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# *Feeling, emotion* and the company they keep: what adjectives reveal about the substantives *feeling* and *emotion*

Stéphanie Béligon

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## Introduction

- 1 The substantives *feeling* and *emotion* have very similar meanings in contemporary English in some of their uses: the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, for instance, defines *emotion* as “any strong mental or instinctive *feeling*, as pleasure, grief, hope, fear, etc., deriving esp. from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationship with others” and *feeling* as “[t]he condition of being *emotionally* affected or committed; *emotion*, sentiment; an instance of this, an *emotion* (of hope, joy, sorrow, etc.)”<sup>1</sup>. The two lexical items are therefore considered to be synonymous, since they are used to define each other.
- 2 This contribution argues that such a view is misleading, and that even when *feeling* and *emotion* refer to affects, they are not semantic equivalents, as they designate different types of affects: *emotion* refers to pre-semantic experience, in the sense that the experience it denotes has not been given a meaning yet, whereas *feeling* designates categorized affects. To defend this hypothesis, which is backed up by Barrett [2006]’s findings in neuroscience about core affect and emotions, this paper analyzes the collocations formed by the two nouns, and more specifically the sequences *ADJECTIVE emotion(s)* and *ADJECTIVE feeling(s)*. It focuses on British and American English and is based on data collected from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* and the *British National Corpus (BNC)*.
- 3 The first section takes stock of the debates about the meaning of the two substantives; the second deals with the collocations formed by *emotion* and *feeling* in the singular; the third section presents Barrett’s theory of core affect and emotions and shows its

relevance in the study of the meaning of *emotion* and *feeling*; the fourth section highlights the connection between the semantic characteristics of the nouns and their semantics. Finally, the fifth and last section offers a few remarks about the plurals *feelings* and *emotions* and the adjectives they co-occur with.

## 1. State of the question

### 1.1. Definitions

- 4 The two definitions the *OED* provides of *emotion* in its current use (“any strong mental or instinctive feeling, as pleasure, grief, hope, fear, etc., deriving esp. from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationship with others” and “[a]s a mass noun: strong feelings, passion; (more generally) instinctive feeling as distinguished from reasoning or knowledge”) show that according to the dictionary, *emotion* designates a strong and irrational feeling.
- 5 *Feeling* is in its turn given definitions quite similar to those of *emotion*: “The condition of being emotionally affected or committed; emotion, sentiment; an instance of this, an emotion (of hope, joy, sorrow, etc.) – “He’d forgotten the sad gray feeling that had settled on him lately”)<sup>2</sup>. The circularity of these definitions does not make it easy to grasp the exact meaning of *emotion* and *feeling*.
- 6 *Feeling* has other definitions, some related to sensations (“A physical sensation or perception (as of touch, heat, cold, pain, motion, etc.) experienced through this capacity” – “A lack of potassium in your system can cause feelings of nausea”), to opinions (“An idea, belief, or sense (especially a vague or irrational one) that a particular thing is true; an impression that something is about to happen or is the case; an intuition about something” – “I have a funny feeling you’ll be back”), to talent “A talent or aptitude; an affinity or intuitive understanding” – “He said they had a ‘feeling’ for how materials worked, a feeling for brittleness, strength and workability” or to the effect produced by what is perceived (“The quality or condition which is felt to belong to anything; the general impression or effect produced on a person by an object, a place, another person, etc.” – “This charming West Village spot evokes the feeling of a Parisian bistro à vins”). *Feeling* has therefore multiple meanings which, as we shall see in Section 2, are often intertwined.
- 7 These definitions leave two questions unanswered: how do *emotion* and *feeling* differ when they refer to affects? How are the several meanings of *feeling* related to one another? As we shall see in the next subsection, the various studies devoted to these issues do not provide very clear answers either.

### 1.2. Wierzbicka [1999]

- 8 Wierzbicka [1999] points out that several scientific traditions equate emotions with purely physiological reactions in the wake of behaviourism<sup>3</sup>; the opposite stance, represented by authors such as Solomon [2007], considers them to be judgments and reduce feelings to *bodily* feelings. Wierzbicka [1999: 2] thinks that *emotion* has a more complex meaning than *feeling*:

The English word *emotion* combines in its meaning a reference to “feeling”, a reference to “thinking”, and a reference to a person’s body. For example, one can

talk about a “feeling of hunger”, or a “feeling of heartburn”, but not about an “emotion of heartburn”, because the feelings in question are not thought-related. One can also talk about a “feeling of loneliness” or a “feeling of alienation”, but not an “emotion of loneliness” or an “emotion of alienation”, because while these feelings are clearly related to thoughts (such as “I am all alone”, “I don’t belong” etc.), they do not suggest any associated bodily events or processes (such as rising blood pressure, a rush of blood to the head, tears, and so on).

- 9 She also rejects the view that *feeling* designates purely bodily feeling: “[...] I do not agree that “feelings” equals “bodily feelings”. For example, if one says that one feels “abandoned”, or “lost”, one is referring to a feeling without referring to anything that happens in the body” (Wierzbicka [1999: 2]), however she does not provide any definition of *feeling*, as she considers that *feel* is a semantic prime, which, as such, cannot be broken down into several semantic components.
- 10 Her account underlines the discrepancy between the meaning of the word *emotion* in common parlance and its use in some scientific fields, and makes it clear that this use is imbued with theoretical biases. However, her own comparison of *emotion* and *feeling* remains sketchy.

### 1.3. Damasio [1994]

- 11 Damasio [1994: 139] also opposes *emotion* and *feeling*:
- I see the *essence* of emotion as the collection of changes in body state that are induced in myriad organs by nerve cell terminals, under the control of a dedicated brain system, which is responding to the content of thoughts relative to a particular entity or event.
- 12 Here again, an emotion is described as consisting of a series of physiological reactions, whereas feelings are reflexive:
- A feeling in essence is an idea – an idea of the body and, even more particularly, an idea of a certain aspect of the body, its interior, in certain circumstances. A feeling of emotion is an idea of the body when it is perturbed by the emoting process. [Damasio 2003: 88].
- 13 In this view, feelings follow from emotions and are complex representations of both the changes undergone by the body and what causes these changes. Contrary to Wierzbicka’s stance, feelings are seen as more complex than emotions.
- 14 Once again, one may wonder whether these definitions are in keeping with common parlance.
- 15 This brief overview shows that the exact connection between the meanings of *feeling* and *emotion* is not straightforward and that scholars do not all designate the same phenomena by means of those words.
- 16 Hilgert [2018: 81], who analyzes the semantics of the French noun *émotion*, also notes a gap between scientific use and common parlance in French:
- Il y a plutôt une polysémie installée entre la langue de spécialité, où le N *émotion* est générique d’un ensemble de types d’émotions et regroupe *peur*, *tristesse*, *colère*, etc., qui lui sont subordonnés, et l’usage commun, où le nom *émotion* désigne une manifestation spécifique du même niveau que *peur*, *colère*, *tristesse*, etc. [...] se plaçant au même niveau lexical que ces derniers.<sup>4</sup>

The author states that the study of the modifiers of *émotion* can clarify the meaning of the noun (cf. Hilgert [2018: 81]). The approach adopted here follows the same principle and focuses on adjectives.

## 2. Study of the adjectives co-occurring with *emotion* and *feeling*

### 2.1. Why study adjectives?

- 17 This paper concentrates on adjectives on the grounds set out by Cotte [1997: 68], who explains that “le nom est synthétique, il occulte la complexité du référent”, whereas an adjective “est analytique et il se charge de dévoiler et d’expliciter les qualités contingentes que le nom néglige ou celles qu’il recèle dans sa définition synthétique”<sup>5</sup>:

Ainsi, le nom unique synthétise les traits jugés structurels qui identifient le référent à un type stable préconstruit, alors qu’un ou plusieurs adjectifs analysent les propriétés, contingentes ou non, à mesure que l’énonciateur les dévoilent et s’il le souhaite. L’adjectif sépare, égrène, explicite, il met au jour ce que le nom met au secret ; il exprime aussi des évaluations concernant le référent.<sup>6</sup>

Adjectives are therefore likely to shed light on the nature of what is designated by *feeling* and *emotion*, and to illustrate how the two nouns differ in their meaning.

### 2.2. ADJECTIVE *emotion*

- 18 The substantive *emotion* occurs 9 919 times in the COCA in its singular form, and there are 639 types of sequences ADJECTIVE *emotion*; 55 adjectives occur more than 5 times in the corpus in that sequence, as shown in Table 1<sup>7</sup>:

**Table 1: Adjectives occurring more than 5 times in the sequence ADJECTIVE *emotion* (COCA)**

human (128)	powerful (29)	heightened (13)	complex (7)	excessive (6)
raw (101)	pure (27)	religious (13)	big (7)	experienced (6)
strong (63)	different (21)	pent-up (12)	extreme (7)	individual (6)
negative (57)	new (21)	strange (10)	heartfelt (7)	inner (6)
real (57)	only (21)	honest (9)	moral (7)	mixed (6)
deep (52)	high (19)	main (9)	outward (7)	prevailing (6)
intense (49)	particular (19)	suppressed (9)	public (7)	sheer (6)
great (44)	dominant (17)	sweet (9)	sudden (7)	sincere (6)
genuine (31)	overwhelming (16)	basic (8)	actual (6)	underlying (6)
other (30)	personal (15)	primary (8)	aesthetic (6)	unfamiliar (6)
positive (29)	true (15)	strongest (8)	evident (6)	useless (6)

- 19 In the BNC, which is a smaller corpus than the COCA<sup>8</sup>, the number of occurrences of *emotion* (1 464 occurrences in the singular) and of sequences ADJECTIVE *emotion* is more limited (197 types of sequences); this is why the query includes combinations that occur at least three times (and not five, as was the case with the COCA). One of the advantages of the BNC is to indicate the log-likelihood value of the collocations, and the

adjectives are ordered according to that value in Table 2 (as in Table 4, 6 and 8). The query yields 24 adjectives and there is a large overlap between the lexemes found in the two corpora.

**Table 2: Adjectives occurring at least 3 times in the sequence *ADJECTIVE emotion* (BNC)**

suppressed (7)	real (7)
expressed (7)	raw (4)
human (14)	violent (4)
intense (9)	strongest (3)
strong (13)	excessive (3)
pent-up (5)	religious (4)
powerful (9)	naked (3)
overwhelming (6)	sensitive (3)
profound (5)	high (5)
deep (7)	positive (3)
dominant (5)	great (3)
heightened (3)	new (4)

20 Several semantic fields can be identified:

- category A: most of these adjectives are connected with intensity: *deep, excessive, great, heightened, (heartfelt), high, intense, overwhelming, powerful, raw, (sheer), strong*;
- category B: some are related to the manifestations – or the lack thereof – of the emotion they characterize: *(evident), (expressed), (genuine), (honest), (outward), pent-up, real, sincere, suppressed*;
- other adjectives are classifying adjectives: *(aesthetic), (moral), (negative), positive, religious*.

21 These semantic tendencies reflect the way affects designated by *emotion* are conceptualized. Intensity adjectives, such as *deep, great, strong* or *powerful*, do not give any indication about the nature of what is felt, as shown in the following examples:

(1) William Bartram's meticulous descriptions are more than just scientific observation; his book is considered an American classic by scholars. He wrote about the environment with *great emotion*, and he influenced many Romantic-era European poets and literary figures. They were fascinated with his sensitive observations of Native Americans and with his poetic descriptions of nature. (COCA, Martha M. Ezzard, "Follow Trail of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Explorer", *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 2006)<sup>10</sup>

(2) The widening of the franchise in the nineteenth century, House of Lords reform, and votes for women in the twentieth – these are issues that aroused *great emotion* and *were fiercely opposed* but on which reform was accepted once the government of the day had got the measure accepted by Parliament. (BNC, Philip Norton, *The British Polity*, 1984)

(3) Prof WILSON: It seems to me that when you feel *deep emotion*, you're having a really intense experience of one kind of another.

ANNE: Right.

Prof WILSON: *Sometimes, sorrows attach to it, sometimes joy is attached to it. And once you'd be able to express that fully, that, in my mind, leads to an*

authentic existence. (COCA, “Happiness Is Overrated”, *Talk of the Nation*, NPR, 2008)

- 22 Examples (1) and (2) feature the sequence *great emotion*, but it does not refer to the same kind of affect in both cases: in (1), the phrase is associated with admiration and sympathy, whereas it is connected with indignation and opposition in (2). In example (3), the speaker underlines that *deep emotion* can refer to an affect having negative (sorrows) or positive valence (joy).
- 23 *Emotion* can also refer to an affect that is out of control, as shown by the phrases “barely held in check” and “overwhelmed” in examples (4) and (5):

(4) Her expression changed again, and anger replaced the misery I thought I’d detected just a few seconds before. “I wouldn’t know. That photo and these old letters are all I have to go on.” She laid a bundle of envelopes on the desk beside the genealogical chart.

I had no idea where this was going, but I could sense *some deep emotion* barely held in check. (COCA, Kathryn R. Wall, *Covenant Hall: a Bay Tanner Mystery*, 2009)

(5) In 2002, Halle Berry became the first woman of color to win a Best Actress Oscar, and while she highlighted the historic and political significance of the moment, her speech is best remembered for *its raw emotion*. After taking the stage, *Berry was so overwhelmed, she struggled to stay composed*, finally collecting her thoughts enough to dedicate the award to groundbreaking women like Dorothy Dandridge, Lena Horne, and Diahann Carroll. (COCA, “The Long History of Oscar Speeches as Political Protest”, *The Verge*, 2017)

- 24 As Romero [2004: 451-452] points out, it is possible to distinguish between several categories among intensity adjectives. She notes that:

[...] ce que fait l’adjectif intensif, c’est situer l’occurrence en haut de l’échelle qui définit le nom. *Énorme* dans *énorme envie* ou *terrible* dans *chaleur terrible* ne qualifient pas tant l’envie ou la chaleur (comme le feraient *envie bizarre*, ou *chaleur humide*), et ne les rangent pas tant dans une classe (les *envies énormes* ne constituent pas un type d’envie comme les *envies de voyage*), qu’ils ne signifient que l’on se situe en haut de l’échelle de “envie” ou de “chaleur”.<sup>1112</sup>

- 25 However, she observes that there is a thin line between descriptive adjectives and intensity adjectives:

Comme il ne s’agit que d’emploi intensif et d’emploi qualificatif intense, mais que cela concerne au fond les mêmes adjectifs, la séparation entre ces deux types de syntagmes n’est pas toujours bien nette. De fait, les adjectifs intensifs peuvent souvent être intenses par ailleurs. Donc, entre le qualificatif intense *eau bouillante* et l’intensif pur *énorme envie*, *extrême bonté* (où l’adjectif ne fait qu’intensifier), on trouve *échec cuisant*, *banalité consternante*, *amour passionnel* où il y a à la fois intensification (quelque chose qui est d’une *banalité consternante* est d’“une grande banalité” ou “très banal”) et qualification (*consternant* = “qui est propre à consterner”, malgré l’éventuelle hyperbole).<sup>13</sup>

- 26 She differentiates between pure intensity adjectives, which are directly intensive:

Par exemple, *haut intérêt* est un intensif direct car, à partir du sens qualificatif de *haut*, on n’a pas de calcul interprétatif particulier à faire pour situer l’occurrence en haut de l’échelle “intérêt” (c’est-à-dire pour interpréter “très intéressant”)<sup>14</sup> [Romero 2004: 455].

and descriptive adjectives that refer to intensity indirectly:

Les adjectifs intensifs contenant une part de qualification sont intensifs après inférence. Par exemple, pour interpréter *banalité consternante*, on doit faire un petit

calcul interprétatif du genre : ‘Sachant que seul ce qui est très banal peut provoquer la consternation, ceci est donc très banal’<sup>15</sup> [Romero 2004: 455].

- 27 Among the intensity adjectives modifying *emotion*, *strong*, *intense*, *powerful* or *extreme* seem to be direct intensifiers, whereas *raw*, for instance, is also descriptive: the idea that the affect has not been polished, refined or channelled implies that the emotion described is strong; one may therefore conclude that it is in the very nature of an emotion to be strong, hence the hypothesis, formulated by Kövecses [2000: xiv], that emotions are essentially conceptualized as forces: “the key theme in our folk theoretical thinking about emotions” is “the idea that we view emotions as forces that turn a ‘rational’ self into an ‘irrational’ one”; he also identifies “a single master metaphor (namely, the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE FORCES) that organizes much of our thinking about emotion.
- 28 As mentioned earlier, several frequent adjectives related to *emotion* – *evident*, *genuine*, *honest*, *outward*, *pent-up*, *real*, *sincere* or *suppressed* – refer to how and whether an emotion is manifested. It is possible to divide that category into two: some of those lexemes refer to whether or not the emotion is visible or expressed (*evident*, *outward*, *pent-up*, *suppressed*) and others to the equation between the affect displayed and what is actually felt by the experiencer (*genuine*, *honest*, *real*, *sincere*):

(6) “Marvin,” I said, kneeling beside the chair to look him in the eyes,” “you’re 6 years old now, and 6-year-olds go to big schools. Today is the last day you will be here with us. Tomorrow morning a big bus will come to take you to the first grade. I’m very proud of you.”

I looked for even the slightest flicker of regret or sadness, but he showed *no outward emotion*. (COCA, Dorothy Olhaver, “Expecting More than Stillbirth”, *Houston Chronicle*, 1992)

(7) Almost all children have tantrums, and they start having them at about the same age – somewhere between 20-30 months. [...] A tantrum is a sudden release of *pent-up emotion*, a mixture of rage, frustration and anger. (BNC, *Parents*, 1991)

- 29 The semantics of these adjectives, as well as the meaning of the utterances (“he showed no sign of outward emotion”, “His face was white with suppressed emotion”) show that an emotion is conceived of as a phenomenon that is intrinsically visible or has outward manifestations: its “release” (cf. example (7)) goes hand in hand with its becoming visible, which is in keeping with the etymology of the word<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, what is shown can correspond to what is felt by the experiencer or not, hence the use of adjectives such as *actual*, *genuine*, *honest*, *real* or *sincere*:

(8) Spitzer moved quickly to meet with the media, and he was brief and to the point. He had “begun to atone for his private failings,” he said, but he recognized his betrayal of the public. [...] His wife’s demeanor, described by the press as “ashen-faced” and “stricken,” provided a shocking display of *genuine emotion* in the midst of the predictable ceremony. (COCA, Kay S. Hymowitz, “The National Adultery Ritual”, *Commentary*, 2011)

(9) “No matter what you think of me,” she said, “all these months I have truly had your best interest in mind. I thought I was doing what was right.” Medicine Wolf lowered the knife, seeing for the first time in nearly two years a hint of *sincere emotion* in the woman’s eyes.” (COCA, Rosanne Bittner, *Song of the Wolf*, 1992)

- 30 The examples show that those adjectives are very similar to the previous subcategory mentioned: in examples (8) and (9), the emotion is considered to be genuine or sincere because it is visible.
- 31 Category B adjectives thus suggest that emotions are intrinsically visible, even when the experiencer tries to hide or control them (cf. *pent-up* and *suppressed*).
- 32 Category C consists of classifying adjectives, some of which have to do with the very nature of the emotion characterized (*aesthetic, moral, religious*) and others with its valence (*negative, positive*):

(10) Summing up his own aesthetic, he writes, “This relief that brings the sense of power, and, with the sense of power, joy, is *the positive emotion* which tells us that we have encountered a first-rate piece of literature. (COCA, Lewis M. Dabney, “The Shy Little Scholar of Holder Court”, *American Scholar*, 1990)

(11) Conversely what we call *aesthetic emotion* is trivialized if we take it as only a reaction to the power of form. I think *aesthetic emotion* is a condition of will that accompanies our regarding the work as offering a distinctive and powerful state of mind. *Aesthetic emotion* may even be considered a strange kind of affect because it tends not to be focussed on any particulars within the work but to characterize the force by which we respond to the piece as a whole, as if we were willing to take responsibility for who we became by virtue of our participation in it. (COCA, Charles Altieri, “Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience”, *Style*, 1998)

- 33 Category C is therefore made up of adjectives that leave the particular feel of the affect opaque: adjectives referring to its valence divide the experience into very broad categories, whereas those linked with the field it belongs to (*aesthetic, moral, religious*) do not give any indication about the actual experience of the emotion.
- 34 This overview of the attributive adjectives modifying *emotion* highlights the fact that the affects designated by *emotion* remain opaque, which is in keeping with the use of *emotion* as a mass noun in the majority of the utterances quoted above: if *emotion* refers to a powerful, shapeless phenomenon, it is reminiscent of the definition given by Langacker [1990: 69] of a mass noun, which “designates a region that is NOT specifically bounded within the scope of predication in its primary domain”<sup>17</sup>.  
As we shall see in the next subsection, the adjectives modifying *feeling* form a different pattern.

## 2.3. ADJECTIVE *feeling*

### 2.3.1. Semantic categories

- 35 The substantive *feeling* is more frequent than *emotion* in the COCA (35 485 occurrences in the corpus) and there are over 1 800 types of sequences *ADJECTIVE feeling*; the 97 adjectives occurring more than 15 times in the corpus are indicated in Table 3:

**Table 3: Adjectives occurring in the sequence *ADJECTIVE feeling* (COCA)**

good (614)	overwhelming (71)	tremendous (38)	
bad (365)	weird (70)	similar (37)	unpleasant (24)
great (363)	growing (69)	negative (36)	peaceful (23)
strong (295)	awful (67)	common (35)	whole (23)
general (226)	better (67)	cold (34)	constant (21)
strange (188)	deep (67)	comfortable (34)	unbelievable (21)
sick (148)	overall (65)	helpless (34)	particular (20)
uneasy (135)	widespread (63)	powerful (34)	profound (20)
warm (135)	human (61)	sudden (34)	unsettling (20)
wonderful (128)	horrible (60)	emotional (33)	heady (19)
funny (126)	nagging (60)	greatest (33)	lonely (19)
different (120)	vague (55)	strangest (33)	peculiar (19)
real (108)	certain (51)	happy (32)	busy (18)
odd (104)	incredible (50)	greater (31)	curious (18)
eerie (98)	positive (48)	pleasant (31)	extraordinary (18)
personal (86)	queasy (46)	scary (29)	guilty (18)
terrible (85)	religious (46)	true (29)	panicky (18)
new (82)	familiar (44)	anti-American (28)	public (18)
best (81)	worst (44)	natural (28)	strongest (18)
special (77)	creepy (43)	hollow (25)	comforting (17)
nice (75)	genuine (41)	other (25)	inner (17)
amazing (74)	intense (41)	awesome (24)	satisfying (17)
distinct (74)	sickening (41)	national (24)	pervasive (16)
empty (73)	fuzzy (39)	secure (24)	physical (16)
uncomfortable (73)	old (39)	subjective (24)	

- 36 In the BNC, the noun *feeling* occurs 6 966 times, and there are 674 types of sequences *ADJECTIVE feeling*; the attributive adjectives modifying *feeling* occurring at least 10 times are the following:

**Table 4: Adjectives occurring in the sequence *ADJECTIVE feeling (BNC)***

strong (112)	widespread (23)	sick (18)	unpleasant (11)	distinct (11)
sinking (47)	growing (26)	strangest (9)	public (28)	genuine (10)
general (108)	intuitive (10)	sneaking (7)	nationalist (10)	familiar (10)
strange (61)	awful (15)	funny (17)	deep (17)	cold (11)
bad (67)	ill (24)	terrible (17)	intense (12)	good (29)
uneasy (28)	same (55)	eerie (9)	anti-us (5)	local (21)
uncomfortable (29)	odd (22)	religious (18)	warm (14)	own (26)
instinctive (18)	great (44)	real (27)	nagging (6)	special (12)
horrible (22)	personal (30)	vague (12)	dreadful (9)	national (15)
nasty (22)	overwhelming (15)	sudden (15)	curious (10)	particular (10)
wonderful (26)	anti-American (8)	uncanny (8)	popular (16)	different (10)

37 Not all the occurrences are relevant, since *feeling* is polysemous, so that some of those sequences have a meaning differing from the meaning under study in this paper<sup>18</sup>, and the figures in brackets are merely illustrative<sup>19</sup>.

38 Here again, the adjectives fall into several semantic categories:

- Category A: as is the case with *emotion*, some of the adjectives are connected with intensity: *strong, overwhelming, intense*:

(12) While I stood there, feeling the hollow emptiness of uselessness, I began to feel something else overcome me, a familiar feeling, *the overwhelming feeling of being full of my love for her*. (COCA, Eric Kraft, *Flying*, 2009)

- Category B adjectives deal with the valence of the affect: (*amazing*), (*best*), (*better*), *good*, *great*, (*incredible*), (*nice*), (*positive*), *wonderful*; *awful*, *terrible*, *horrible*:

(13) As I put my clothes in my dresser, I kept expecting him to walk into the room and I had trouble accepting the fact that it was impossible. I missed our weekly phone calls and knowing he was only a few hours away. He'd been so easy to talk to and I'd always felt his unconditional love. It was a *terrible feeling* to know that there wasn't a soul in the world now who loved me that deeply. (COCA, Diane Chamberlain, *The Silent Sister*, 2016)

- Category C adjectives are evaluative and are related to the normal or abnormal character of the affect: *eerie*, *funny*, *odd*, (*weird*):

(14) What with Mrs Clements and the girls also gone for the week, I suppose I was very conscious of the fact that once I departed, Darlington Hall would stand empty for probably the first time this century – perhaps for the first time since the day it was built. It was an *odd feeling* and perhaps accounts for why I delayed my departure so long, wandering around the house many times over, checking one last time that all was in order. (BNC, Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 1989)

- Category D adjectives are about the emergence or the evolution of the affect: *nagging*, *growing*, *sudden*:

(15) I screwed a fresh CO2 cartridge into my fishing vest. The small bottle held enough pressurized gas to inflate the vest in case of an emergency. Activated by a ripcord, it would float me in case I came loose in the rapids. As I loaded the car, I had *this nagging feeling I'd forgotten something*. (COCA, Warren C. Easley, *Dead Float*, 2014)

- Category E adjectives concern the extent of the affect among the population: *general*, *widespread*:

(16) At the same time, residents and local politicians demonstrated Friday against the mayor's recent decision to eliminate funding for two schools that would serve Lower Manhattan's growing residential population.

Still, there is a *widespread feeling* that it is time for change in the plans for downtown. (COCA, Charles V. Bagli, "A Blueprint For Conflict At Ground Zero", *New York Times*, 2006)

- Category F adjectives refer to the nature of the experience of the feeling: (*creepy*), (*empty*), *good*, (*queasy*), *sick*, (*sickening*), *sinking*, *uncomfortable*, *uneasy*, *warm*:

(17) But when it came time and I sat there contemplating the white casket smothered in pink lilies sitting at the base of the altar, I felt a *sick feeling* rising in my gut. (COCA, Katarina M. Spears, *Breakaway*, 2015)

(18) Carmen lay awake, certain she was to blame, because she was, as their mother so often said, the ringleader. She had a *sick feeling* that being mean to the dolls had caused their father's illness. (COCA, Rosaleen Bertolino, "The Doll Family", *New England Review*, 2017)

(19) It was graduation day, and the strange man standing at the top of the cobblestone stairwell gave me an *uneasy feeling*. It was like he was waiting on me. With each step I climbed, the feeling turned into a gnawing in my stomach, gripped me a bit more, pulling at my good mood. (COCA, Jason Overstreet, *The Strivers' Row Spy*, 2017)

(20) Thinking about the girl was like studying a childhood photograph, like reading an old diary entry. It was the way some people looked to their children to understand their own mistakes. Debbie sipped her wine, and a *warm feeling* spread from her esophagus into her chest and belly. (COCA, Miciah Bay Gault, "Stepping out of the Cow", *Southern Review*, 2014)

- Category G adjectives are classifying, such as *human* or *religious*:

(21) Both the fervor and the resulting Christian pluralism were keys to much that happened later. The intensity of *religious feeling* among members of the founding generation has been noted by an earlier essay in these pages [...]. (COCA, M. Stanton Evans, "The Custom of the Country", *American Spectator*, 2007)

- Finally, category H adjectives convey an opinion or an ideology (*anti-American*, *anti-US*, *nationalist*):

(22) Washington had to take account of the approach of a British general election – either in 1959 or 1960. Concern over the dangers of nuclear war – and over fall-out from nuclear tests – was adding to the strength of *anti-American feeling* among highly vocal sections of British opinion. (BNC, C. J. Harlow, *The Special Relationship: a Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, 1992)

39 It is noticeable that the role of the adjectives varies with the meaning and the syntax of *feeling* in each utterance: when *feeling* admits a prepositional phrase or a clause as a

complement the adjectives tend to be evaluative or descriptive (15, for instance). Moreover, the sequences *ADJECTIVE feeling* are compatible with the various meanings of *feeling*, be it that relating to a sensation (17), an affect (13) or an opinion (16). In (18), for instance, the complement clause *that being mean to the dolls had caused their father's illness* identifies the cognitive content of the *feeling*, whereas the adjective *sick* identifies the nature of the affect.

### 2.3.2. Category F

- 40 This subsection is about category F adjectives, characterizing the nature of the *feeling*: they often seem to be evaluative or descriptive, such as *queasy*, *sick* or *warm*. However, unlike typical evaluative and descriptive adjectives, they cannot be used predicatively:

(17) But when it came time and I sat there contemplating the white casket smothered in pink lilies sitting at the base of the altar, I felt a *sick feeling rising in my gut*.

(17') ??I felt a feeling rising in my gut. That feeling was sick.

(19) It was graduation day, and the strange man standing at the top of the cobblestone stairwell gave me an *uneasy feeling*.

(19') ??the strange man standing at the top of the cobblestone stairwell gave me a *feeling that was uneasy*.

- 41 The questionable grammaticality of (17') and (19') suggests that those adjectives are to some extent categorizing adjectives in the sense that they refer to a type of affect. Their use sometimes constitutes a hypallage since it is the experiencer himself or herself who is characterized by the adjective:

(17'') I felt sick in my gut.

(19'') the strange man standing at the top of the cobblestone stairwell *made me feel uneasy*.

This issue will further be dealt with in Section 4.2.3.

## 2.4. Summary

- 42 The adjectives co-occurring with *feeling* are more varied than those modifying *emotion*, which, on the one hand, results from the polysemy of *feeling*, and, on the other hand, from the fact that *feeling* does not designate the same type of affects as *emotion*, as the next section aims to demonstrate.

## 3. Core affect and emotions

- 43 The analysis of what Barrett [2006: 30-31] names “core affect” offers an interesting insight into the distinction between the nouns *emotion* and *feeling*:

my first suggestion to account for the experience of emotion is that something called *core affect* is the basic building block of emotional life. Core affect has been characterized as the constant stream of transient alterations in an organism's neurophysiological state that represent its immediate relation to the flow of changing events [...].

- 44 As the “basic building block of emotional life”, core affect is the basis for emotions<sup>20</sup>:

Core affect is the ongoing, ever-changing state that is available to be categorized during emotion conceptualization, much like the visible light spectrum is categorized in color perception [...].

- 45 Barrett's research leads her to conclude that what she calls "emotions" results from categorization:

the experience of feeling an emotion, or the experience of seeing emotion in another person, occurs when conceptual knowledge about emotion is brought to bear during the act of categorization. The experience of feeling emotion occurs when a person categorizes his internal state. [Barrett 2006b: 27]

- 46 Core affect is characterized by its binary value<sup>21</sup>, whereas emotions result from a more complex cognitive treatment and emerge as a consequence of core affect:

First, the act of categorization performs a kind of figure-ground segregation [...] so that the experience of an emotion will pop out as a separate event from the ebb and flow in ongoing core affect [...]. In doing so, people divide ongoing changes in core affect into meaningful experiences. [Barrett 2006: 36]

- 47 What Barrett [2006: 35] calls "emotions" are therefore:

[...] at once affective and conceptual. [...] The idea is that conceptual and affective processing proceed in parallel, with the processing in each limiting, shaping, and constraining the way in which the brain achieves a single coherent "solution" – an instance of experienced emotion that is organized into a coherent interpretation and action plan that suits the particular goals of the individual and constraints of the context. All this occurs in the blink of an eye.

The dichotomy identified by Barrett seems to find an echo in the ways the substantives *emotion* and *feeling* function. As we have seen above, *emotion* is compatible with a restricted range of adjectives denoting mainly strength, and whether the affect is expressed or not. In that sense, *emotion* refers to an experience that is not semanticized, since it has not yet been given a meaning and results from a basic cognitive analysis. On the other hand, *feeling* is modified by adjectives that describe the nature of the experience undergone by the human subject; as Barrett highlights, it is the result of an operation of categorization and is both "affective and conceptual". In other words, the noun *emotion* seems to designate what Barrett names "core affect" and the noun *feeling* what she calls "emotion".

- 48 This hypothesis is backed up by the non-count use of *emotion*, redolent of "the ongoing, ever-changing" character of core affect, as opposed to the "separate" nature of *feeling*, which is mainly used as a count noun.

- 49 Finally, the "affective and conceptual" nature of what Barrett calls "emotion" is reminiscent of the polysemy of *feeling*, which can designate affects and opinions, and often mixes those two dimensions, as illustrated by the structure *ADJECTIVE feeling of + NP* or *ADJECTIVE feeling + complement clause*. These features of *emotion* and *feeling* all suggest that the latter refers to an experience imbued with meaning, whereas the former designates pre-semantic experience.

The object of the next section is to show that these characteristics are connected with the etymology and the morphology of the two nouns.

## 4. Etymology and morphology

### 4.1. *Emotion*

50 The *OED* notes that *emotion*, borrowed from French, was first used in English at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to refer to “Political agitation, civil unrest; a public commotion or uprising” (the first recorded example of that meaning<sup>22</sup> dates back to 1562) and “Movement; disturbance, perturbation; an instance of this” (the first example<sup>23</sup> is from 1594).

51 Later on, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Thorley [2013: 5] notes that *emotion*:

was a term whose meaning was in flux. That is to say, while both early senses of the word – ‘political unrest’ and ‘physical movement’ – remain in play throughout the period, during that time it is also possible to trace the word’s dominant usage as it undergoes a transition from ‘movement’ to something akin to strong ‘feeling or passion’.

52 He also states that:

the word’s ability to mean both ‘movement’ and ‘feeling or passion’, senses which the *OED* now holds to have had almost simultaneous development, should not be surprising given that, in many examples, the humoral fluid responsible for creating the passions is the very thing which is in motion.

53 Thorley [2013: 15] considers that the next step leading to the contemporary use of the word is exemplified by a phrase coined by Jeremy Taylor, ‘the emotions of an unquiet conscience’:

Here, we seem to find an account of emotion as movement, but that which is moving is not spirits but conscience, that is, (in *OED*’s definition) ‘inward knowledge, consciousness; inmost thought, mind.’ In instances of emotion such as this, a stage in the process I have been tracing can be observed: it has moved from its political usage to a physical one, and onward to one in which it is internalised and made to demonstrate the working of human anatomy. After this, I suggest, it is able to elide the anatomical meaning, and become a simple shorthand for mental affections.

To summarize, “emotion during the seventeenth century [...] had taken the early steps of the long evolutionary journey that would distance it from the physical, fixing it more commonly in the mental realm” [Thorley 2013: 15].

54 The substantive *emotion* is therefore etymologically and historically connected with the idea of movement and agitation: it first designated an event that leads to a change of situation before stability is reached. There seem to be remnants of that origin in the contemporary use of *emotion*, as the idea of disturbance, of change in the making is in keeping with the “core affect” postulated by Barrett and with the idea that *emotion* refers to an affective experience whose cognitive treatment remains to be completed.

### 4.2. *Feeling*

55 As we saw in the previous sections, *feeling* refers to different types of affects, which this section argues is connected with its being derived from the verb *feel*.

#### 4.2.1. *Feeling* and analysis

56 We saw in Section 2 that the meanings of *feeling* are related to perception, affect and cognition, as is the verb *feel*. Paulin [2003: 131] explains that when the verb refers to affects, “nous considérerons qu’il y a une relation d’altérité non stricte de perception de soi par soi-même. Le sujet perçoit ce qui n’est autre chose que lui-même, comme le même et un autre que lui.”<sup>24</sup> The experiencer is therefore split into two entities, the subject of the affect and the observer of that subject. In other words, *feel* encodes the distance taken by the experiencer from his or her own experience, which allows him or her to give it meaning and to categorize it. This property of *feel* can be found in the substantive *feeling*: the categorization involved explains the three semantic dimensions of *feel* and *feeling* – perception, affect and cognition –, since affect is here a form of self-perception which involves cognitive categorization. It also accounts for the fact that several semantic components can often be detected in occurrences of *feeling*.

#### 4.2.2. *-ing*

57 *Feeling* is a particular case of *-ing* derivation; indeed, according to Quirk *et al.* [1985] the nominal suffix *-ing* corresponds to the following cases:

[i] noncount concrete aggregates are fairly freely formed, such as *tubing*, *panelling*, *matting*, *carpeting*, all with reference to the material of which it is made;

[ii] ‘activity connected with’, as in *cricketing*, *farming*, *blackberrying*. Such nouns, abstract and noncount, are fairly freely made [...] [Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1548]

concrete count nouns referring to what results from the action of the base, as in *building*, *opening*, *filling* (in tooth); some are obligatory plurals: *earnings*, *savings*, *shavings*. Occasionally the formations are noncount: *stuffing*, *clothing*. The abstract count items *christening*, *wedding* refer rather to the occasion of the base verb’s activity. [Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1550-1551]

58 *Feeling* does not belong to any of these categories: it is generally used as a count noun and therefore deviates from the two groups identified in the first quote; it does not refer to the result of an action or to an event either, and therefore differs from the third group. Although it is a fully-fledged noun – as opposed to a gerund or a gerundial noun – it maintains a strong connection with the inflectional suffix, as it refers to the very actualization of the situation denoted by *feel*, and it has no other reality than that actualization for the experiencer.

59 The inflectional prefix nominalizes the verb:

On considère habituellement que le mot en *ing* devient alors hétérogène, car sans abandonner sa nature sémantique primitive, – il réfère encore à un acte, à un état ou à un devenir, à un « procès », il dit un rapport extralinguistique, selon la définition traditionnelle du verbe –, il acquiert une fonction syntaxique caractéristique du nom en instanciant dans le cas le plus typique une place d’argument dans une relation prédicative.<sup>25</sup> [Cotte 1994: 233]

60 This paper argues that the derivational suffix found in the substantive *feeling* is anaphoric, like the inflectional suffix, and keeps a connection with an underlying predicative relation. The role of *-ing* is here both to establish a link with the actualization of a predicative relation and to present the result of that actualization as an autonomous entity, since it is designated by a substantive:

Grevisse définit le nom comme ce qui « nomme » les êtres et les choses et il ajoute « Tout mot du langage peut devenir un *nom* dès que l'on considère ontologiquement, en le faisant passer sur le plan de l'“être”, la notion qu'il exprime » (1964 : 166) ; autrement dit, « nommer » c'est détacher un référent de sa situation d'occurrence et le porter à la transcendance, le rendre atemporel, le prendre en lui-même et pour lui-même.<sup>26</sup> [Cotte 1994: 240]

The next subsection aims to show that this is why some of the adjectives modifying *feeling* form hypallages.

#### 4.2.3. *Feeling* and hypallage

61 As observed in Section 2.3.2, hypallages can be found in the following utterances:

(17) But when it came time and I sat there contemplating the white casket smothered in pink lilies sitting at the base of the altar, I felt *a sick feeling rising in my gut*.

(17'') I felt sick in my gut.

(19) It was graduation day, and the strange man standing at the top of the cobblestone stairwell gave me *an uneasy feeling*.

(19'') the strange man standing at the top of the cobblestone stairwell *made me feel uneasy*.

62 As said above, the adjective denotes the nature of the affect experienced. Furthermore, Cotte [1991] observes that the adjective category is related to preconstruction:

L'adjectif, en effet, est une unité du trésor de la langue, qui préexiste en tant que telle à tout discours mais qui, à la différence du nom, ne réfère pas à la chose prise en soi et pour soi comme une réalité autonome et séparée mais qui y réfère indirectement en tant qu'elle est intégrée à un support. De ce fait dire, par exemple :

(8) Et pendant qu'il séchait ce haillon désolé (V. Hugo, *Le Mendiant*, cité par Morier) c'est montrer, au moment du discours, la désolation déjà intégrée au haillon, c'est décrire le réel sans faire dépendre la relation de l'énonciation et c'est opérer une F.A [= fausse attribution].

Il n'y a pas de F.A. sans cette préconstruction [...] Ce n'est donc pas seulement l'association notionnelle qui fait le hiatus de la F.A. mais le fait que la relation est objectivée, donnée dans la chose elle-même, présentée comme indépendante de l'énonciateur<sup>27</sup>. [Cotte 1991: 86]

Consequently, the hypallage (what the author calls “fausse attribution”) completes the operation consisting in presenting the affect as an autonomous entity, independent from the experiencer. In that sense, the emergence of hypallages is in keeping with the *-ing* form; the substantive *feeling* is the result of the situation it is connected with, and the hypallage shows that the feeling cannot be dissociated from the experiencer's state; at the same time, the nominal status of *feeling* imbues it with an autonomous existence.

63 Those adjectives highlight the paradoxical nature of what *feeling* designates: the affect emanates from the experiencer, however, as a noun, *feeling* separates the affect from a singular experience.

### 4.3. Summary

64 The etymological and morphological characteristics of *emotion* and *feeling* reflect their semantic singularities: the contemporary meaning of *emotion* as pre-semantic affect echoes its historical connection with the idea of agitation and disturbance; moreover,

the nominalization of the verb yielding *feeling* accounts for its polysemy, its denoting semanticized affects and the hypallages it forms.

## 5. *Emotions and feelings*: a few remarks

- 65 In their plural form, *emotion* and *feeling* do not co-occur with the same adjectives as in the singular.

### 5.1. Definitions

- 66 The *OED* offers several definitions specific to the plural *feelings*<sup>28</sup>:
1. In *plural*. A person's emotions or sympathies considered collectively; the emotional susceptibilities or tendencies of a person's character.  
*He's not a great one for showing his feelings but he was in the most frightful state, I can tell you.*
  2. Usually in *plural*. Sympathy or fondness for, or emotional attachment to, a person or thing; (in later use *esp.*) romantic attraction. Frequently in *to have feelings for*.  
*I didn't expect to meet Leo and end up having feelings for him, but I did.*
  3. With modifying word: an emotion or attitude of the specified type that two or more people or groups feel with respect to each other. Frequently with *between*.  
Now sometimes in *plural*.  
*The ads... intensified bad feelings between factions of the Democratic Party.*
- 67 The plural occurs when multiple feelings are referred to, either concerning one individual, as in the first definition, or several experiencers (cf. definition 3). More surprisingly, the second definition designates a specific type of affect.

### 5.2. Collocations

#### 5.2.1. *Emotions*

- 68 Table 5 lists the 73 adjectives occurring more than five times with the plural form *emotions* in the *COCA* and Table 6 the 42 adjectives occurring more than three times in the *BNC*<sup>29</sup>:

**Table 5: Adjectives occurring more than 5 times in the sequence *ADJECTIVE emotions* (COCA)**

negative (359)	personal (31)	overwhelming (13)	disturbed (9)	private (7)
mixed (194)	real (30)	painful (13)	particular (9)	repressed (7)
strong (171)	deep (29)	similar (13)	big (8)	tender (7)
positive (168)	certain (28)	specific (13)	nationalist (8)	universal (7)
human (154)	complicated (17)	appropriate (12)	corresponding (7)	wild (7)
conflicting (132)	true (17)	deepest (12)	darker (7)	anticipated (6)
other (83)	unpleasant (17)	volatile (12)	destructive (7)	bittersweet (6)
intense (72)	contradictory (16)	difficult (11)	differential (7)	confused (6)
moral (66)	high (16)	religious (11)	distinct (7)	dark (6)
different (60)	pent-up (16)	conflicted (10)	heated (7)	disturbing (6)
basic (48)	social (15)	extreme (10)	natural (7)	great (6)
powerful (48)	various (14)	heightened (10)	normal (7)	hard (6)
raw (46)	violent (14)	turbulent (10)	old (7)	passionate (6)
complex (39)	new (13)	uncomfortable (10)	primary (7)	strange (6)

**Table 6: Adjectives occurring more than 3 times in the sequence *ADJECTIVE emotions* (BNC)**

conflicting (30)	Fragile (4)	confused (3)
mixed (23)	other (16)	intense (3)
negative (22)	unruly (3)	raw (3)
strong (27)	hidden (4)	such (10)
human (26)	positive (6)	extreme (3)
own (35)	turbulent (3)	basic (4)
pent-up (6)	violent (4)	real (5)
deepest (7)	complex (5)	strange (3)
uncomfortable (7)	deep (5)	ordinary (3)
suppressed (5)	destructive (3)	dark (3)
wayward (5)	inner (4)	several (4)
tangled (4)	deeper (3)	various (3)
contradictory (4)	overwhelming (3)	right (3)
different (11)	same (9)	new (5)

- 69 Some of these adjectives are similar to the adjectives co-occurring with the singular form *emotion* and some are related to the intensity of the affect (*deep, extreme, great, intense, overwhelming, powerful, raw, strong, violent*). However, overall, the semantic groups tend to differ widely from those occurring with the singular; only few adjectives are related to whether or not the affect is manifested, and that category is restricted to *pent-up* and *suppressed* here.

- 70 On the other hand, other sub-groups emerge: the adjectives *dark(er)*, *destructive*, *negative*, *positive*, *uncomfortable* are related to the actual experience of the affect and to its valence<sup>30</sup>.
- 71 Finally, several adjectives denote complexity or contradiction: *complex*, *conflicting*, *contradictory*, *mixed*, *turbulent* and some of them are among the most frequent adjectives with the form *emotions* (*mixed* and *conflicting*). As observed in Section 3, *emotion* in the singular tends to appear as a non-count noun, which is obviously not the case in the plural; however, the adjectives referring to complexity suggest that the affects described are lumped together and cannot easily be disentangled:

(23) The men Jeb had sent for supplies were coming in as I left the room and by the time I returned with ice packs, Amber had been hooked up to an IV and fluid was dripping down the line into the vein at her wrist. Her eyes were closed. She was either asleep or almost there so I didn't disturb her. Instead, I handed Jeb the compresses, then sat on the love seat near the bed and watched, helpless.

I was actually grateful for that helplessness. *Of the myriad complex emotions* that were weighing on me at the moment, helplessness was the easiest to carry. *It was the one I knew.* (COCA, Laurelin Paige, *Last Kiss*, 2017)

### 5.2.3. Feelings

- 72 Table 7 lists the 70 adjectives occurring more than five times with the plural form *emotions* in the COCA and Table 8 the 56 adjectives occurring more than five times in the BNC<sup>31</sup>:

**Table 7: Adjectives occurring more than 5 times in the sequence *ADJECTIVE feelings* (COCA)**

hard (483)	warm (72)	bruised (41)	suicidal (26)	normal (18)
strong (462)	inner (70)	general (40)	certain (24)	anti-American (17)
negative (397)	different (64)	emotional (39)	conflicted (23)	physical (17)
personal (305)	similar (64)	angry (37)	hostile (23)	homosexual (16)
positive (275)	ambivalent (57)	powerful (34)	fuzzy (22)	internal (16)
mixed (265)	human (57)	religious (34)	painful (22)	nationalist (16)
true (215)	deepest (51)	subjective (33)	unresolved (22)	passionate (16)
hurt (210)	old (49)	contradictory (31)	guilty (21)	raw (16)
bad (201)	other (47)	private (31)	intimate (21)	shared (16)
good (172)	romantic (47)	stronger (31)	patriotic (21)	ambiguous (15)
real (95)	tender (47)	complex (30)	deeper (20)	current (15)
intense (90)	conflicting (44)	complicated (29)	aggressive (19)	individual (15)
deep (86)	bitter (43)	new (28)	initial (19)	moral (15)
sexual (73)	innermost (42)	increased (26)	uncomfortable (19)	natural (15)

**Table 8: Adjectives occurring more than 5 times in the sequence *ADJECTIVE feelings (BNC)***

own (159)	emotional (15)	painful (8)	same (17)
mixed (69)	positive (18)	aggressive (8)	private (10)
strong (79)	bad (21)	intense (8)	individual (9)
personal (68)	deep (17)	hostile (7)	natural (8)
true (53)	hurt (10)	powerful (10)	actual (6)
negative (36)	human (18)	conflicting (6)	other (20)
ambivalent (19)	unconscious (9)	deepest (5)	normal (6)
unwanted (18)	deeper (9)	unpleasant (6)	certain (7)
real (34)	religious (13)	tender (6)	general (8)
sexual (24)	innermost (6)	associated (6)	different (8)
hard (27)	unproductive (6)	loving (5)	old (7)
subjective (14)	uncomfortable (8)	similar (11)	national (5)
inner (17)	violent (9)	injured (5)	good (7)
finer (11)	confused (8)	vague (5)	new (8)

- 73 Among the adjectives common to the two lists, some of the semantic groups that can be identified are similar to those found with the singular *feeling*: adjectives related to intensity (*deep, intense, strong*), valence (*good, negative, painful, positive, uncomfortable*), authenticity (*real, true*) and classifying adjectives (*emotional, religious, sexual*). Adjectives occurring with the plural *feelings* differ from those forming collocations with the singular on three accounts: as is the case with *emotions*, one subgroup is related to heterogeneity (*ambivalent, conflicting, mixed*); one subgroup is specific: *bad feelings, hard feelings* and *tender feelings* refer to social affects; finally, one can also identify adjectives referring to one individual's affects (*personal, private* and *subjective*):

(24) It was their mother who'd been the glue that kept them connected, Frank and Casey. Her constant smile and teasing words lightened the years of *bad feelings* between brothers who'd been born more than a decade apart. Now, though, they had less than nothing in common. (COCA, Suzanne Brockmann, *Headed for Trouble*, 2013)

- 74 *Bad feelings* designates affects caused by other people's behaviour which are in that sense social affects. Social affects are overrepresented with the plural *feelings* whereas the adjectives found with *feeling* in the singular and connected with the nature of the experience (*sick, sinking, etc.*) are not common with the plural<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, phrases such as *ambivalent feelings, conflicting feelings* or *mixed feelings* often designate opinions rather than pure affects:

(25) But a public document would almost certainly see wide distribution, finding its way onto the Internet, for example, Mr. Jester said. [...] Then, he added, "it can be reviewed by anyone in the world."  
Because the findings could likely be applied to a wide range of projects, however, many wonder where the line between military security and public safety should be drawn.  
"I have *conflicting feelings*," said John Durrant, executive director of the Structural Engineering Institute of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

“We believe the findings would be of benefit to the profession. On the other hand, we are very sensitive to the need for national security.” (COCA, James Glanz, “Lessons Drawn From Attack On Pentagon May Stay Secret”, *New York Times*, 2002)

- 75 As we saw in Section 4, the noun *feeling* results from the nominalization of a predicative relation based on the verb *feel*; in its plural form, *feeling* is more clearly grounded in the paradigms of prototypical nouns, and is therefore at a further remove from the verb and the predicative relation, so that the referent is not envisaged as the direct product of the experiencer’s affective and cognitive activity. This seems to go hand in hand with the fact that the plural, unlike the singular, does not focus on the actual experience of the affect, but either on social entities circulating between individuals or on opinions, encompassing several components.
- 76 In that sense, the plural has two different effects on the semantics of *emotion* and *feeling*: with *emotions*, it is connected with confusion, whereas with *feelings*, it has to do with the addition of separate entities.

## Conclusion

- 77 Although *emotion* and *feeling* both refer to affects and are considered to be synonymous in some of their uses, a closer analysis of the collocations they form with adjectives shows that they refer to different kinds of affects, as *emotion* denotes affective experiences that have not been categorized, whereas *feeling* refers to affects that have undergone a more elaborate cognitive treatment. Those characteristics are correlated with the etymology and morphology of those words, but also with the experience of affect as described by cognitive neuroscience. Finally, the plural forms *emotions* and *feelings* form specific collocations, which reflects a social and intellectual conception of affects, further removed from individual experience.

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## NOTES

1. Emphasis added.
2. Each of the definitions is followed by one of the examples quoted in the *OED*.
3. "Seventy years ago the founder of behaviourism John Waston proposed the following definition (quoted in Plutchik 1994: 3): "An emotion is an hereditary 'pattern-reaction' involving profound changes of the bodily mechanisms as a whole, but particularly of the visceral and glandular systems"." (Wierzbicka [1999: 1])
4. "There seems to be a sort of polysemy between language for specific purposes – where the noun *émotion* is generic and encompasses a set of various types of emotions, such as *peur*, *tristesse*, *colère*, etc. which are subtypes of *émotions* – and common parlance, where the noun *émotion* désignates a specific manifestation, and is on the same lexical level as *peur*, *colère*, *tristesse*, etc." (my translation)
5. "nouns are synthetic and hide the complexity of their referent", whereas adjectives are "analytical and detail the contingent qualities that nouns neglect or contain in their synthetic definition". (my translation)
6. "A noun is a lexical unit that synthesizes the structural features identifying the referent as a stable, preconstructed category, whereas one or several adjectives break it into its properties, whether contingent or not, as the speaker uncovers them if he or she wants to. Adjectives separate what nouns conceal and they also express an evaluation of the referent." (my translation)
7. The figures in brackets correspond to the number of occurrences of each sequence.

8. The COCA contains over 560 million words, and the BNC around 100 million words.
9. The adjectives in brackets are those that appear only in one of the two tables.
10. In this example as in the others, the emphasis is mine.
11. “the role of intensity adjectives is to place the occurrence at the top of the scale defining the noun. *Énorme* dans *énorme envie* or *terrible* in *chaleur terrible* do not so much characterize *envie* or *chaleur* (as would *envie bizarre* or *chaleur humide*) or categorize them (the NP *envies énormes* does not designate a type of *envies*, unlike *envie de voyage*) as indicate that the referent is placed at the top of the scale “*envie*” or “*chaleur*.” (my translation)
12. She adds that whether the noun modified is *a priori* gradable or not is immaterial: “Il en est de même pour un prédicat *a priori* non gradable [...] : disant *de vraies vacances*, on ne parle pas d’une qualité des vacances (comme ce serait le cas avec *longues, chères*), on ne parle pas de tel type de vacances (*d’hiver, touristiques*), mais on dit que les propriétés qui constituent le sens de vacances sont réunies, ou intensifiées.” (Romero [2004: 451]) (“The same holds for adjectives that would appear non-gradable [...]: the NP *de vraies vacances* does not refer to a property of the holidays (as would be the case with *longues* or *chères*), or to a kind of holidays (*d’hiver, touristiques*), but indicates that the properties that make up the essence of holidays are brought together or intensified”). (my translation)
13. “the distinction between the two types of phrases is not always clear-cut since the same adjectives can be used as intensity adjectives or intensifying descriptive adjectives. Thus, between the descriptive *eau bouillante* and the intensity adjectives *énorme* and *extrême* in *énorme envie* and *extrême bonté* (where the adjectives are merely intensity adjectives), with *échec cuisant*, *banalité consternante*, *amour passionnel* there is both intensification (something that is said to be “d’une banalité consternante” is “d’une grande banalité” or “très banal”) and characterization (consternant = “qui est propre à consterner”, despite the possible hyperbole). (my translation)
14. “For example, *haut* is a direct intensity adjective in *haut intérêt* because no interpretative calculation is required from the qualitative meaning of *haut* to place the occurrence at the top of the scale “*intérêt*” (that is, to interpret the NP as meaning “très intéressant”).”
15. “Intensity adjectives having a describing component are indirectly intensive; for example, to interpret *banalité consternante*, an interpretative calculation such as “Only what is very banal can arouse consternation, therefore this is very banal” is necessary.
16. Since “the classical Latin *ēmōt-*” is “the past participial stem of *ēmōvĕre* to remove, expel, to banish from the mind, to shift, displace” (OED).
17. Its “primary domain” being “that in which different instantiations of the category can occur and be identified” (Langacker [1991: 69]).
18. The sequence *warm feeling*, for instance, is relevant here, but some occurrences are not, as in the following example : “The restaurant has a *warm feeling*, but other than two murals of masked revelers near the bar, wood and copper trim, and white, teardrop-shaped lamps jutting from pale yellow walls, the crowd is the decor.” (COCA, Maria Cianci, “This Spot By Any Name Would Taste as Sweet”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1995)
19. Although the majority of the sequences are relevant to this study, some are not; giving the exact number of occurrences requires a systematic manual analysis of each of the utterances, which is beyond the scope of this paper.
20. Barrett’s technical use of the noun *emotion* differs from the use of the word in common parlance.
21. “This form of affective responding is “core” because it is influenced by a very simple form of meaning analysis – whether stimuli or events are helpful or harmful, rewarding or threatening for a given person at a given point in time and whether an active behavioral response is required.” (Barrett [2006: 31])
22. “The great tumultes and emotiones that were in Fraunce betwene the king and the nobilitie.”

23. “Such were [...] the terrible expeditions of the Tartarians, [...] thorough the great emotion [Fr. emotion] and mutation of humaine things.”

24. “I shall consider that a relation of non-strict alterity underlies self-perception; the experiencer perceives himself or herself as both himself or herself and someone else.” (my translation)

25. “One generally considers that the word ending in *-ing* becomes heterogenous, for while keeping its original semantic nature – it still refers to an act, a state or a change, i.e. to a situation, and expresses an extralinguistic relation, in accordance with the traditional definition of the verb – it also fulfils the syntactic function of a noun since it is prototypically used as an argument in a predicative relation.”

26. “Grevisse defines the noun as that which “names” beings and things, and adds, “Any word can become a noun as soon as one considers the notion it expresses from an ontological point of view, at the level of “what is”, [1964: 166]; in other words, “to name” is to detach a referent from the situation where it occurs, and to bring it to transcendence, to make it timeless, to consider it in and for itself.”

27. “An adjective is a lexical unit which, as such, precedes any discourse but which, unlike a noun, does not refer to an entity taken in and for itself as an autonomous and separate reality; on the contrary, it refers to it indirectly as being integrated into a substrate. In this way, saying: (8) Et pendant qu’il séchait ce haillon désolé (V. Hugo, *Le Mendiant*, quoted by Morier) is tantamount to showing the “desolation” as already integrated into the rag at the time of utterance, the “false attribution” (F.A.) boils down to describing the real without making the relation depend on the utterance.

There is no F.A. without preconstruction [...] The notional association is therefore not the only element that creates the hiatus in the F.A., the fact that the relation is objectified, given in the thing itself, presented as independent of the enunciator, must also be factored in”.

28. Each of the definitions is followed by one of the examples quoted in the *OED*.

29. There are 13 547 occurrences of the plural *emotions* in the *COCA* and 1 851 in the *BNC*.

30. These adjectives are often classifying adjectives here, and *emotions* corresponds to the hypernym identified by Hilgert (2018) in scientific use: among the 359 occurrences of *negative emotions* in the *COCA*, 235 come from academic sources (65%).

31. There are 27 312 occurrences of the substantive *feelings* in the *COCA* and 5 136 in the *BNC*.

32. There are, for instance, only 2 occurrences of *sick feelings* (vs. 149 of *sick feeling*), 1 occurrence of *queasy feelings* (vs. 47 of *queasy feeling*) and no occurrence of *?sinking feelings* (vs. 247 occurrences of *sinking feeling*) in the *COCA*.

## ABSTRACTS

This paper analyzes the adjectives modifying the substantives *emotion* and *feeling* in contemporary American and British English. It argues that although the two nouns refer to affects and are treated as synonyms in dictionary definitions, they are not semantic equivalents. The study of their collocations with adjectives shows that *emotion* refers to pre-semantic experience, whereas *feeling* designates affects that have been the object of a more elaborate cognitive treatment. This paper also aims to show that the semantic characteristics of the two substantives reflect their morphology and their historical evolution.

Cette contribution porte sur les adjectifs modifiant les noms *emotion* and *feeling* en anglais britannique et américain. Nous cherchons à démontrer que bien que les deux noms renvoient aux affects et qu'ils soient souvent présentés comme synonymes, ce ne sont pas des équivalents sémantiques. L'étude des collocations qu'ils forment avec les adjectifs suggère que *emotion* renvoie à une expérience pré-sémantique, alors que *feeling* désigne des affects qui ont fait l'objet d'un traitement cognitif plus élaboré. Cette contribution montre également que les caractéristiques sémantiques des deux substantifs reflètent leur morphologie et leur évolution historique.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** feeling, emotion, expression of affects, collocations, adjectives, lexical semantics

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