

## Article

# Syncopated Beats and the History of Sadness: The Affective Fusion of Audience and Film through Music

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Academic Editor: Joseph Kickasola

Received: 19 January 2016; Accepted: 23 March 2016; Published: 25 March 2016

**Abstract:** Recent developments in the disciplines of cinema studies, theology, and religion and film have generated renewed interest in the experiential dimensions of filmgoing. More specifically, those contributing to theological scholarship have begun to explore these cinematic experiences as theologically significant. With these developments in mind, this essay offers a close reading of the principal musical theme in the 2010 film *Beginners*, noting in particular the ways in which this music is distributed throughout the narrative. In doing so, it suggests that the music in this film expresses in concrete terms one of the key insights from emerging neuropsychological research, namely, that our affective, pre-cognitive, “wordless knowledge” of the world is the foundation upon which human consciousness is constructed. But the essay goes one step further by making an explicitly theological claim. That is, when located within the framework of a lived theology (*i.e.*, a “poetic theology”), the film and its music shed light on the ways in which aesthetic modes of awareness (*i.e.*, intuitive, embodied forms of knowledge) open up spaces in the contemporary world where our affections, the goods of late-modern society, and our spiritual longings are able to meet and interact.

**Keywords:** music; jazz; theology; religion; consciousness; poetics; aesthetics; bodies; emotions; leitmotiv

## 1. Introduction

In Mike Mills’ Academy Award-winning *Beginners* (2010), Ewan McGregor plays the part of Oliver Fields, a forty-something graphic artist grappling with the loss of both his mother and his father in relatively quick succession. Highlighting Oliver’s newfound sense of loneliness and isolation, the film’s opening segment follows him through the vacant house of his now deceased father, Hal Fields (played by Christopher Plummer). While he silently organizes and cleans the files, books, and unwanted trash that litter this painfully empty space, Oliver pauses over the personal ad that his father had recently submitted. Through a series of flashbacks triggered by this ad, we soon discover that, although Hal knew he was gay for the entirety of his forty-five year marriage, he did not come out as a gay man until his wife died. In the four years following his wife’s death though, Hal lived his life with a kind of exuberance and *joie de vivre* that was rooted in a lifetime of denial, repression, and angst.

Yet, Plummer’s well-deserved accolades notwithstanding, *Beginners* is not about Hal. It is about Oliver. In the wake of his parents’ deaths, Oliver is alone. He is lost. He is grief-stricken. But the depth of his grief exceeds that of mere loneliness or despair. Oliver is literally dis-integrating. At work, he becomes consumed with creating an album cover that depicts human history as the “History of Sadness.” At home, he has conversations with his father’s dog, who reminds him that “the darkness is about to drown us unless something drastic happens right now.” And in his social life, he attempts to sabotage his relationship with the one person who might save him from the creeping darkness: Anna.

From a narrative perspective, it is Oliver’s budding relationship with Anna that serves as the primary means by which he awakens from his stupor and takes the first steps toward integrating his

life into a larger, more meaningful whole. But to fully understand the complexity of Oliver's plight and his movement toward wholeness, we need to move beyond purely narrative or thematic modes of analyzing this film, which tend to focus on either linguistic or visual forms of representation. Instead, we need to understand something of the way that music works. Thus, this essay focuses on a close reading of the music in *Beginners* as a way of articulating my primary argument. Namely, I want to suggest that the music in this film expresses in concrete terms one of the key insights from emerging neuropsychological research, namely, that our affective, "wordless knowledge" of the world is the foundation upon which human consciousness is constructed. But I take this argument one step further by making an explicitly theological claim. That is, when located within the framework of a lived theology (*i.e.*, a "poetic theology"), the film and its music shed light on the ways in which aesthetic modes of awareness (*i.e.*, intuitive, embodied forms of knowledge) open up spaces in the contemporary world where our affections, the goods of late-modern society, and our spiritual longings are able to meet and interact.

## 2. Musical "Fusion" and the Feeling of What Happens

The recurrence of the principal leitmotiv in *Beginners*, and the relationship it forges with the rest of the film's music, offers unique insight into Oliver's profound sadness [1]. In doing so, it reveals something about Oliver's character that cannot be put into words (e.g., his psychological state, inner motivations, and emotional landscape). Significantly though, this music also functions as the primary means by which the audience comes to know and understand Oliver. Within the cinematic experience, music often serves as one of the key mechanisms by which the audience is "fused" both with the characters and the larger narrative of which they are a part [2–4]. As a result, this musical fusion involves a distinctly affective form of engagement with the film [5,6].

A brief interlude is necessary here in order to parse out the theoretical underpinnings of this claim regarding film music and its inherently affective appeal. In the first place, methodologically speaking, I am separating out music from the various other elements that comprise any given film. But it is important to note that this is only an analytic distinction. It is not an attempt to essentialize music or conceive of it as a radically different way of knowing. Within the context of filmgoing, music signals or "re-presents" a discursive exchange between a film and its audience. Music functions uniquely in this exchange, but it remains only one of a number of equally integral modes of cinematic representation.

That being said, in terms of developing a phenomenology of musical affectivity and the kind of meaning-making that takes place in a filmgoer's cinematic experience, the work of neuropsychologist Antonio Damasio has been quite helpful [7]. Damasio's turn of phrase—"the feeling of what happens"—encapsulates well my own approach toward embodied cognition. For Damasio, the core dimensions of (and thus the primary difficulties in understanding) human consciousness are related to how the brain not only "images" or "pictures" the objects it encounters, but also how it generates a sense of self in the act of knowing [7]. Drawing from his own neuropsychological research, Damasio asserts that consciousness, emotion, and the body are inseparable. As such, self-awareness is not a purely cognitive reality, but is rather generated by "the feeling of what happens when [our] being is modified by the acts of apprehending something" ([7], p. 10).

This is all fine and well as far as it goes, and, at least in cinematic terms, is rather uncontroversial. But it is Damasio's conception of the two levels of consciousness (*i.e.*, "core consciousness" and "extended consciousness") that provide us with the most helpful resources for understanding how filmgoers not only feel music in their bodies, but incorporate that feeling into a more elaborate sense of self—their identity. According to Damasio, "core consciousness", the simplest kind, provides humans with a sense of self in the context of their immediate experience [7]. Significantly, this intuitive, affective mode of awareness both precedes and creates the very conditions for the kind of higher-level thought and reflection that is indicative of what Damasio calls the "extended consciousness." It is this more developed consciousness that is typically under consideration in traditional discussions of the self or personhood. But for Damasio, what is prior and, to some extent, more foundational (to use his term) is

the “wordless knowledge” that comprises the core consciousness. Thus, our basic awareness of the world is first constituted by our bodies and our emotions—our sensual being-in-the-world. In other words, our identities are constituted and constructed through thoroughly affective means, and our labeling of those emotions is always a secondary phenomenon.

Thus, for Damasio:

“Consciousness begins as the feeling of what happens when we see or hear or touch. Phrased in slightly more precise words, it is a feeling that accompanies the making of any kind of image—visual, auditory, tactile, visceral—within our living organisms. Placed in the appropriate context, the feeling marks those images as ours and allows us to say, in the proper sense of the terms, that we see or hear or touch”. ([7], p. 26).

When framed in terms of Damasio’s understanding of consciousness, *Beginners* offers a helpful example of how film music can signal a cinematic exploration of the interplay between our core consciousness and our historical sense of self—an inherited awareness of the world mediated by music that is not only rooted in a “wordless knowledge” but also precedes our conscious awareness [8]. Indeed, the majority of the music in the film is 1920s jazz music, which features equal parts ragtime, blues, and big-band influences. What is interesting about this particular choice of music is that, as it originated during what is now commonly known as the “Jazz Age”, it is rife with the political and racial tensions that marked the cultural landscape of the 1920s. This inherited tension is related to the fact that, on the one hand, the foundations of jazz music are deeply rooted in the African-American experience of slavery and segregation. Yet, on the other hand, young white Americans quickly re-appropriated this music not only for entertainment purposes, but also to express a rejection of and rebellion against the dominant culture of their time.

Jazz music, then, represents a very specific kind of consciousness [9,10]. To be sure, it is historically situated, but at the same time, like all musical-aesthetic experiences, it both mediates and is mediated by a form of awareness that is always already being received, reprocessed, and repurposed in the present moment for each and every musical object with which the listener’s brain interacts. Consequently, as jazz music dominates the film’s non-diegetic underscoring, and as Oliver also hears it playing on either vinyl or CD while he recalls memories of his mother and father, we “feel” (to use Damasio’s term) that—much like ourselves—Oliver has been inserted into a story that he did not start and that he will not bring to an end. For good or for ill, this is the confused and confusing history that he has inherited through these musical artifacts, which means that it is now a history mediated by music. It is for this reason that Oliver must repeatedly remind us through voice-over narration that “this is what the sun looked like in 1955,” and “this is what it means to be Jewish in 1938,” and “this is what happiness looked like in 2003.” In other words, Oliver’s identity is fully, wholly, and inescapably the product of the story in which he finds himself, but the development of his historical sense of self is always already taking place in relationship to a mode of understanding that, at least within the context of the film’s narrative, emerges almost exclusively through music. Indeed, just as he points out to his canine companion, it is this fractured story—his unique history—that has been quite literally bred into him.

### 3. The Interplay between Core and Extended Consciousness

If there is an element of Oliver’s historically situated consciousness (*cf.* Damasio’s “autobiographical consciousness”) that he struggles to either understand or embrace, it is the one that his parents in particular have bequeathed to him. He truly loves his parents and, in an important sense, is lost without them. In their deaths, a part of him has gone missing. Yet, like every child of every parent, his dysfunctions are their dysfunctions. His inadequacies are their inadequacies. Thus, his parents’ marriage, which appeared to him to be detached and loveless, has robbed him of the ability to value or otherwise engage in a genuinely intimate relationship. If marriage, if relationship, if love looks like that, then he would rather be alone. In this way, his parents’ lingering influence is like a song that he cannot get out of his head (nor out of his body). In fact, throughout the film, the scenes

that depict Oliver's memory of his parents are almost always underscored and thus problematized by the very jazz music that, on the surface, seems so filled with "soul", but in reality embodies a painful and convoluted history.

Again Damasio is helpful here, especially in the distinction that he draws between "emotions" and "feelings". Whereas emotions are a "collection of [neuro-biological] responses, many of which are publicly observable" ([7], p. 42), a feeling is the private, mental experience of an emotion. Thus, we cannot observe a feeling in another person, but we can observe a feeling in ourselves when, "as a conscious being, [we] perceive [our] own emotional states" ([7], p. 42). Interestingly, Damasio claims that we are not always conscious of our feelings or the emotions that lead to them. Thus, he separates the phenomenon by which consciousness emerges into three stages of processing, which run along a continuum: "a state of emotion, which can be triggered and executed nonconsciously; a state of feeling, which can be represented nonconsciously; and a state of feeling made conscious, i.e., known to the organism having both emotion and feeling" ([7], p. 37).

As the first step toward knowing, this "state of feeling made conscious" is inseparable from our emotions. However, for these emotions and the feelings they induce to influence the subject beyond the "here and now", consciousness must at some point be present. What is more, for these feelings to become a part of our identity (i.e., our "extended consciousness", which corresponds to our "autobiographical self"), they must move beyond the confines of their immediacy and be taken up within a more elaborate sense of self. Thus, for Damasio, just as our feelings stand at the threshold of being and knowing, so too is core consciousness a rite of passage into extended consciousness. As a consequence, these are not two independent varieties of consciousness. Rather, they are interdependent modes of awareness, both of which create the necessary conditions for the other. Although extended consciousness can only ever emerge through the portal of core consciousness, every instantiation of our core consciousness is enacted and embodied by a historically situated self.

Indeed, according to Damasio, "[t]he glory that is consciousness requires the orderly enhancement of both kinds of consciousness. But if we are to elucidate the glorious combination, we are well advised to begin by understanding the simpler, foundational kind: core consciousness" ([7], p. 17). In other words, as it concerns our critical engagement with film music, even when our analyses focus on what appears to be an obvious example of extended consciousness and its corresponding historically situated self, we must keep in mind that core consciousness is always already present and active, providing the very resources for the more elaborate forms of awareness that extend beyond their primary source.

All of this is another way of saying that *Beginners* employs music to represent a series of underlying neurobiological processes in its characters that are neither seen nor spoken. As signaled by the film's music, Oliver "knows" his parents' relational dysfunction in his body without having to name it as such or even reflect upon it critically. In the "here and now" of his grief, as he listens to jazz records, he *feels* it. In this musically mediated space, there is no before or after for Oliver—only "now." It is an experience rooted in his core consciousness. Of course, the emotional response induced by his hearing of jazz music is something that can be observed through visual modes of representation—both by the characters in the film and by us the audience. But Oliver himself may not be conscious of these emotions, and even if they did rise to the level of a state of feeling made conscious, they would remain private to Oliver and thus inaccessible to the audience. It is for this very reason that music's ability to affectively fuse audience and film has become such an integral element of film storytelling, for it is one of the more efficient (although equally problematic) means at a filmmaker's disposal for bridging the gap created by the privacy of feelings and publicly observable emotions.

When viewed from this standpoint, Oliver's entire character arc hinges upon his ability to bring to conscious awareness his affective response to his parent's jazz music and integrate it into a more robust sense of self. That is, Oliver's growth as a character depends upon his ability to construct an identity shaped by the past, but not shackled by it—one that can anticipate the future as something other than a

“history of sadness”. Or, as Damasio might put it, Oliver needs to avoid becoming stuck in a permanent, musically induced feed-back loop between his core consciousness and his extended consciousness.

#### 4. The Beginner’s Suite as An “Invitation to Feel”

It is in the midst of one of these grief-filled episodes of permanent nostalgia that Oliver first meets Anna. It is also where we first hear the film’s principal leitmotiv, “Beginner’s Suite”. It is a simple piece played primarily on a piano in 4/4 time. Interestingly, while the notes of the melody stress the downbeat of the 4/4 time signature, elements of the accompanying instrumentation give the tune a somewhat syncopated feel. We first hear this musical figure as Oliver and Anna dance at the party where they meet. It also plays as they eat tacos from a food truck, as Anna tells Oliver of the burden she feels for his loss, and once more as Oliver narrates his love for her. Thus, this music does what most leitmotifs do in the context of a film. That is, it expresses the growing bond of love between the two main characters who, like the music that corresponds to them, are rather “off beat” from one another. One of them is quirky and free-spirited. The other is a bit of a downer. But their contrasting emphases neither eliminate nor overwhelm the other. Rather, the unique rhythm that each possesses become all the more meaningful when played in light of the other.

Given the way that the Beginner’s Suite leitmotiv is distributed across the film, I want to suggest that, as a “wordless” form of cinematic knowledge or awareness, this non-diegetic music is able to “represent” or “express” the unique characterizations of Oliver and Anna on the level of our core consciousness [11]. In the immediate here and now of the filmgoing context, we come to “know” these characters through the affective fusion provided by the film’s music. In truth, this should come as no surprise. Filmmakers often call upon music for the express purpose of producing a connection between the film and the audience that is not only or even usually related to the higher order of knowledge associated with our extended consciousness [12]. Whether we as the audience label or reflect upon the feelings brought about by these musically induced emotions is of little importance when it comes to how and whether we become “fused” with the narrative, for we have no means of exerting direct voluntary control over our neural processes. That being said, for this affective fusion to have any real influence on the audience beyond the immediacy of the film, consciousness must become “extended” at some point. We must move beyond the here and now and begin the work of categorizing our feelings and reflecting upon what (if anything) those feelings might mean. That is, this music becomes “our” music only when we move toward, in the words of Damasio, “a state of feeling made conscious” ([7], p. 37).

For example, we may or may not be consciously aware of the fact that, as Oliver and Anna’s relationship slowly dissolves, the music shifts as well. The melody (let’s call it “Anna’s melody”) eventually goes silent, but we continue to hear the leitmotiv’s underlying chord progression. During this time, Oliver recalls two more memories of his parents—one in which they dispassionately kiss every morning, and another where Oliver speaks with his father about holding his hand as a child. Both of these moments feature the “Beginner’s Suite”, but the orchestration now includes a lone French horn instead of Anna’s melody. As a result, rather than offering an alternative or complementary voice, the memory of his parents’ failed relationship (invoked by the appearance of the French horn) simply fills this melodic void. It is in this moment that we hear Oliver’s love song being displaced by another song—a song from his wounded past that he cannot quite seem to shake.

Thankfully, the film does not leave us here, wallowing as it were in disillusionment and discontent. But neither does it present a simple or straightforward path out of Oliver’s grief. As he comes to his senses and hops on a plane to New York to profess his love for Anna, the “Beginner’s Suite” returns just as we might expect. Like Anna herself, Anna’s melody is once again a part of the leitmotiv and thus a part of Oliver’s life. But so too is the instrumentation that emerged while he recalled his parents’ fractured relationship. What we now hear is not the original leitmotiv that expressed Oliver and Anna’s bond of love, but a new song that incorporates what seems to be contradictory elements—a musical expression of both his losses (represented by the French horn) and his loves (represented by



Anna's melody on the piano) at one and the same time. Here the music offers for the first time a full articulation of what it has anticipated all along—the co-mingling of Oliver's disintegrated past and his integrated future, his familial dysfunction and his romantic love, his sadness and his hope. It is a piece of music that conveys the rich complexity of Oliver's emotional landscape and his newfound sense of wholeness. At the same time, it opens up a space within the cinematic experience in which filmgoers are invited to feel (and thus bring to consciousness) these same feelings themselves—to integrate their sadness and hope into their own lives not as contradictory phenomena, but as complementary modes of aesthetic awareness.

## 5. Embodied Cognition, Affectivity, and Lived Theology

Here then is where the film most discernibly expresses a kind of lived theology—an intuitive awareness of our life in the world that has a decidedly religious shape. In his prescient book, *Poetic Theology*, William Dyrness builds upon Damasio's work in neuropsychology in order to explore the theological significance of this kind of aesthetic knowing. Dyrness is primarily concerned with the fundamentally emotional ways in which our core consciousness emerges from images or mental patterns. Thus, the starting point for his *theologia poetica* is rooted in Damasio's claim that "the role played by feelings is prior to and influential on the pictures we finally make of the world (*i.e.*, our knowing) [13]." But Dyrness takes a step beyond Damasio and makes an explicitly theological claim: "[F]aith itself cannot be understood apart from a healthy awareness of the role of feeling" ([13], p. 9). For Dyrness then, our affective awareness of the world, which is rooted in our core consciousness and is thus fundamentally aesthetic in nature (*i.e.*, embodied, sensual, and emotional), can bear theological significance. Indeed, "the drive that moves [contemporary people] to pursue the goods associated with their passions is a movement of the soul that, if nurtured more deeply and oriented rightly, would lead them to God . . . [A]esthetic and symbolic projects are . . . spiritual sites where the affections, the goods of the world, and religious longings meet and interact" ([13], pp. 5–6).

This is neither to romanticize aesthetic experiences nor to reify abstract theological categories. Rather, Dyrness is simply locating Damasio's findings within a larger theological framework—one that hinges upon two related theological claims: (a) "that these symbolic possibilities reflect the structures and purposes of creation"; and (b) "that these structures are themselves grounded in our conception(s) of g/God" [14].

Thus, when read through the lens of this poetic theology, we can say that Anna's melody not only reflects the spiritual core of the film itself, but also invites filmgoers into a profoundly aesthetic and, at least from Dyrness' perspective, theological encounter. Indeed, it is in this fully embodied, emotionally oriented experience that a psycho-pneumato-somatic fusion occurs between the audience and the filmic "text". That is, we as filmgoers come to the realization that we are not unlike Oliver. In fact, we are kindred "spirits". On both individual and corporate levels, we too have been dropped into a story that might be defined as a "history of sadness". And we "know" this on the level of our core consciousness—in our emotions—before we "know" it cognitively. We all have inherited a particularly convoluted historical consciousness, and the best way forward is neither clear nor without risk, for just like our own identity, this history is deep within us. It is closer to us than we are to ourselves.

As the film comes to a close, Oliver sees a picture of a daisy and imagines that his mother handed it to him at some point in the not-so-distant past. He envisions her saying "Here is simple and happy. That is what I meant to give you." But as he knows all too well, he has not inherited simple and happy because life is not simple and happy. It is complex and difficult, and the way forward is not always easy or obvious. As the biblical book of Proverbs states, "Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief" Prov. 14:13 (NET). This is life as we know it—the world as it has been handed to us. And what the music in this film suggests is that Oliver senses this complexity in every fiber of his being. He feels the paradox in his bones.

But the music in *Beginners* also suggests that moving from grief to joy is not about abandoning or simply rewriting the difficult stories that have shaped us, but incorporating our sadness into our

laughter, and allowing our very selves to be caught up in and transformed by the offbeat love of another (or an “other”). This is about more than simply changing the way we think or entertaining a different perspective on a pressing issue. It has to do with a fundamental shift in how we come to know the world and each other—a form of awareness that is far more affective than it is rational. Indeed, it might even be said that we can only ever truly understand others through a kind of “empathetic fusion”. To borrow from Roberto Goizueta: “We can know objects through observation and analysis, but we can only know human persons through empathetic love” [15]. Of course, like becoming a skilled jazz musician, this fully embodied, empathetic fusion is an ongoing process that requires practice, collaboration, and the ability to balance a number of unique (and sometimes competing) voices. But then again, the best music always does.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References and Notes

1. For an expanded treatment of how the leitmotiv functions in cinema and its potentially spiritual dimensions, see Kutter Callaway. *Scoring Transcendence: Contemporary Film Music as Religious Experience*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013.
2. Following the work of Claudia Gorbman, who authored one of the seminal theoretical treatments of film music and its affective power, music (especially non-diegetic music) is the primary means by which audiences are affectively “fused” with the film’s narrative. Given her commitments to critical theory in general and, in particular, the Frankfurt school of cultural criticism, Gorbman interprets this musical activity negatively. For Gorbman, music works as a “suturing device” which lessens the awareness of the technological nature of film discourse and bonds the spectator to spectacle. Moreover, it lowers the audience’s threshold of belief. Gorbman states: “Like hypnosis, it silences the spectator’s censor. It is suggestive; if it’s working right, it makes us a little less critical and a little more prone to dream.” Claudia Gorbman. *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 55.
3. In a similar vein to Gorbman, Anahid Kassabian approaches film music from a decidedly psychoanalytic perspective, suggesting that one of film music’s primary functions is to “track” audience identification. Anahid Kassabian. *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
4. Likewise, Caryl Flinn has made a compelling case that critical scholarship’s tendency to overlook the affective fusion that takes place between filmgoer and film via music is due to the epistemological privileging of seeing over hearing that orients the academy as a whole. She seeks to deconstruct these essentializing tendencies both within the film industry itself and among critical scholars whose work focuses on Hollywood film music. According to Flinn, the music that audiences hear in the context of the cinema problematizes these epistemological commitments because, before it does anything else, music serves as “the communicating link between the screen and the audience, reaching out and enveloping all into one single experience.” Caryl Flinn. *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 46. In the present article, I am building upon the theoretical insights of these film music scholars, but I am approaching the question of how music functions vis-à-vis the audience from an expressly theological perspective. For more on film music as a means of “fusion” and its theological significance, see again [1].
5. It will be helpful to note here that I am using the terms “affect” and “emotion” in a somewhat broad manner. I am largely indebted to those working in the fields of cognitive philosophy and psychology who study emotions through an integrative and multi-disciplinary approach. Therefore, I will be speaking of “affect”, “emotions”, and “feelings” as pieces of a larger affective landscape, which includes physiological changes, feelings, and cognitive processes. As it pertains specifically to the interaction between emotions and film, I have found immensely helpful Greg M. Smith. *Film Structure and the Emotion System*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
6. See also Carl R. Plantinga, and Greg M. Smith. *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

7. Indeed, from Damasio's perspective, the emotions generated by film and music—regardless of the perceived “quality” of the art in question—are as significant as any other emotion for the development of human consciousness. “[F]ine human emotion is even triggered by cheap music and cheap movies, the power of which should never be underestimated.” Antonio Damasio. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. Orlando: Harcourt, 1999, p. 36.
8. Because the focus of this essay is the music in a narrative film, it will also be helpful to note that, for Damasio, there is a narrative dimension to the emergence of consciousness as it relates to identity formation. He writes, “In brains endowed with abundant language, memory, and reasoning, narratives with this same simple origin and contour [core consciousness, feelings, objects that evoke those feelings] are enriched and allowed to display even more knowledge, thus producing a well-defined protagonist, an autobiographical self.” Antonio Damasio. *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*. New York: Random House, 2010, p. 216.
9. Jazz music itself bears the markings of this fractured social history, but so too does the musicological discourse about its production, distribution, and reception. Adorno was perhaps one of the most prominent and outspoken critics of modern jazz. Although he wrote several essays on jazz, his most widely read comments are found in Theodor Adorno. “The Culture Industry.” In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Edited by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. New York: Continuum, 1969.
10. Those following in the wake of the Frankfurt school have either embraced Adorno's critique wholeheartedly or decried his analysis as lacking a careful engagement with the music and, in the words of James Buhler, of “being Eurocentric and elitist, and being insensitive to issues of race, especially as they play out in an American context.” In recent literature, a renewed discussion of both Adorno and the jazz music he so “hated” hinges on a different question: “On what ground has the critical reception of the jazz essays proved most contentious?” In other words, Adorno might have anticipated the core problem we encounter when we attempt to “understand” jazz on any level. That is, we are complicit in the very racist and commodifying structures that have not only produced this music, but also blind us to its complexities (or lack thereof). For an insightful and helpful analysis of the current discourse, see James Buhler. “Frankfurt School Blues: Rethinking Adorno's Critique of Jazz.” In *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music*. Edited by Berthold Hoeckner. New York: Routledge, 2006.
11. I make this claim recognizing that there is debate concerning whether the non-referential type of symbolism produced by music and the musical-aesthetic experience constitutes a higher- or lower-level form of “knowing.” In my view, the way film music functions as both a “representation” of narrative meaning and as a “suturing device” that is often at its most effective when operating on the level of the subconscious, offers convincing evidence that lower levels of knowledge are perhaps more sophisticated than they are generally thought to be. For an interesting conversation on film music's “subconscious” effects, especially as it concerns the work of Gorbman and Flinn whom I cited above, see Jeff Smith. “Unheard Melodies? A Critique of Psychoanalytic Theories of Film Music.” In *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*. Edited by David Bordwell and Noel Carroll. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.
12. Although the notion is now contested, for much of film history, the “best” film music was considered to be the kind of music that no one consciously realized was even present. It was “inaudible” and thus “invisible”. And it was music's very ability to be audibly-inaudible that allowed it to “increase affective response, building dramatic intensity and evoking a ‘gut reaction’ that is unobtainable in any other way.” Roy M. Prendergast. *Film Music: A Neglected Art: A Critical Study of Music in Films*, 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992, p. 222.
13. William Dyrness. *Poetic Theology: God and the Poetics of Everyday Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, p. 8.
14. And of course Dyrness, who is a Trinitarian theologian, connects this symbolic work to a particular Christian Trinitarian conception of God: “[These structure] can only be properly grounded within a Trinitarian conception of God ([13], pp. 20–21).”
15. Roberto Goizueta. *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*. New York: Orbis Books, 1995, p. 92.

