing and universities. These books provided an intellectual pathway not taken. But the ultra-realist criminologists, just (about) tethered to universities and university research, albeit at marginal institutions and under pressure, are producing some of the most powerful research in the world. They have courage, and are paying institutional penalties because of it.

These late-1990s books and Redhead’s career up to this point asked the key questions about Cultural Studies and why it did not outreach into sport, leisure, clubs, drugs and dancing. Why were the disciplinary interventions only playing between literature, history and sociology? Where was the ‘deep groove’ – the deep engagement with popular music? The resultant point remains scathing. Popular

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culture became unpopular in universities. The consequences of disconnecting from popular culture lead to the rise of populism, where saying the unsayable became normalised.

Post-Steve Redhead and Digital Death Studies

Steve was an adventurous intellect. It would tickle him that his death offers interdisciplinary insights into the burgeoning field of Death Studies.¹²⁰ The Health Industrial Complex – at the end of life – is replaced by the Death Industrial Complex. Managing the culture of death is completely shielded from the living of a life. After death, all the rules change. Civilisation seems to buckle and warp. The unsayable becomes normal and normalised.

While Steve's digital death churned through emails, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, I had more messy matters to manage. Deploying the phrase 'direct cremation' has a similar impact to releasing the flying monkeys in a shopping mall or confirming that I am Satan's daughter during a Catholic high mass. To not have a funeral – to not allow capitalism a final slice at the living – was disturbing for most. Steve's direct cremation was the first time most people had heard of it. Then, our popular music friends and colleagues remembered David Bowie. They understood, with some wonder and appreciation. Steve has created Popular Cultural Studies. He had published Theoretical Times. He lived that commitment as post-Steve, beyond his death.

This decision made sense to Steve. It makes sense to me. It was Steve's last homage to Baudrillard. He disappeared. Steve took theory seriously, even in death. This was a theoretical death for theoretical times. He summoned an analogue disappearance while the digital post-Steve continued. What would have surprised him was the scale of the response to his death: the book dedications, the thesis dedications, and the passionate, deeply moving reviews of his career. During that long night and day and night, as the tweet mentions pinged their relentless arrival, the Times Higher Education, which had been so supportive

in publishing both of us, prepared to publish an obituary. That would have meant everything to Steve. In our business, an obituary in the Times Higher Education is the pinnacle of influence and impact. The review celebrated his interdisciplinary commitments, his scholarly innovations and his research excellence. Appropriately, his last Vice Chancellor, the Scot who built a career in Manchester (only) to land in Adelaide, offered a statement that was cited with wonder and appreciation from our radical friends: 'a global citizen who was never afraid to push boundaries' and left 'a legacy of cultural inspiration'.¹²¹ In difficult times for higher education, and particularly following our world tour of toxic universities, that was a fine ending to a career. None of the other leaders we worked for in our careers would have shown that interest and intellectual generosity.

The outpouring of commentary after Steve's death was punctuated by shock. He was tweeting, emailing and posting on Facebook until that final Friday, so none of our colleagues or friends suspected anything was amiss. Significantly, two of the most poignant reviews focused – distinctively – on his first and third acts. Guy Osborn, Steve's friend for decades and an international expert in sports and entertainment law, captured the discipline-clearing importance of his first act:

Steve was, in fact, a man of firsts. The first Professor of Law and Popular Culture, perhaps the first PhD student to focus on sport and law, with his PhD somewhat less snappily titled than his later work ('The Legalisation of the Professional Footballer: A Study of Some Aspects of the Legal Status and Employment Conditions of Association Football Players in England and Wales from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present Day') ... For me the work that really caught me and inspired me was Unpopular cultures: The birth of law and popular culture. This came out during my PhD, with Steve as my Director of Studies, and many of the ideas outlined here, particularly his formulation of panic law and theoretical take on 'law and popular culture', were catalysts for my PhD and some of my later work ... On a personal level, and for me most importantly, he was the first to show me that you could work academically on things that mattered to you and touched on your

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*everyday life, that popular culture as a field was important and should be celebrated. ... A great example here is his book The Repetitive Beat Generation; a text that nodded not only to the Beat Generation poets but also to the attempted policing of dance subculture, along with other areas of popular culture via the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 that he covered in Unpopular cultures. The launch of The Repetitive Beat Generation was held at the now long gone Borders bookshop on Oxford Street in London, and was attended by many of those involved including Hanif Kureishi and Adrian Sherwood, whilst others in the audience included the actor Rhys Ifans. A surreal afternoon ended with lots of us in The Ship on Wardour Street and I still dine out on the time I went to the pub with Hanif Kureishi ... For Steve, anything was possible and anything was permissible. He forged a path that allowed many to follow in his giant footsteps. His passing leaves a giant void but his legacy lives on.*¹²²

This legacy would be enough for most careers. That key period where he challenged disciplines and built new paradigms in Manchester was remarkable. But it was not the end, or the fumes on which he fuelled the rest of his career. Significantly, another remarkable, courageous professor like Guy Osborn, Simon Winlow, offered one of the most evocative commentaries on the state of higher education, using Steve's death as the hook. His focus was Steve's third act, the disintermediated, digitised scholar of the world.

The ideals of the university are under attack from all sides, and for academics there is progressively less time and space to conduct innovative research and the deep thinking that must accompany it. But every now and then, not often, but occasionally, something beautiful happens, and the world we inhabit becomes a little more comprehensible. Steve Redhead spent much of his life in thrall to this educational and intellectual ideal. A voracious reader and committed dialectician, Steve refused to stand still intellectually. While some of us have one idea and spend our entire career repeating and defending it, Steve continued to move forward, constantly attempting to more accurately represent reality and explain the dominant features of our cultural life. He could talk with authority and great erudition on the law, on popular culture and the media, on football and fan cultures, and also on crime, criminology and

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*our rapidly evolving social order. He drew upon sociological, criminological and cultural theory, and remained right up to date with the latest developments in psychoanalytic theory and continental philosophy. He was a renowned expert on Baudrillard and Virilio and ... was also a producer of original ideas, and some of those ideas will be returned to as the scholars of the future seek to explain the diverse tragedies of post-crash neoliberal societies. In particular, I'd like to take this opportunity to direct you to his concept of claustropolitanism. Steve was, I'm told, funny, intelligent, humble and endlessly accommodating. I knew him mostly through his work, which has rightly drawn acclaim in a range of academic disciplines. Here was a life lived in the realm of ideas. A valuable life has been lived and is no more. I hope his work continues to inspire all those who yearn to know more about the world we inhabit.*¹²³

Steve may be part of the last generation of academics where it was possible to commit to ideas, to research and publish knowledge that speaks defiant truths to populist institutions, organisations and individuals. The last fifteen years of his career were institutionally rocky, but the research was profound. He was living the precariousness, the ruthlessness and the consequences of empowered institutions validating and endowing the ignorant, the foolish and the incompetent.

The room is yours

These stories, almost inevitably it appears, loop back to *The End-of-the-Century Party*. A career of courage was foreshadowed here, bouncing with insights from pop 'at the edge', the profound reimagining of punk and the desolate boredom with pseudo-authentic rock. If Popular Cultural Studies has an Old Testament, then it is *The End-of-the-Century Party*. Moses is played by Morrissey. Noah is so much more interesting as Bez. And Adam? It has to be Elvis Costello. We know he'd take that apple with relish and enthusiasm. And he'd blame Eve. To see what we have lost from academic life – particularly radically interdisciplinary life – this book is a fine primary source. It is of its time, but like the best of pop, it transcends its time because

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of its courage to be defiant. How is this story about popular culture, humanities research, our universities and ‘theory’ to end? In our still-born century, what do we – as scholars and intellectuals – stand for? Well, with Steve gone, the ending depends on us.

Yes, Steve Redhead is dead. He has disappeared. He has left us (the) room. It is up to us to occupy it. To read. To agitate. To be percussively, persuasively wrong. To be frighteningly, annoyingly right. To love boldly, without compromise, limits, edges or boundaries. To offer expertise with generosity and rigour. To engage widely and without expectations. To kick intellectual cans along the road and see where they take us. To knock down disciplinary walls when we see them. To ridicule the gatekeepers. To poke fun at the pretenders. Laugh. Dance. Support Manchester City. Think. Write.

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