In an 1848 letter to a friend, George Eliot discusses her view of *Tancred*, the novel by Benjamin Disraeli published a year earlier which dramatizes the debt owed by Christianity to Judaism:

> My Gentile nature kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority in the Jews. […] I bow to the superiority of Hebrew poetry, but much of their early mythology and almost all their history is utterly revolting. Their stock has produced a Moses and a Jesus, but Moses was impregnated with Egyptian philosophy and Jesus is venerated and adored by us only for that wherein He transcended or resisted Judaism. The very exaltation of their idea of a national deity into a spiritual monotheism seems to have been borrowed from the other oriental tribes. Everything *specifically* Jewish is of a low grade. [1]

Here the 29-year old Eliot vociferously denies the specificity of Jewishness. Patrick Bratlinger points out that this is a reaction against what Eliot describes as Disraeli's too-broad 'fellowship of race […] which must ultimately be superseded.'[2] This might sound surprising coming from the eventual author, in 1876, of *Daniel Deronda*, a novel in which Eliot extends the full breadth of her sympathetic imagination toward inhabiting Jewish history, belief and subjectivity in order to consider the possibilities for Jewish life in contemporary England. Scholarship on Eliot and the Jews has examined the depth and complexity of her reading in Jewish history and theology, the political implications of her apparent Zionism, and even whether Daniel Deronda was circumcised, given that he was born into a Jewish family. Building on these lines of enquiry, this paper considers Eliot's engagement with Jewishness in the context of two contemporary models of feeling: Spinoza's concept of *affectus*, or the capacity for feeling without object; and Organicism, which suggests that life and mind are parts of a wider human organism. Knowledge, Eliot affirms in the essay "Notes on Form in Art", exists in detecting "multiplex interdependent parts" – or fine gradations of difference – in the interrelated whole.

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[1] Gordon S. Haight, ed. *The George Eliot Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954-5, 1977-8), *Letters* vol. 1, P. 246-7 (to John Sibree, Feb 11, 1848). Emphasis in original.
[2] Eliot qtd in Patrick Bratlinger, 'Empire and Nationalism' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1830-1914* ed by Joanne Shattock (CUP, 2010), p. 261.

In *Daniel Deronda*, navigating between the local and the international, as well as the spiritual and the political, is facilitated by feeling Jewish, or by participating in affective exchanges through language and music that are ultimately constitutive of Jewish identity in the novel. Deronda embodies both a will to *affectus* and a consciousness of difference, and so is the ideal ethical exponent of Organicism. It is this characteristic which enables him to steer a middle course between the dominant associations of Judaism with extremes of traditionalist isolation and unsettling cosmopolitanism. In this way, his version of Jewish feeling is formulated within the context of non-Jewish attitudes towards the presence of Jews in the modern state; it is, in other words, an outsider's perspective. While Eliot may be said to feel *for* the Jews, this paper asks whether she succeeds in representing feeling *as* a Jew.

So what can it mean to fell *as* a Jew? Elsewhere, I have articulated a model of affect referred to as "Jewish Feeling", which I argue is a marker of the kind of Jewish specificity that Eliot somewhat glibly denies in her 1848 letter. This comes from viewing rabbinic reading practices as productive of affect. A brief genealogy of affect can begin with Spinoza. In his philosophical treatise *Ethics*, published posthumously in 1677, Spinoza defines affect broadly as a change in the body's power of acting, in addition to the cause or the result of that change: 'By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections.'[3] The body's powers of acting are divided into actions and passions or *affectus* and *affection* in Spinoza's Latin. *Affectus* is internal to the subject and is the result of the mind acting through its own knowledge or ideas. This capacity for self-regulation can facilitate a decline from a better condition to a worse one, or an improvement from worse to better. *Affectus* is thus associated with a certain degree of agency, as the actions are the individual's internal means of regulating the influence of externally originating passions. *Affectus* is internal and is characterized by a capacity to enter into 'experiential [states]', rather than the specificity of those

[3] Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), p. 70 (D3).

states themselves which may more properly be described as feelings or sentiments. *Affectio*, by contrast, has its origin outside of the subject. When at the effect of passions we are passive, or acted upon. Brian Massumi describes *affectio* as "each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies)."[4]

Importantly, a text, particularly one believed to be divinely authored, can be an externally-originating stimulus to affect. As noted, elsewhere I have argued that engaging in certain Jewish interpretive strategies works to facilitate and amplify this affective response, and this is what I call Jewish feeling. These rabbinic modes of interpretation take on the task of finding and filling these gaps in the text. The finding of gaps is as important as their filling, as to have filled all the gaps would be to have concluded the search for meaning in the sacred text – impossible and not to be wished for. In this model, affect is generated by the intersection of a pluralistic mode of thought – akin to Spinoza's *affetus* – with an external body that engages this way of thinking, in this instance the sacred text itself, in all its perfected and limitless potential.

Eliot translated in English both *Tractatus Theologico-Politico* and *Ethics* by Spinoza, although neither translation was published during her lifetime. The first was undertaken during 1849 at the request of Charles Bray. Eliot worked on translation of *Ethics* from 1854, during her time in Germany with G. H. Lewes. Although complete by 1856 it was not published due to Lewes's disputes with publishers, first Bohn then A & C Black.[5] Daniel Deronda, the eponymous hero of Eliot's final novel, exhibits 'that keenly perceptive sympathetic emotiveness which [runs] along with his speculative tendency'.[6] Deronda is a sympathetic exemplar, a man of feeling in an unfixed and open state. The special perceptiveness that he achieves in this state can furthermore be understood in the context of organicism.

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[4] Brian Massumi, 'Forward', in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, eds, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980]), p. xvi.

[5] See Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 199.

[6] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Graham Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014 [1876]), p. 419.

Organicism, a popular trope in scientific thought from the 1860s onwards, rests on a metaphor of a body composed of multiple collaborative parts, or organs. These organs represent various areas of knowledge, including natural sciences, philosophy and social theory, which must operate in harmony in order to support the body – the sum total of human awareness – of which they are parts. In an 1876 article published in the *Fortnightly Review*, Eliot's partner G. H. Lewes uses organicism as a means of reconciling the theologian's 'terrified repugnance' of matter and the scientist's 'contemptuous rejection' of spirit.[7] 'In a word', he explains,

> the organic phenomena grouped under the terms Life and Mind are activities not of any single element, in or out of the organism, but activities of the whole organism in correspondence with a physical and social medium.[8]

Lewes proposes that spirit and matter are manifestations of 'the same group of phenomena [that are] objectively expressible in terms of Matter and Motion, and subjectively in terms of Feeling'.[9] Here Lewes re-frames Spinoza's *affectus* which, as discussed earlier, is the capacity to feel rather than the object or sensation of those feelings. Indeed, Lewes states, it is 'feeling [. . .] with which we must perceive and understand'; consequently, experiencing an affective response to matter is in this view a necessary epistemological approach to recognizing the organic (and thus interconnected) nature of life.[10]

Perhaps due to her collaborations with Lewes, this concept was also central to Eliot. In 'Notes on Form in Art' (1868), she affirms the moral necessity of attending to fine gradations of difference, even while witnessing the holistic functioning of the social organism:

> And as knowledge continues to grow by its alternating processes of distinction & combination, seeing smaller & smaller unlikenesses & grouping or associating these under a common likeness, it arrives at the conception of wholes composed of parts more & more multiplied & highly differenced, yet more & more absolutely bound together by various combinations of common

[7] G. H. Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism I', *Fortnightly Review* 29.19 (1876): 479–93 (p. 479).
[8] G. H. Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism II', *Fortnightly Review* 29.20 (1876): 707–19 (p. 715).
[9] Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism I', p. 480.
[10] Ibid., p. 488.

> likeness of mutual dependence. And the fullest example of such a whole is the highest example of Form: in other words, the relation of multiplex interdependent parts to a whole which is itself in the most varied & therefore the fullest relation to other wholes.[11]

Knowledge, an important term here, is amassed via 'processes of distinction & combination', that is in organizing 'multiplex interdependent parts' into like and unlike groups so that they relate to form a greater whole. Importantly, knowledge produces rather than reveals these groupings.

Daniel Deronda concludes by sending its primary Jewish reproductive unit, Deronda and Mirah, away from England and towards 'the East' with the aim of, in Deronda's words, 'restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe'.[12] The futurity of Jewish life is thus removed from English soil, both racially via the implied children that will issue from the marriage, and, spiritually given Deronda's mystical inheritance from Mordecai. Deronda compares the diasporic dispersal of Jews to the 'scattered' English, although the latter scattering is the result of colonialism enabled by the reality of an imperial centre. Jewish rootlessness, by contrast, represents for Deronda the necessity of political unification. Importantly, these two states – British imperialism and Jewish nationalism – are not coterminous. While Deronda's parentage, it might be noted, is Italian, the Lapidoth siblings (Mordecai and Mirah) were born in England. None among them bear much allegiance to a modern state, however. All three ultimately view their supranational Jewish identity as prior to Italianness or Englishness, and also as potentially formative of a new nationalism entirely. For Amanda Anderson, the novel 'ruminates powerfully on the relation between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, promoting an ideal of Jewish nationalism

[11] George Eliot, 'Notes on Form in Art' (1868), in A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren, eds, *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), pp. 231–6 (p. 232).

[12] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Graham Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014 [1876]), p. 677.

informed by cosmopolitan aspiration'.[13] Amidst the instability of collective identities there continues the local and individual network of affinities comprised of family, friendship and labour.

On the surface, the novel also appears to adopt a general opposition between male modes of rational, logical, legalistic and rule-bound knowledge and female qualities of emotion, sensitivity, feeling and spirituality.[14] The correlation between men and printed text represented by Mordecai sits alongside the feminized forms of music deployed by Mirah that are also repositories of culture and memory. Both text and music are finally shown, however, to give way to – or to enable – feeling for what has already been learned, either through proximity in childhood or some other form of cultural inheritance, rather than to initiate new experiences of learning. While Mordecai is associated with language and Mirah with music, both siblings experience moments of feeling and knowledge which exceed this gendered pedagogy. Mordecai attests to the breadth of his knowledge, but also to its limitations:

> I know the philosophies of this time and of other times: if I chose I could answer a summons before their tribunals. I could silence the beliefs which are the mother-tongue of my soul and speak with the rote-learned language of a system [. . .]. I could silence them: may not a man silence his awe or his love and take to finding reasons, which others demand? But if his love lies deeper than any reasons to be found?[15]

Here Mordecai describes a form of knowledge which exceeds language, philosophy and history. It is 'love' which causes him to insist to Deronda that 'the life of Israel is in your veins', long before the substance of Deronda's veins is made known.[16] The aspect of Judaism most important to Mordecai – to find a 'rooting place' for a unified conception of Jewish idealism – is expressed as an affective rather than pedagogical

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[13] Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 119.
[14] See John Stewart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and Methods of Scientific Investigation* (London: J.W. Parker, 1843).
[15] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, p. 425.
[16] Ibid., p. 483

exchange.[17] Indeed, at an early meeting the two men share 'as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers', and Deronda promises that dying stranger 'I feel with you – I feel strongly with you.'[18] In addition to deliberating with Mordecai over ancient languages and a textual inheritance, he feels with Mirah when listening to music; on hearing the liturgy chanted at the synagogue in Frankfort, Deronda 'wondered at the strength of his own feeling'.[19]

Deronda, in other words, embodies a will to *affectus* and a consciousness of difference, and is thus the ideal ethical exponent of Organicism. This position is articulated in the course of his reported musings on his own rootlessness, before his true origins are known:

> He wanted some way of keeping emotion and its progeny of sentiments – which make the savours of life – substantial and strong in the face of a reflectiveness that threatened to nullify all differences. To pound objects of sentiment into small dust, yet keep sentiment alive and active, was something like the famous recipe for making cannon – to first take a round hole and then enclose it with iron; whatever you do keeping fast hold of your round hole. Yet how distinguish what our will may wisely save in its completeness, from the heaping of cat-mummies and the expensive cult of enshrined putrefactions?[20]

Here, reflectiveness stands in for *affectus*, or that internal capacity for improvement or deterioration. The 'emotion and its progeny of sentiments' are *affectio*, externally originating affects that act upon *affectus*. Deronda expresses a desire to remain perceptive to difference by maintaining openness to *affectio*. The logical puzzle which follows illustrates this by representing one's faculty for feeling as neutral, in the same way that the 'round hole' of a cannon is an immaterial absence. Both the cannon and the feeling self are made 'material'; the former through the shaping of iron, and the latter through the influx of raw material for feeling. This coming-into-being, the narrator points out, cannot take place by repressing or reducing

[17] Ibid., p. 421.
[18] Ibid, pp. 418, 422.
[19] Ibid., p. 308.
[20] Ibid., p. 306.

('pounding into small dust') those 'objects' which might generate feeling. This model is qualified in the final lines, which show the extreme consequences of valorizing the material objects of feeling ('cat-mummies' and other 'enshrined putrefactions') by pointing out that these may decay or lose their significance once the feeling self has passed on. Thus, Deronda's education in feeling Jewish occurs via the openness of his capacity to feel, which in turn allows him to detect difference via an affective response to the objects of Jewishness represented by Mirah and Mordecai: music and language.

Deronda's status as one who may feel as a Jew underpins and intersects with his political ambitions on behalf of the Jews. Anderson argues that Deronda displays a 'universalist civic mode of nationality [. . .] built in the principles of critical reason and democratic debate'.[21] Deronda's openness to dialogue is a function of the affective openness which characterizes his Jewish feeling. The foreclosure of that extreme openness that occurs when he discovers from his mother his actual Jewish identity is directed toward the nationalist project of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a conclusion which endeared Eliot to generations of Zionists. In steering a middle course between the dominant associations of Judaism with extremes of traditionalist isolation and unsettling cosmopolitanism, however, Deronda's version of Jewish feeling is formulated within the context of non-Jewish attitudes towards the presence of Jews in the modern state; it is, in other words, an outsider's perspective. In learning to feel *as* a Jew, Deronda represents feeling *for* them instead.

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Paper delivered at Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada
April 22nd, 2016

[21] Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*, p. 122.