Degree Modification of Extreme Adjectives

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This paper strives to develop an explicit theory of the relationship between 'extreme' adjectives---such as *gigantic*, *horrifying*, *gorgeous* and *fantastic*---and their ordinary counterparts. The starting point will be the apparently novel observation that there is a class of degree words that can modify extreme adjectives exclusively. To account for this, I will argue that, contrary to one natural intuition, extreme adjectives are not simply adjectives with upper closed scales, and that their crucial property is instead that they introduce a presupposition of exceeding the contextually-provided standard by a large amount.