Less celebratory about modern city life than Joyce and Woolf, Lawrence’s fiction nonetheless often posits metropolis as a determining influence upon the individual psyche and social relations. In *Women in Love* (1921) a metropolitan awareness rather than the city of London itself impinges upon the major protagonists’ perceptions, self-consciousness and interactions. In fact, the novel’s rural settings in the English Midlands foreground the problematics of what Georg Simmel calls “the objective culture” of urban realities, delineating both its cosmopolitan potential and the attendant risk of “the atrophy of individual culture” (409). According to Simmel, the excessive stimulations of the city foster a “blasé attitude,” a trained impersonal response to the environment, a kind of economic psychology, adapted to the
exchange value of the market place (411). At the same time, the limitations thus imposed upon individuals’ emotional ties and expressions strangely precipitate the difficult freedoms associated with modernity. Even if such freedom may be without emotional comfort, it is amenable to positive change and ethical outlooks. Simmel detects a tension in the urban personality between the affective life and the metropolitan real. *Women in Love* is attuned to this psychic rhythm, defamiliarizing it within contexts of alternative small communities and within a variety of scenes from the natural world.

My essay attempts to trace the interplay between the impersonal and the intimate in *Women in Love* from the perspective of affect theory, drawing on Brian Massumi’s and Ben Anderson’s understanding of affect as the mobility of emotion, as an immanent quality of embodied creatures, activated only in the encounter. In Massumi’s work, fluid conceptions of “movement as qualitative transformation” replace older theoretical models of subjective positionality (*PV* 6). Contemporary theorists draw on Baruch Spinoza’s conception of *affectus* as a non-representational corporeal mode that disposes bodies to act and to be acted upon, to extend beyond themselves to other connections and in turn be impacted by the extension. This may seem an ostensibly simple definition of eventfulness, but as Duffy and Atkinson state “there is significant complexity, for it refers to a range of processes from the affected states of bodies to the relaying of movement by individual bodies and connection between bodies” (“Unnatural Movements” 107). Affect then always implies an interactive context and because of the dynamic mix of bodies a sense of emergence, an excess to the situational. Massumi refers to this excess as the virtual and perceives registers of affect as always on the edge of virtualities, as perpetually open to the hazards of change. Even in representation, in the expression of personal emotion, for instance, there is “the fact that something has always and again escaped. Something remains unrealized, inseparable from but unassimilable to any particular,