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Article

Re-listening to Alexisonfire: Duo-*currere*, adolescence, and the forms of study therewithin

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Abstract

This article shares insights emergent from our practices of listening and re-listening to music that deeply affected us during adolescence. Drawing methodologically on duo-*currere*, we focus our reflections on our mutual love for, and respective experiences with, the Canadian post-hardcore band Alexisonfire. We evoke the concept of study toward an articulation of the value of such listening both in adolescence and today. More specifically, the following insights emerge from our reflexive practice: 1) our adolescent listening shaped our affective landscapes, forming the contours of our relational and social lives; 2) our adolescent listenings were our first forms of study, and we find similarity in the ways we operate as scholars of curriculum today; and 3) re-visiting those listenings with active attention constitutes a valued form of study, albeit perhaps one that does not fit within the constraining value logics of neoliberal capitalist society. We conclude the article by gesturing toward the affective potency of music heard in our adolescence and its relevance in *currere*.

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Introduction

My greatest gift to you / Is a dance floor / Free from insecurity
~ Alexisonfire, "Get Fighted" (2004)

Inuk artist Elisapie Isaac's latest record *Inuktitut* is a 10-track album of covers, each song representing a certain memory for the artist. To create the record, Elisapie translated pop and rock hits into her language, Inuktitut. She took to reimagining particular songs that emotionally mark her memories from childhood and adolescence growing up in Salluit, Nunavik, northern Québec (Power, 2023). This was, she recounts, an act of reclamation and healing. During this project, she realized these songs provoked a unique emotional experience in her today and transported her back in time to re-experience her life at the time the song was first important to her (MacDonald, 2023; Power, 2023). Each song on the record provokes a story for Elisapie, whether it was a contemporary hit she and her friends had connected over or a classic that spoke to them of an earlier generation's experiences. Positioning the album as a gift to her community, through her acts of translation, she came to realize the songs spoke to experiences past and present that affect her people. We can know each other through music, Elisapie explained (MacDonald, 2023).

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New insights emerged, too, as these reveries of deep listening enabled Elisapie to witness her community's experiences again. Whether a song provoked an emotional response in her became the standard by which Elisapie chose songs to record—if she didn't cry on listening to the original, it wasn't the right song for this project. The translations felt true for Elisapie, as Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here" became "Qaisimalaurittuq"; "Wild Horses" by The Rolling Stones was recorded as "Qimmijuat"; and Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" transformed into "Taimangalimaaq". Elisapie was struck by how the songs' meanings revealed themself to her through the act of translation, as she describes:

> I always say that maybe we already heard them in our heads in Inuktitut when we would hear them. We'd listen to these songs and in our minds, we were in the Inuit world. I really can't believe (how natural they sound) in Inuktitut. (MacDonald, 2023, para. 41)

This album of covers, magically and mysteriously, Elisapie says, is her "most personal album...I kind of went back home" (Power, 2023, 20:22). Re-visiting once-loved songs, records, and artists is here an aural parallel to flipping through a photo-album and looking back at who, when, and where we once were. More than that, memories too unflattering, mundane, or otherwise uncaptured by a camera may also be made present in this aural 'visit' with one's past musical sites of becoming. This practice, and its implications, is one we, the authors, know well. We each intentionally re-visit the musical works that marked us across our lives. We say 'intentionally' to indicate that this involves attention, selection, purpose, and a little bit of obsession. We know we're about to be affected when we make a choice to replay that old favourite. Something happens because we choose to go there, distinct from the happenstance experience of encountering the old favourite playing from the radio or a playlist. This is a practice we discovered we had in common when we met for the first time at a curriculum studies conference in early 2023.

We know we're not the only ones who do this—which signals for us that there could be something worth better understanding about what we do, where we go, what we realize and even remake with each act of dropping a needle or pressing play (again and again). Our thinking about this practice takes root in curriculum theorizing, where there is a long tradition of attention to aesthetics, as in the significance of the arts and, indeed, music. Ted Aoki (2004), for example, emphasized the harmonies he saw between jazz improvisation and the curriculum-as-lived, and Awad Ibrahim (2004) offered critical readings of hip-hop lyrics in a pedagogical context. More recently, Walter Gershon (2017) has explored the way sound intersects with educational research (see also Gershon & Appelbaum, 2020) and Boni Wozolek (2023) has used sonic ethnography to capture the effects of everyday racism in schools. Our current work finds community with all these approaches, where conscious engagement with the sonic arts generates (and in some cases exceeds) meaning. That is, we decided to ask, together, what might be educationally significant about the time we spend with these old loves, the songs, and whether the method of *currere* might help us explore that question. Indeed, we set out to enact *currere* through listening and to listen for the *currere* moments that might sound out to us in response.

In what follows, we retrace the movements we made in our *currere* journey toward an explication of what we value in these moments of re-listening. We begin by discussing our understanding of *currere*, and specifically duo-*currere*, toward a loose methodological framing for our paper. We then give some background information about the band around which our

duo-*currere* coheres, Alexisonfire, and how we each came to love that band. From there, we discuss the aims and intentions behind our writing. Then, we retrace three movements in our *currere* conversation. In the first, we consider the way the music we listened to in adolescence traces the affective contours of our adult lives. In the second, we highlight our listening and re-listening practices as forms of study. In the third, we describe the constraints on the forms of study we practice and how we seek to subvert them. Finally, we conclude the paper by reiterating the value we find in our practices of re-listening.

Our Duo-currere Began on a Picnic Table in the Sun

As stated above, we met for the first time at a curriculum studies conference in early 2023. Two things became clear for us the second time we met, a few months later at another conference. The first: we had felt out of place at the earlier conference and a sense of alienation was still lingering in us at the present scholarly event. As we talked, we likened 'conferencing' to being back in high school, replete with its identity crises and cliques; but, there was also the similar hope that fast friendships might be made based on animated interests. In high school, for us, those friendships were often based on the music with which we identified. This led to the second of our connection points: we had each been fans of the Canadian post-hardcore band Alexisonfire during our adolescence; this band was a defining feature of those years of identity formation for us both.

We talked with ease, sitting at a picnic table with the sun shining on us, each aware that inside conference sessions were beginning and ending but that we were more animated as scholars here in our ambling conversation than we would be inside. The current paper started taking shape through that conversation, which concerned listening (and listening again), adolescent feeling, and study. We agreed writing together about our shared past affinity with Alexisonfire might reveal something about our present and future scholarship. Since then, living in separate Canadian provinces, we have met on video calls to think together about why Alexisonfire mattered to us and why that matters for us educationally; we started to practice a duo-*currere* by listening.

William Pinar (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015) originally conceived the method of *currere* as a framework for understanding experience with four discrete moments of analysis: the regressive (past), the progressive (future), the analytic (present), and the synthetic (integration) (see also Pinar, 2023). Taken up extensively by authors like Janet Miller (2005) and localized in the Canadian context through the work of Canadian curriculum studies scholars like Hasbe-Ludte et al. (2009), these and other expressions of autobiographical inquiry inform our own scholarship. Most recently, for example, Adrian has drawn on *currere*, and autobiographical inquiry more broadly, to think through human agency in the posthuman turn (Downey, 2021, 2024). Also, Tesni plays with artistic modes of thinking and doing *currere,* such as drawing (Ellis, 2024). Here, we take up *currere* as a loose methodological framing for our thinking together.

Recalling that Pinar originally described *currere* as recursive, rather than sequential, Morna McNulty (2019) emphasises that *currere*'s moments are rhizomatically interconnected. Indeed, clear delineations of the past and the present are not always possible—the past recurs in the present and how we react shapes the future. On the unique *temporality* of *currere*, Hongyu Wang (2010) writes,

> Currere blurs the boundary of past, present and future to encourage an inner experience of time that enables a transformative re-entry into the present. The particular pattern of transformative change for each person is not predictable due to currere's temporal nonlinearity and openness, each person's life history, and the interaction between the two. (p. 282)

Another 'interaction' comes into play when we practice duo-*currere*, a collaborative extension of Pinar's original method offered by Wallace and Byers (2018). While all autobiographical narratives necessarily implicate others, when two people are actively involved in co-composing *currere*, we find a duo-*currere* or a "dialogic and emotive conversation" between two subjectivities (Wallace & Byers, 2018, p. 63). For example, Wallace and Byers (2018) show their duo-*currere* by sharing a series of email exchanges between them, through which they share artefacts, reflections on their separate ongoing research activities, and respond to and challenge each other. In duo-*currere,* the inner experience of temporality becomes intersubjective, meaning that it is complicated once more in dialogue; in this way, new "possibilities [are] made thinkable" (Wallace & Byers, 2018, p. 59).

The difference between *currere* and duo-*currere* may be subtle enough to miss, for it is a shift in who we address. That is, in writing duo-*currere* we write *to* a receiver who is already known to us, who is explicitly implicated in our analysis, and whose own we will respond to in kind. A correspondence is generated even as the experiences 'made thinkable' remain singular to their author. As Wallace and Byers (2018) put it,

> The primary difference between our duo-currere and a single authored image of currere was the dialogic and emotive conversation that occurred with/in the lived experiences of another: another human, another relationship, another geographic location, another self, another image of time. (p. 63)

For our duo-*currere* project, we corresponded with each other through writing and conversation while each of us separately made our past, future, and present thinkable through repeated listenings—visits—with Alexisonfire. We listened closely to each other and to this band we first knew in our adolescence. In this way, the aural became the focus and mode of our duo-*currere*. Like Wallace and Byers (2018), we share some of our correspondence throughout this paper. Framed as *currere interludes,* we show some of the ongoing conversations we had with ourselves and each other in this inquiry. While some *currere interludes* may seem to speak to a particular phase of *currere*, we don't make that explicit or discrete; we don't present them in a sequential order, either. Instead, we invite our readers to see (or hear) as we did—that between pressing play and a song/album's end, we had moved through each of the regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic stages (see also Downey, 2022), as our memories, desires, and experiences folded in on themselves, provoked through our listening.

Many *currere* accounts consider the significance of the literature that marks us throughout our lives as a way to understand one's educational experiences (Pinar, 1994; Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015). As Adrian admits elsewhere, "rather than literature, however, music has taught me the most" (Downey, 2022, p. 74). As our duo-*currere* revealed to us, Alexisonfire, who came onto the Canadian alternative music scene in 2001, taught us each how to feel, how to relate to others, and how to study. Before we explicate those lessons further, however, it is worth briefly exploring their biography as well as our own connections to the group.

It's Pronounced Alexis-on-fire

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Interlude, by Adrian

The first time I went to a local rock concert, I was 14. At the time, I felt like an outcast at school, but I did have a few friends, and one of them invited me to see their band play. I wasn't sure what to expect. I was almost an hour early, which at 14 felt like an eternity. When the music finally started, I felt something I'd never felt before. Any anxiety I had at being in an unfamiliar social setting melted away, and I felt a sense of physical connection with others.

The opening band ended their set with a cover of Alexisonfire's .44 caliber love letter, *and by the end of the song, something in me had changed. That was the first time I heard of Alexisonfire.*

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Alexisonfire, from Saint Catharine's, Ontario, gained fame in Canada through appearances on the Canadian popular music channel, MuchMusic, as well as through their extensive, and eventually international, live tours. The band's lineup included George Pettit on lead vocals, Dallas Green on supporting vocals and backing guitar, Wade MacNeil on backing vocals and lead guitar, Chris Steele on bass, and Jordan Hastings on drums (originally Jesse Ingelevics). The defining feature of the band's sound—what separated them from other bands at the time and influenced later groups—was the interplay of the three vocalists. George's lead vocals evoked the sounds of modern heavy music with a guttural scream, while Dallas' supporting vocals were more akin to those of a singer-songwriter, defined by a strong sense of melody. Wade brought in an element of hardcore punk with his shout. On the band's Myspace page, they described their sound in the following way:

> [Alexisonfire] sounds like a guy with a pretty voice getting into an argument with a guy who is kind of upset about things, while a guy who really likes punk is laughing with a guy who likes to rhyme while there is a guy who looks like a rat keeping time. get it? [sic] (Alexisonfire, 2009)

Elsewhere, they infamously describe their music as "the sound of two Catholic high-school girls in mid-knife-fight" (Dine Alone Records, 2017), the image of which is foreshadowed on the front cover of their debut self-titled album. Backed by technical instrumentation with a strong sense of rhythmic interplay, the band's sound held traces of the post-hardcore genre but also pushed at its boundaries to generate a unique aural aesthetic that changed the Canadian music scene in enduring ways.

As adolescents, we each found our way to participate in this scene, albeit with different motivations and from distinct, seemingly incongruous backgrounds. One of us entered as a teenage girl growing up in suburban Ottawa, eager to distinguish herself from the crowd through alternative music tastes. The other came as a teenage boy growing up on the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour, seeking refuge from oppressive high school social hierarchies through community with like-minded people. Across Canada, teens and young adults like us were finding something to cohere around in Alexisonfire. Significantly, for Tesni, girls were included in this scene as active participants, fans who could take up space like any of the guys (to an extent, see interludes). For Adrian, the music became an entry point to a counter-culture that validated and welcomed the sense of outsiderness he felt in the public school system.

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Interlude, by Tesni

I can track who I was when based on the albums I obsessed over. But some only hold up today for their nostalgic powers—I still know the lyrics in and out, but I might only put it on in the car for a jolt of memories to accompany me on a long drive. An Alexisonfire album is different. I've turned to their work time and again whenever I wanted to bring a part of me forward, a part that needed healing or attention just as when I first heard them. Somehow this group of young men screaming and singing and raging (about things I didn't really understand) met and addressed something in me. I remember my "Watch Out!" CD was soft-cover, it folded out in my hands as I poured over the liner notes tucked away in my room, in my own private and entirely 'emo' world. But I can't find an image anywhere of the original CD to confirm this memory, since I lost my copy years later in a break-up… Alexisonfire, or Alexis as I still lovingly call them, has been with me every time I need to scream and sing and rage (about things I still, maybe, don't really understand).

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What We Heard; What We Said

Having now introduced our methodological framework, duo-*currere*; the band around which our duo-*currere* is centred, Alexisonfire; and our broad topic of study, the music we listened to in adolescence, we now move on to retrace the movements of our *currere* conversation. Before doing so, however, a few words on the 'why' driving this work are warranted. Indeed, one reviewer of this paper recommended that we be clear about what we are critiquing and/or offering in this paper. Our response is that we offer our conversation as a course run together, a curriculum we shared as we moved further into understanding the (re-)listening practices that shape(d) us. We do not envision this paper as an act of critique, but through our conversations we often find certain constraints on the ways we might study, and we are always seeking ways of subverting those constraints.

More specifically, here we are interested in the way music transports us both temporally and affectively, as well as how returning to specific songs throughout our lives enacts unique sorts of *study*. In attempting to understand these sorts of study through our duo-*currere* conversations, we experienced constraint in the form of the dominant expressions of time in late-stage capitalism and the rhetorics of productivity and accountability that mark those expressions (Saul & Burkholder, 2020). Ultimately, however, it was the music and the feelings it evokes in us that drove our inquiry, and thus shaped our relationship with time and value. When we came together after our first few visits with Alexisonfire, we began to understand how our *past* relationship with this band still influenced our *present* and has possible implications for our *futures*. We realized that Alexisonfire signifies a potent part of our adolescence, marked by *wasted time*—but wasted time is felt differently in our present contexts as adults. And yet something from our (compulsive re-)listening habits remains in our *study* habits, today. Moreover, because we value this *way of being* together in our listening and study, we ask how we might make that more possible in education, which feels evermore-so determined to control and structure ways we *should* study rather than allow for ways we *might* study. We consider these interrelated realizations, next—exploring what we 'heard' in

Alexisonfire and what we 'said' to each other in our *currere* conversations, rather than defining any 'results' of our inquiry. This forms the 'why' of our paper.

Authorial purpose noted, we now proceed to retrace our *currere* conversation, the starting point of which was the visceral feelings we have while listening to music from our adolescence. One way of thinking about those feelings is through psychological research conducted under the term "music-evoked autobiographical memory" or MEAM (Janata et al., 2007; Kaiser & Berntsen, 2023). MEAMs are usually linked to strong emotion (Janata et al., 2007) and those memories are often more vivid than those evoked by other cues, such as television or pictures of famous people (Kaiser & Berntsen, 2023). Generally, MEAM research suggests that the music we listen(ed) to during adolescence and young adulthood—what is sometimes called the reminiscence bump (Munawar et al., 2018)—is particularly well remembered in later life (Kaiser & Berntsen, 2023). Moreover, hearing this music in later adulthood can bring back a host of complex emotions including, but not limited to, happiness, youthfulness, and nostalgia (Janata et al., 2007). As an artist, Elisapie's work affirms what MEAM researchers suggest: as she says, her emotional autobiography is contained in each song on *Inuktitut* (Power, 2023).

While the MEAM research seems to legitimize our interest in the music of our youth and the strong, yet somewhat elusive, feelings it evokes in us today, we still resist the pull to think these experiences exclusively through the psychological, preferring the more expansive theoretical frameworks that form the backbone of reconceptualist curriculum studies: feminisms, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies (Morris, 2016a, 2016b; see also Pinar et al., 1995). This is not just a mental phenomenon we're concerned with; it is cultural, experiential, and material as well—not to mention curricular. The music we listen to in adolescence has a significant effect on how we remember that time psychologically, and it can also play a role in determining the ways we navigate the complex world of social identity, providing us with a sub- and counter-cultural lens through which to view the world in adolescence and early adulthood.

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Interlude, by Adrian

The day after that first concert, I downloaded .44 caliber love letter *from a peer-to-peer file sharing program. Looking back now, it amazes me that I had the technological literacy to be able to do this successfully and avoid crashing my computer with a virus, although that did happen a few times.*

I listened to the song on repeat for about an hour before I tried downloading the other songs on Alexisonfire's debut album. A few of them resonated, but none so much as love letter. *For the rest of that school year, the song featured heavily on all my playlists. It became the defining song in my Junior Highschool soundtrack. Today when I hear the song, I'm taken back to those moments.*

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Adolescence, Where Certain Kinds of Study Take Hold

Unsatisfied with MEAM as a means to understand our listening practices, we reflected together on an even earlier time: when the books read in early childhood mark us and when our reading (and re-reading) perhaps foreshadows our adolescent listening (and re-listening) practices. Aparna Mishra Tarc (2015) suggests the literature we read as young children plays

a role in subject formation, determining the contour of our adult life. In this way, learning to read is a profoundly humanizing experience. This humanization is something that both encompasses and transcends the neurobiological development of learning to read and the socio-cultural development of learning to relate to others. Tarc (2019) also suggests that literature read as a child colours one's affective landscape as an adult. To make this point, she draws on Coetzee (2018) who says, "the books we read as children, at least some of them, leave an impression on us, and…this impression goes deeper than the impression left by books we read as adults" (as cited in Tarc, 2019, p. 111). Tarc (2019) builds on this point, suggesting that:

> It is vital for teachers to make examinable one's felt experiences of reading, to understand how impressions of the other can influence who we can be. We need to think about what reading, in forms as well as contents, is doing *in* us and the people we can be. (p. 114)

In this passage, Tarc (2019) challenges instrumental views of literacy, where reading is seen as useful mainly for brain development, for navigating the adult world, and for "reading to learn" in later schooling. Reading does all of those things, of course, and it is a profoundly useful skill. But reading also does something *in* us; it changes us and what is possible for us, affectively.

What, then, happens when we re-visit those books we loved and learned from as children? Margaret Hunsberger (1985) asks, "What is it like to re-read?", and we ask a similar question here: What is it like to re-listen? Hunsberger (1985) explains re-reading "is not a repeated conversation, but a new one" (p. 161). Having been altered by the first reading, whether the next follows quickly or after some time, by returning to a text we bring with us something new even as the text itself is constant. Hunsberger (1985) writes,

> During a first reading of a text, the reader's interpretation is influenced by that part of the manuscript which has gone before. But in a re-reading the interpretation is influenced by both past and future text since the reader already knows what is yet to come. (p. 162)

We can't replicate the first time we heard a song—that suspension of time in which we know neither where the song is going, what it might tell us, or when it will end—but we do experience it anew with each re-listen, as new dimensions are added in the re-listening. We anticipate the next note, we've memorized the lyrics, we feel familiar to the work and it to us, and yet we can be surprised by what we feel and come to know as we re-listen.

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Interlude, by Tesni

One listen, sometime last summer, I'm biking across the city, heading towards a friend to hold her hand during a medical appointment. A sweaty garbage smell assaults me every few blocks as I ride. Some Alexisonfire lyrics are still a mystery to me – I'm not sure if I'm singing along accurately or just making up words with the melody – a blend of both really. Alexisonfire returns me to the angst of trying to find your self. My thoughts catch in my throat even as I sing and ride. I'm thinking of my friend. I'm thinking about that essay I want to write if I'm brave enough. And then I see a flash of memory and I'm at my family cottage getting 'mansplained to' by a group of boys. We're arguing about which Alexis album is better. And then I'm defending their newer work in the staff breakroom at the movie theatre with the older, cooler guys who regret the band's sound has 'changed'. And back in the present it occurs to me this project is a perfect way to understand how currere *happens all at once. I see my problem with being*

'brave enough' to write that paper, and my other concerns as a scholar, contained in these early moments of having to defend myself and my ideas to those who seem to be given more authority on the topic. It was early in the morning when I left, and I'm always surprised how sleepy this city is, until all of a sudden it's not. People start heading into work; I'm halfway through my ride. I'm accompanied across the city by the sound of desperate lyrics like "Poor little tin man, still swinging his axe / Even though his joints are clogged with rust" and "Brother! There is no charity / For the common man / When he is in need of relief".

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Drawing on Tarc (2015, 2019) and Hunsberger (1985), we extend this train of thought about reading and re-reading to music. Music, especially the music we listen to repeatedly in adolescence, does something *in* us; it changes who we are, how we see ourselves, and how we relate to others. Tarc (2019) suggests the maternal relation as the first pedagogic site, which shapes the affective map of how learning takes place thereafter. Her suggestion is consistent with object relations theory, where the mother is seen as the first significant relationship through which the child learns how to relate to others (i.e., Klein, Bion; see Mitchell & Black, 2016). By adolescence, these maps are already drawn, and the child must learn how to navigate through the social and cultural world—the world of multiple others—using those (often unconscious) maps as their guide. Adolescence is generally understood as a fraught time that feels of much consequence to those living it—our friendships matter greatly, and yet we may feel isolated; our somewhat obsessive interests become declarations of "who" we are or wish to be seen as; and shame and mistakes are felt excruciatingly. Tamara Bibby (2018) reflects,

> Watching adolescents living through the throes of coming into being can be acutely painful: not only may they appear to put themselves at risk and refuse our painfully won adult good sense, they also summon up all our own experiences of lost loves, of mistakes made, of opportunities discarded, of ingratitude, of humiliation and shame. (p. 27)

We feel intensely in adolescence, and we play intensely too: playing with identity, as in our aforementioned scene, emo, and punk phases; playing music with friends, in basement bands and on long bus rides and elsewhere; and playing in the way Donald Winnicott (1971/2008) defined it, as Bibby (2018) summarizes as "a mode of communication, something that takes place between the wild formlessness of my subjective experiences and the reality of the world beyond me" (p. 76). Listening as we did through our duo-*currere* was a sort of *watching back* of our *own* adolescent play—we put all that on *replay*, album after album, to better understand, today, what it helped us come to know, then. And our duo-*currere* became an answer, of sorts, to Bibby's (2018) question: "How can we help make sure that learners remain able to access their own responses…to their own subjective experiences of learning[?]" (p. 29). Even though they warned us early on, "My words won't heal / It is you who decides" (Alexisonfire, 2004) – track after track, we hear how Alexisonfire held us through this time.

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Interlude, by Tesni

Last summer, I'm at my adolescent home, in the basement that was, for years, my bedroom. I'm looking through an old box of diaries, notebooks, and letters written between friends from grades 7 through 12. I find a note between myself and a girl I recall wanting desperately to be closer friends with; I admired her cool-factor. It's a note she'd sent back to me, its pair likely long ago recycled. She'd written, amongst other musings about the sports we played or people we admired, "Yes! Alexisonfire! <3 <3 So good! .44

caliber love letter <3 <3" *I wonder whether I'd written something to her, like, "I love Alexisonfire!!". I probably knew that she did and hoped this admission of mine, while true, might encourage her to see some cool-factor in me, back. I didn't listen that much to the rest of the 'hardcore' music out there – it was always, only, Alexis. And I'm glad it was a girl I was seeking to impress, in contrast to the private diary entries that embarrassingly reveal a naive, boy-crazy girl… There she is, though, seeking closeness – an enduring preoccupation.*

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Study, Something A Bit Obsessive

Beyond the ways that our adolescent listenings shaped us, we also wondered about our current practice of re-listening in our *currere* exchange. To understand that practice more deeply, we turned toward the concept of "study". While in common parlance the word "study" takes on connotations of preparing for exams at school or university, a sketch made in preparation of a greater work, and/or designing a research protocol, in educational thinking the word can take on myriad other meanings (e.g., Ruitenberg, 2017a). We treat study herein as a process involving sustained attention directed toward better understanding the object of one's study (McClintock, 1971; Ruitenberg, 2017b). And, Robert McClintock (1971) explains, as the student comes closer to the object of her study, she is herself transformed. Relationships are formed and transformed, too, between object and student (and others) in study—indeed, for Pinar (2017) it is relationships, not outcomes, that structure study. But, study escapes measurement: "Study does not measure up to the demands of evidence…While study certainly has effects, these effects are not predetermined, and so study's effectiveness cannot be assessed" (Ruitenberg, 2017b, p. 2). Focusing on study, then, offers an opportunity to resist outcomes-based educational discourse, which we experience as a constraint, because while an intention to learn may drive study, the 'outcomes' may be better described as affected senses and sensibilities that, we believe, endure and recur beyond an initial 'lesson'.

Reflecting on the question "Why does the University go to such lengths to avoid identifying students with study?" Arsenjuk and Koerner (2009) position thinking about study as "a move away from the problem of the figure of the student to the specificity of the student's practice" (p. 8). They write:

> Study would instead name those 'unprofessional activities' of thought and experimentation that leave one intoxicated…driven by curiosities that are closer to pleasure, to play, to wandering, to leaving work…A compelling suggestion: that one might have picked up the habit of reading intensely or of writing to excess, that there might be something a bit zealous, obsessive, uncontrollable, and unaccountable in study. (Arsenjuk & Koerner, 2009, pp. 8-9)

For our part, we picked up these habits in the ways we listened to music. Study, of course, happens in and outside of formal education structures. This is significant for our discussion because what we've come to understand, through our duo-*currere*, is that the ways in which we paid attention to music during our adolescence—that is the ways we studied with artists and bands voraciously—foreshadowed our future study practices as academics. Those early experiences with music were, for us, our first rigorous experiences of what it has come to mean to be a scholar. We find a new thinker, read everything we can find by them, and dive head-first into the currents of their thinking. We talk to others about our love for these thinkers and

thoughts, hoping in our hearts that they share our interests, if not our intensity, and also that they might recognize something about us in our evocation of their thinking. It is all strikingly similar to the way(s) we "discovered" new artists in our teenage years. By re-listening today, we re-learn who we were, who we are, who we might be, and what it means today. Our inquiry, then, reveals the truths and contradictions alike that we continue to confront and navigate in our academic lives.

Returning to the earlier analogy of reading to further our thinking about study, we think there is also an intersubjective element to re-reading and re-listening. Hunsberger (1985) says "the essence of re-reading appears to be found in interaction and sharing" (p. 166). Interaction might happen between reader and author, listener and musician; sharing might happen between readers, between fans. The private and public nature of study is made vivid here. Although *being in study* can involve private absorption in an object or text, with the mind and the senses attuned with "a clear intent to learn, even if one does not know in advance what one will learn" (Ruitenberg, 2017c, p. 136), something else happens when we look, or listen to, a text together. Harney and Moten (2013) propose the text becomes a social space when "we get to that point where the text is open enough that instead of being studied, it actually becomes *the occasion for study*" (p. 109, emphasis added). We might, then, meet in study to think publicly and experimentally and to "try to truly *meet with* the phenomenon (or text, or image)" (Masschelein, 2017, p. 47, emphasis original). Fandom might be a particularly potent version of such public, collective study that brings people together. Our new friendship as duo-*currere* collaborators is a testament to this. Connecting over a shared, private, recurring study of a sound that marked our adolescence, we learned our academic interests and anxieties converged. To varying degrees, we both participated in subcultures based around the music we listened to—*scene, emo,* or *punk* are all names used to describe both the style of music and the youth subcultures in which we participated and experimented (Bennett, 2001). Those subcultures helped shape the ways we related to others, ourselves, and even societal structures such as schooling, which represented established authorities toward which these subcultures, especially punk, reacted. Our fandom today gives us a language to express our present because we had a past (enduring) cultural object in common. For Alan Block (2017), to pray, to study, and to teach concerns "the public personal acknowledgment of wonder and awe" (p. 90). Same, too, perhaps, for the concert-goer who waits in line, who joins a group that gathers, who directs their attention, lovingly, toward the stage where the performers, soon, meet them. The live concert event offers anticipation and spontaneity and hope where we ask, "Will they play my favourite song?" as much as "Is this a group where I belong?".

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Interlude, by Tesni

In another artefact-finding mission from last summer, I recover old photographs and videos from my teenage years. I find three videos from an Alexisonfire concert I attended at age sixteen, in Ottawa: a grainy, tiny square of a video taken on a pocket-sized digital camera that would seem archaic to today's teens but was, at the time, my prized possession. In one video, George is (characteristically) shirtless, moving erratically around the stage; the camera records unsteadily as my body moves in concert with everyone around me. In another, Dallas is centred, singing a melodic solo from "Side Walk When She Walks". A slice of the lyrics, "Let's be honest you know you shouldn't bother / 'Cause with me, it's impossible to win" is nearly drowned out by adoring screams and singing along from the girls in the crowd—I remember how many girls were there. Something about Alexisonfire, as guy-centred and even

violent as the stories they wove in their songs were, caught teenage girls' attention. I recognize some of the screams from behind the camera as my own. I know it's the first concert I crowd-surfed at. But I catch myself wondering whether I was comfortable, physically, there in that crowd where men dominated—or am I confusing my self from today with my self, then? Was I braver, freer, fearless in that teenage body? In the role of the observer, I imagine my tiny body and I'm worried she will be pulled into the mosh pit to be crushed by the weight of the boys and men and their arms and bodies flailing and pushing wildly. But I don't think that's how I felt, then. Was there something about the crowd, and the band, that made us girls feel like we belonged, too? Don't I remember the girls-only mosh, evidence of our collective, unspoken agreement that this concert was our sacred space to meet and participate in something, together?

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Our concert-going experiences from adolescence further illuminate the social aspect of study for us. When study becomes social, Harney and Moten (2013) explain, it "allows for everyone to feel that [they] can contribute or not contribute to being in a space" (p. 109). They continue:

> [We've] been thinking more and more of study as something not where everybody dissolves into the student, people sort of take turns doing things for each other or for the others, and where you allow yourself to be possessed by others as they do something. That also is a kind of dispossession of what you might otherwise have been holding onto, and that possession is released in a certain way voluntarily, and then some other possession occurs by others. (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 109)

As suggested above, we have come to think of the habit of repeated listenings as a form of study where we're 'possessed' by the music and, perhaps, those we listen with. When we sat in front of a computer with the latest download queued, or pressed play on our discman or stereo and hit "auto-repeat" on those songs that moved us, we were learning the songs. We memorized lyrics, and we also learned the rhythms and the sonic textures. Moreover, this investment in the music became a gateway into our participation in the subcultures with which the music was associated. Our knowledge of the songs manifested in comments to others—"Oh, I love that song"; "Have you heard this song before?"—declaring our status as "punk" or "scene kids".

Today, when we listen to those same songs, we remember those moments vividly. We also remember the people we were with, the relationships we formed in our adolescent play, and where we were. The music evokes strong autobiographical memories—strong especially because of the repeated, ritualistic nature of our listenings. The investment of our adolescent selves in this music comes back to us in the shape of emotion and life narrative (Janata et al., 2007).

Like the well-worn records of previous generations, these songs formed groves in our minds, tracks into which we fall without much effort. Those tracks are affective, and like Tarc's (2019) vision of the affective landscape painted in childhood through the first, maternal pedagogy we all experience, sometimes manifest in and through children's literature, music too shapes the contour of who we become. Re-visiting those contours, those grooves, with the renewed perspective of age, insights emerge into who we are and where we have been. That re-visiting is, we think, another form of study worth attending to—one here enacted through the process of duo-*currere*.

Listening Again, Toward Making Temporal Waste Through Reverie

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Interlude, by Adrian

Somewhere in the middle of completing my PhD (2017-2020), Alexisonfire released their first new song since their 2011 EP "Dog's Blood". Their resurgence onto the Canadian music scene fueled a glut of media coverage that was never present for their earlier albums. In re-watching some of this media while making a push to finish this paper (and listening to nothing but Alexisonfire), one video struck me. It is a live performance at "the house of strombo". The video begins with George saying, "okay, so you don't remember everything in your life, you just remember moments, okay? And you want to create those moments. So here's an opportunity to create a moment" (The Strombo Show, 2019, 0:00-0:10).

The more mundane moments from my PhD that I remember are all coloured by Alexisonfire. They are moments of sitting in the computer lab with headphones on, formatting documents or completing reference lists, or the 30 minute pre-dawn walk to campus made daily as a sort of ritual. The commonality is reverie. Each of those moments enabled a drift away from the heavy focus demanded by writing and reading. My mind wandered, and I allowed myself to envision what might be. Outwardly, it may have looked like I was wasting time listening to music, but they were the moments that enabled the most growth in me as a scholar. Connections were made, papers were dreamed, and thoughts were pursued, and always Alexisonfire, along with other bands, were my friends in reverie.

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Having thought through the affective potency and the studious rigour of our adolescent listenings and present re-listening, our *currere* dialogue turned to the constraints we felt along the way. Primary among those constraints was time. As teenagers, we both invested tremendous amounts of time in listening to music. It was active time—time spent developing a sense of who we are through the sounds and words of others. It was time spent in study but expressly outside the bureaucratic apparatus of schooling, where study is easily conflated with credit (Harney & Moten, 2013; Manning, 2019). According to market logics, we generated nothing in exchange for the time we spent with Alexisonfire, yet we spent it freely, rewarded beyond mere "entertainment" by an investment in self.

Today, we often find it difficult to devote as much time to pure listening. Indeed, there is a compulsive pull to make our time productive, especially as academics. For Adrian, faculty meetings, advising students, service commitments, answering emails, and preparing classes all require huge time commitments that can overwhelm and diminish the time allocated to other activities that are more sustaining, such as research. Even with research, the pressure to "publish or perish" is acutely felt and can sometimes pull against the desire to spend more time with an idea, a paper, or a song. For Tesni, the pressures to keep pace, to remain competitive and agile, to be excellent, to build a C.V., and to establish oneself as already-established—all *prior* to graduation—weigh heavily and strain the possibility for time spent in study with peers and colleagues. Right when we start to feel close to something, time's up; cut the talk short; everyone's too busy; move on to the next task. And we all admit this is troubling, but nothing changes.

In all of this, we can't always find the time to listen like we used to, and that is a profound loss. Yet, the music is still with us, and we still listen to it—in the car on the drive to work/school, in headphones at our desks while doing less strenuous work, or in the background of other activities. In those moments, when we allow it, we are transported—

brought into a reverie. Here, we conceptualize reverie following David Lewkowich's (2022) evocation of the concept as a sort of waking daydream, "a psychic state of dynamic receptivity" (p. 130) and "a form of relational aliveness" (p. 130). Those moments of reverie, we contend, are valuable, though perhaps not in the dominant framing of "value". Indeed, within late stage capitalism, the simple pleasure of reverie might be viewed as a waste of time. Aware of this, Saul and Burkholder (2020) suggest that "in a society that fetishizes efficiencies, making temporal waste can be seen as an important critical intervention, a subversion of what neoliberal logics value most" (p. 9). They continue to state that,

> Waste need not be conceived of as pejorative, need not exist on the other side of value, but could instead assume its own structure of values in ways that contest the excesses of late stage capitalism. (Saul & Burkholder, 2020, p. 9)

Following this, we frame our re-listenings as temporal waste, not in the pejorative sense, but as a rigorous reverie, one through which subjective reconstruction, and thus study (Pinar, 2023; Strong-Wilson, 2021), actively takes shape. Today, as in our adolescence, the subversiveness of the act enhances its meaning. Then, the existence of study outside the parameters of the school curriculum made it feel agentic—an action we chose freely rather than one that was forced on us. "This is what I choose to study, and it is valuable on my terms, not on those presented by others," we said. Now, we aim to keep our listening as temporally wasteful—valuable to us in terms of our own learning, self-understanding, and becoming, but actively resistant to the value structures in which we are required to participate in order to survive in neoliberal society. It is a way of studying despite constraint. Re-listening to the songs of our youth evokes a reverie, one where we are both transported to the past but also projected into the future and alive in the moment. In and of itself, it is a form of study, one we aim to keep temporally wasteful so as to resist the pull to commodify everything and account for every moment of our being with some productive use of time. It is something we keep for ourselves, that keeps us ourselves, even as we share it through our duo-*currere* and, indeed, in this paper.

Conclusion

Countless lessons lie in every fever dream / a million voices asking, what does it all mean?

~ Alexisonfire, "Born and Raised" (2009)

Framed as autobiographical inquiry taking shape through duo-*currere*, and a reflective dialogue between the authors, what we have attempted in this paper is to palpate some meaning in our shared practice of intentionally returning to the music of our adolescence. To enumerate the insights we have shared here, we might say the following: 1) Our adolescent listenings shaped our affective landscapes, forming the contours of our relational and social lives much as does the literature we read as children; 2) our adolescent listenings were our first form of study, and we find similarity in the ways we operate as scholars of curriculum today; and 3) re-visiting those listenings with active attention moves toward subjective reconstruction—we come to know ourselves better through active reflection on who we were in those early listenings and in listening again with more experienced ears. The overarching message of all these points seems to be that there is a tremendous value in listening to music, re-listening to music, and following what interests us most, even if that value is separate from the constraining logics of late stage capitalism, particularly as they play out in the education system. Indeed, at the close of this essay, we think back to the hours we spent at a picnic table

watching the conference continue without us, sharing our mutual feelings of outsiderness, and talking about the bands we loved and the scholars we had read. That was a moment of study, one made newly thinkable by our duo-*currere* and made possible by our respective adolescent investments in Alexisonfire. At the end of the day, it was the music that brought us together. To conclude our paper, then, we reiterate the affective power of music.

Like Elisapie, we are familiar with the multidimensional, emotional experience provoked by re-listening to the music that we listened to during our adolescence. Particular musicians and their work are irrevocably linked to a time, a mood, a place, and, often, people with whom we listened. Whether the musical taste of our teenage years endures through adulthood is not the point; rather, the time-travel spell a once-favourite album casts, we understand, is a kind of memory work—a study of self and other through subjective reconstruction of the past in the present (Pinar, 2023; Strong-Wilson, 2021). Listening again and again as we do, we notice things today just as we did then – things about ourselves, our desires, and our emotional experiences. Further, we understand that this practice—one honed during adolescence when the things we care about mark us in a particularly poignant and visceral way—matters for our present and future practices of listening, being with, and suspending time and tasks to bask in our reverie, our study.

Re-visiting those narratives and songs that shaped us offers insight into who we are now and the ways we are prone to be with others. It is, then, precisely a form of the expansion of the subject at the centre of *currere* (Pinar, 2023). In that way, the method and content in this paper mirror one another. *Currere*'s synthetic moment is a fleeting thing—a coming together, usually in the moment of teaching (Pinar in Ng-A-Fook & Pinar, 2020), that only rarely outlives the moment (Pinar, 2023). If there is a synthesis here—a gesture toward an always emergent praxis—it is that we teach/research/study how we are, and how we are is informed by many things, not the least of which is the music that coloured our teenaged years. Re-visiting that music now might enable a different mode of being, one that remains perpetually open to reinterpretation and reconstruction.

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