

**Some Observations on the Intensive Means of Expression
in Defoe's Language—Mainly in *Robinson Crusoe* with
Supplementary Examples from *Gulliver's Travels***

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0. The present study is not intended to be as exhaustive as the one carried out by Britta M. Charleston.¹ It is scarcely more than an attempt to examine and describe some features of Defoe's intensive means of expression in *Robinson Crusoe* (*RC*),² which, together with *Gulliver's Travels* (*GT*),³ claims a monumental place in the movement of English prose from the post-Restoration period through the eighteenth century.⁴ Our primary corpus is *RC*; but by way of a supplement we quote a number of examples from *GT*.

With respect to the language of *RC* and *GT*, Ian A. Gordon, though admitting unmistakable disparity in the background and the prose style of each, finds their divergencies to be less striking than their similarities and goes on to describe both as "speech-based prose"⁵; while Robert Adolph cites them as examples of the prose style of the later seventeenth century—"the new prose of utility."⁶

The means of intensification discussed in the present paper are not of course peculiar to Defoe, but it is expected that our semi-comparative study of the language of two contemporary writers sharing much the same role in the history of English prose will cast some light on some aspects of Defoe's language of narrative.

Roughly speaking, the functions of language may be said to be twofold: objective and subjective. In the former case language, which is merely employed for communication, tends [to be impersonal, dispassionate, matter-of-fact, business-like, informative, referential, and factual.⁷ In the latter case language attempts to express a writer's emotions, intensity of feeling and attitude; or to rouse in others certain feelings or attitudes; or again to indicate the writer's attitude towards his statement or his interlocutor, etc.⁸ It therefore tends to be more or less personal, emotional or emotive, and affective. Defoe's language, as Watt has maintained, has a certain 'mathematical plainness', a positive and wholly referential quality very well suited to carrying out the purpose of

language as Locke defined it, 'to convey the knowledge of things.'⁹ It is certainly true that Defoe was exposed to all the influences which were making prose more prosaic in the later seventeenth century.¹⁰ But recent Defoe scholarship has disclosed more tangible evidence against such a conventional view. On reading *RC* as well as Defoe's other narrative works one is impressed by the variety and ubiquity of intensive formula. It can be argued that intensification or intensive expression, which is a means of intensifying a certain word or phrase in a sentence, is a form of emotional expression.¹¹ Charleston includes the following means in her subjective function of language: intonation, stress, emphasis, pitch, interjections, exclamations, commands, wishes, intensification and the use of intensifiers, certain particles, words, and phrases that betray a personal feeling or attitude, the use of hyperbole and litotes, or meiosis, tension, evocation, slang, imagery, innuendo, invectives, expletives, and various "emotional devices".¹² The present study focuses on, among other things, Defoe's comparative forms and some other forms of expression.

1. Superlatives

1.1. Here we include superlatives because, despite the absence of emotive words, they have a certain effect of intensification. At least fifty-nine examples have been found. Some of them are:

(1) So void was I of every Thing that was good, or of the least Sense of what I was, or was to be, that in the greatest Deliverances I enjoy'd, such as my Escape from *Sallee*, my being taken up by the *Portuguese* Master of the Ship, my being planted so well in the *Brasils*; my receiving the Cargo from *England*, and the like; I never had once the Word *Thank God*, so much as on my Mind, or in my Mouth;¹³.... (*RC* 131)

(2)...I came to reflect seriously upon the real Danger I had been in, for so many Years, in this very Island; and how I had walk'd about in the greatest Security, and with all possible Tranquility;....(*RC* 196)

(3)...if the worse came to the worst, I could but die, which would put an end to all these Miseries at once. (*RC* 198)

(4)...as *Friday* had kill'd this Wolf, the other that had fastned upon the Horse, left him immediately, and fled; having happily fastned upon his

Head, where the Bosses of the Bridle had stuck in his Teeth; so that he had not done him much Hurt: The Man indeed was most Hurt;...(RC 292)

(5) ...there was exactly the very Print of a Foot, Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot; how it came thither, I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. (RC 154)

“The least” in (1) and “not...in the least” in (5) are both very frequent in Defoe: they reach nearly as high as fifty per cent of the instances included here. Two superlatives in (1), i.e. “the least Sense” and “the greatest Deliverances,” are in close proximity and thus heighten the effect of Crusoe’s reflections upon his “wicked and hardned Life past.” And it is very interesting to note that “the greatest Deliverances” smacks something of an exaggeration. Much the same tendency can be detected in (2). This is usually termed the “absolute superlative,” which has a notable tendency to be quite intensive or emotive.¹⁴ “If the worse came to the worst” in (3) seems somewhat illogical, but the superlative preceded by the comparative “worse” just fits the context where Crusoe is made desperate by “the long Continuance of my Troubles, and the Disappointments I had met in the Wreck.” Moreover in (5), Crusoe’s confusion of mind when he saw a footprint for the first time since he was drifted on the shore of the uninhabited island overshadows the syntax in terms of repetition of negation.

Superlatives which often tend to be intensive or emotional are rarely descriptive, and to this generalization Defoe is no exception. Yet *RC* has several examples which might be described as barely intensive or nearly descriptive.

(6) ...I said no more to the Boy, but bade him lye still, and I took our biggest Gun...and loaded it with a good Charge of Powder, and with two Slugs, and laid it down;... (RC 27-28)

(7) ...they did me the Honour to call me Captain, as well because I was the oldest Man, as because I had two Servants, and indeed was the Original of the whole Journey. (RC 289)

(8) ...I took my two Nephews, the Children of one of my Brothers into my Care: The eldest having something of his own, I bred up as a Gentleman, and gave him a Settlement of some Addition to his Estate, after my Decease; the other I put out to a Captain of a Ship;...(RC 304-05)

It may seem to be curious that the narrator, i.e. Crusoe, prefers in (8) the

superlative to the comparative which in the context seems quite reasonable. Of this kind of superlative we can find two other instances. However, in colloquial English this tendency is considered to be natural.¹⁵

Apart from the superlatives treated above, attention should be paid to emotional superlative expressions, in which intensification is apparent or direct in the sense that head words denoting emotion or [their modifiers are in the superlative. Instances are quoted here to illustrate what kind of emotional words are in the superlative:

(9) I kept this Day as a Solemn Fast, setting it apart to Religious Exercise, prostrating my self on the Ground with the most serious Humiliation....(RC 103)

(10)...with the Noise of *Friday's* Pistol, we heard on both Sides the dimmallest Howling of Wolves, and the Noise redoubled by the Eccho of the Mountains....(RC 292)

In (10) the narrator's impression when he heard the howlings of beasts shot by Friday is duly magnified by his predilection for the superlative instead of the positive or the positive modified by some intensive adjective. Other instances are: "in the most earnest Manner" (RC 44)/"the bitterest Providences" (RC 148)/"in the most affectionate Manner" (RC 5)/"most piteous Work" (RC 134)/"most anxious about" (RC 179)/"most terribly scar'd" (RC 230)/ "the most dreadful to us" (RC 181)/"was the most amaz'd" (RC 229)/etc.

In the following example, it is not the emotional word itself, i.e. "Composure," but its modifier, i.e. "great," that is in the superlative. This distinction is merely syntactical, for the function of both is semantically one and the same.

(11)...my very Heart would die within me, to think of the Woods, the Mountains, the Desarts I was in;...In the midst of the greatest Composures of my Mind, this would break out upon me like a Storm, and make me wring my Hands, and weep like a Child:...I would...sit down and sigh,.... (RC 113)

Two other examples of a similar type are to be found: "my greatest Concern now being...." (RC 45)/"...in the greatest Distress" (RC 131). In the instance (11), the superlative phrase "the greatest Composures of my Mind" has a strong exaggerative effect. It is interesting that both before and after the superlative

phrase there is the recurrence of such emotional phrases as “my very Heart would die within me,” “this would...make me wring my Hands, and weep like a Child,” and “I would...sit down and sigh.” Therefore we feel that the intensity of Crusoe's desperation, which is already great enough because of these multiple emotional phrases, is made even greater by the superlative “In the midst of the greatest Composure of my Mind.” To these should be added the following instances from *GT*: “...under the highest Displeasure of his Imperial Majesty” (Pt. 1, Ch. VII, 67)/“...the greatest Abhorrence of...” (Pt. 1, Ch. V, 56)/ “My greatest Apprehension was...” (Pt. 1, Ch. V, 52)/“...he is highest provoked, and most determined to...” (Pt. 111, Ch. 111, 172).

1.2. Superlative+*that*-clause

Here must be included superlatives followed by a *that*-clause. Most of the twenty-six instances found in *RC* more or less reflect the narrator's emotional state of mind. There is of course no difference felt between this and the forms discussed previously in the sense that both are superlatives. However, a *that*-clause following the superlative often has a tendency to be effective in a peculiar way.

(12) ...for me to think of such a Voyage, was the most preposterous Thing that ever Man in such Circumstances could be guilty of. (*RC* 40)

(13) ...the Ground I stood on shook three Times at about eight Minutes Distance, with three such Shocks, as would have overturn'd the strongest Building that could be suppos'd to have stood on the Earth....(*RC* 80)

(14) ...to have seen one of my own Species, would have seem'd to me a Raising me from Death to Life, and the greatest Blessing that Heaven it self, next to the supreme Blessing of Salvation, could bestow....(*RC* 156)

(15) ...the Sight was, as I thought, the most delightful that ever I saw. (*RC* 9)

Needless to say, the superlative has as its logical ground a set of things or ideas to be compared with one another. They may be either explicit or implicit in the context. It is the *that*-clause attached to the superlative that indicates the set of things or ideas. This form of superlative seems to have its own stylistic effect. In this connection it is worth recalling G. A. Starr's comments on Moll's phrases: the clauses “that ever man in such Circumstances could be guilty of” and “that could be suppos'd to have stood on the Earth” etc. both seem to inform the

reader of not facts but Crusoe's commentary on the facts.¹⁶ It might be interesting to note that (13) has what might be called multiple metaphorical devices as evidenced in "as would have overturn'd...." and "that could be..."; the latter being embedded in the former. Brief mention should be made of the clause in (15) "that ever I saw."¹⁷ This type of clause in the first person singular is characteristic of Defoe's narrative most of which are cast in the form of an "autobiographical memoir." It might be said that Defoe's point here is not only emotional intensification but also verisimilitude.

A few instances from *GT* had better be added here :

(16) ...I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth. (Pt. 11, Ch. VI, 132)

(17) I answered, I was an *Englishman*, drawn by ill Fortune into the greatest Calamity that ever any Creature underwent ; and begged, by all that was moving, to be delivered out of the Dungeon I was in. (Pt. 11, Ch. VIII, 143)

(18) ...it was only an Heap of Conspiracies, Rebellions, Murders, Massacres, Revolutions, Banishments ; the very worst Effects that Avarice, Faction, Hypocrisy, Perfidiousness, Cruelty, Rage, Madness, Hatred, Envy, Lust, Malice, and Ambition could produce. (Pt. 11, Ch. VI, 132)

1. 3. Superlative+phrase

Closely related to the above are superlatives with slightly different syntactical features from those treated in the preceding section : superlatives not followed by *that*-clauses but a variety of phrases such as *in the world*, *imaginable*, etc. Among more than one score of examples some are instanced here :

(19) ...they were so shy, so subtile, and so swift of Foot, that it was the difficultest thing in the World to come at them.... (RC 61)

(20) ...they were all of them very civil honest Men, and they were under the greatest Distress imaginable, having neither Weapons or Cloaths, nor any Food, but at the Mercy and Discretion of the *Savages*.... (RC 245)

(21) And now I was once more deliver'd from the most miserable of all Conditions of Life, and what to do next with my self I was now to consider. (RC 34)

(22) The most covetous griping Miser in the World would have been cur'd

of the Vice of Covetousness, if he had been in my Case; for I possess'd infinitely more than I knew what to do with. (RC 129)

Most of these phrases of course also tend to be intensive and therefore emotional. Starr's contentions quoted above seem to apply to this form also¹⁹, and these phrases function like those dealt with in the preceding section, although to a lesser degree.

A few examples from *GT* are:

(23) ...but I happened to slip through her Fingers, and should have infallibly fallen down forty Foot upon the Floor, if by the luckiest Chance in the World, I had not been stop'd by a Corking-pin that stuck in the good Gentlewoman's Stomacher.... (Pt. 11, Ch. V, 121)

(24) By what I could discover, the *Yahoos* appear to be the most unteachable of all Animals, their Capacities never reaching higher than to draw or carry Burthens. (Pt. IV, Ch. VIII, 266)

(25) ...if the Inhabitants of this Country were endued with a proportionable Degree of Reason, they must needs be the wisest People upon Earth. (Pt. IV, Ch. I, 225)

1. 4. Absolute use of *most*

As Quirk et al. say, there seems to be a tendency that absolute *most* is restricted as to the adjectives with which it occurs, perhaps premodifying only those expressing subjective rather than objective attitudes.²⁰ Of close on a score of examples here are some:

(26) ...the Wind began to blow, and the Winds to rise in a most frightful Manner.... (RC 8)

(27) As I was busy in the Inside of it, behind my Tent, just in the Entrance into my Cave, I was terribly frighted with a most dreadful surprising Thing indeed.... (RC 80)

(28) ...*Lisbon*, where I arriv'd in *April* following; my Man *Friday* accompanying me very honestly in all these Ramblings, and proving a most faithful Servant upon all Occasions. (RC 279)

In most examples there is a natural tendency to an emotional effect. In (28), for instance, Crusoe's gratitude towards Friday which is explicit in "faithful" is heightened by putting "most" as its premodifier.

GT has almost as many instances, some of which are as follows: “a most ingenious People” (Pt. I, Ch. I, 24)/ “a most magnanimous Prince” (Pt. I, Ch. II, 36)/ “a most obstinate War” (Pt. I, Ch. IV, 49)/ “a most astonishing Object” (Pt. II, Ch. VIII, 148)/ “a most hospitable Manner” (Pt. III, Ch. IV, 174)/ etc.

2. Comparisons

2. 1. Comparisons with superlative effect

Comparison with superlative effect is another syntactical device of intensification. Among twenty-four instances here are some:

(29) Even the Earthquake, tho' nothing could be more terrible in its Nature, or more immediately directing to the invisible Power which alone directs such Things, yet no sooner was the first Fright over, but the Impression it had made went off also. (*RC* 90)

(30) ...for never frightened Hare fled to Cover, or Fox to Earth, with more Terror of Mind than I to this Retreat. (*RC* 154)

(31) But I needed none of all this Precaution; for never Man had a more faithful, loving, sincere Servant, than Friday was to me... (*RC* 209)

(32) ...he runs to his Enemy, and at one blow cut off his Head as cleverly, no Executioner in Germany, could have done it sooner or better... (*RC* 204)

GT, on the other hand, has no more than ten instances. Here are some:

(33) The Nipple was about half the Bigness of my Head, and the Hue both of that and the Dug so varified with Spots, Pimples, and Freckles, that nothing could appear more nauseous... (Pt. II, Ch. I, 91)

(34) My Master continuing his Discourse, said, There was nothing that rendered the Yahoos more odious, than their undistinguishing Appetite to devour every Thing that came in their Way, whether Herbs, Roots, Berries, corrupted Flesh of Animals, or all mingled together... (Pt. IV, Ch. VII, 261)

The underlined clause in (31) is notable in that it fully informs the reader of Crusoe's keen appreciation of Friday. (32), which discovers the co-occurrence of another type of comparison, i.e. that which is based on equivalence,²¹ contains no overtly emotional word, but this metaphorical passage is a vivid depiction of Crusoe's surprise at Friday's agility or ingenuity. More than half of the examples both in Defoe and Swift contain emotional words or what may be considered as

such

2 2. Comparisons based on equivalence etc.

We here take into account comparisons based on equivalence, excess and sufficiency as expressed by *as...as, so...that, such...that*.²²

2. 2. 1. *as...as*

Instances are not many either in *RC* or *GT*. Some of the emotional examples are:

(35) ...never was a Fight manag'd so hardily, and in such a surprizing Manner, as that which follow'd between *Friday* and the Bear....(*RC* 293)

(36) ...But never was any thing in the World of that Kind so unpleasant, awkward, and uneasy, as it was to me to wear such Cloaths at their first putting on. (*RC* 274)

(37) I must confess no Object ever disgusted me so much as the Sight of her monstrous Breast, which I cannot tell what to compare with, so as to give the curious Reader an Idea of its Bulk, Shape and Colour. (*GT* Pt. 11, Ch. 1, 91)

(38) It happened that a young Female *Yahoo* standing behind a Bank, saw the whole Proceeding; and inflamed by Desire, as the Nag and I conjectured, came running with all Speed, and leaped into the Water within five Yards of the Place where I bathed. I was never in my Life so terribly frightened.... (*GT* Pt. 1V, Ch. V111, 267)

This type of expression, not unlike others considered above, has a strong tendency to be emotive.²³

In this connection mention should be made of *as...as if* which can be considered as its variant with a peculiar effect worthy of note.

(39)...I was comparing the happy Posture of my Affairs, in the first Years of my Habitation here, compar'd to the Life of Anxiety, Fear and Care, which I had liv'd ever since I had seen the Print of a Foot in the Sand; not that I did not believe the Savages had frequented the Island even all the while, and might have been several Hundreds of them at Times on Shore there; but I had never known it, and was incapable of any Apprehensions about it; my Satisfaction was perfect, though my Danger was the same; and I was as happy in not knowing my Danger, as if I had never really been expos'd to it....(*RC* 196)

(40) When I came to *England*, I was as perfect a Stranger to all the World, as if I had never been known there. (RC 278)

Relevant and interesting here is Starr's comment on this kind of expression in *Moll Flanders*.²⁴ "It is worth noting," he says, "that...the phrases 'as if somebody had thrust me against her' and 'as if I had been killed' furnish not facts but Moll's commentary on the facts," and goes on to say, "Unobtrusive as they may be, such metaphorical devices are important: they contribute not to what Watt calls the 'immediate presentation' of the scene, but to a presentation constantly mediated by Moll's imagination."²⁵ He suggests that, by calling attention to the fact that "there is more exploring of states of mind,"²⁶ Defoe is not perfectly "detached from his own feelings."²⁷

2. 2. 2. *so...that*

This is another form of comparison based on excess or sufficiency which has a remarkable intensive effect. This type of phrase is quite prevalent in *RC*.²⁸ Out of about a hundred examples here are some:

(41) I had so much Presence of Mind as well as Breath left, that seeing my self nearer the Main Land than I expected, I got upon my Feet, and endeavoured to make on towards the Land as fast as I could, before another Wave should return, and take me up again. (RC 44)

(42) ...my Thoughts were so intent upon my Voyage over the Sea in it, that I never once consider'd how I should get it off of the Land...(RC 126)

(43) His Caution was so seasonable, and his Advice so good, that I could not but be very well pleased with his Proposal, as well as I was satisfy'd with his Fidelity. (RC 246)

(44) ...when we had gotten all things in a Readiness to go, the *Spaniard* himself started an Objection, which had so much Prudence in it on one hand, and so much Sincerity on the other hand, that I could not but be very well satisfy'd in it; and by his Advice, put off the Deliverance of his Comrades, for at least half a Year. (RC 245-46)

The first clauses introduced by *so* in (41) and (42) are apparently both intensified depictions of the state of mind of the narrator, while in (43) and (44) he discloses his state of mind in the clauses introduced by *that*: "I could not but be very well pleased with..." and "I could not but be very well satisfy'd in..." What is

intensified in (43) and (44) is the narrator's commentary on Friday's "Caution" and the Spaniard's "Objection" raised against him, rather than his state of mind. These examples seem to suggest that in Defoe's prose an external thing or event is often described less in objective terms, as it is in itself, than in subjective terms, as it is perceived or interpreted by the narrator himself.²⁹

In addition to the four instances discussed above here are quoted a few examples in which emotional intensification is explicit in the clauses introduced by *so*:

(45) I was so amaz'd with the Thing it self, having never felt the like, or discours'd with any one that had, that I was like one dead or stupify'd....
(RC 80)

(46) But the worst was not come yet, the Storm continued with such Fury, that the Seamen themselves acknowledged they had never known a worse. (RC 12)

(47) ...the Rogue was so void of Fear, that he did it purely to make the Bear follow him, and show us some Laugh as he call'd it. (RC 294)

In (45) the narrator's emotion is intensified; whereas both (46) and (47), like (43) and (44), reveal the narrator's momentary feelings towards the Storm and the Rogue (i.e. Friday) in the seemingly objective description.

3. *all...that*

Though instances are not many, *RC* has another form of intensification such as:

(48) ...he look'd up in my Face with all the Tokens of Gratitude and Thankfulness, that could appear in any Countenance.... (RC 239—40)

(49) I wrote next a Letter of Thanks to my two Trustees, with all the Acknowledgement that so much Justice and Honesty call'd for; as for sending them any Present, they were far above having any Occasion of it.
(RC 287)

Closely related to these are some examples with a slightly different syntactical form. They are included here, because they also convey the same kind and quality of intensification on the narrator's part:

(50) ...I took all possible Caution to preserve my Effects, and keep up my Plantation.... (RC 40)

(51) ...he lays his Head flat upon the Ground, close to my Foot, and sets my other Foot upon his Head, as he had done before; and after this, made all the Signs to me of Subjection, Servitude and Submission imaginable, to let me know, how he would serve me as long as he liv'd.... (RC 206)

On scanning both (48) and (51) we may have a momentary feeling that they are both purely descriptive of Friday's behaviour, but as we can understand when we read them again carefully they are subtle reflections of the narrator's emotion.

4. *To the last degree*

It also seems that the phrase *to the last degree* (including, of course, its variation) often tends to be emotionally intensive. Some ten instances are found, of which a few are instanced here:

(52) ...what I had received by the good Instruction of my Father was then worn out by an uninterrupted Series, for 8 Years, of Seafaring Wickedness, and a constant Conversation with nothing but such as were like myself, wicked and profane to the last Degree.... (RC 88)

(53) ...I with-held my Passion, though I was indeed enrag'd to the highest Degree, and going back about twenty Paces, I got behind some Bushes, which held all the way, till I came to the other Tree.... (RC 233)

5. *Utmost*

RC has a dozen instances, in seven of which the *utmost* is in collocation with words denoting an emotional state of mind:³⁰

(54) ...as the Voice continu'd to repeat *Robin Crusoe, Robin Crusoe*, at last I began to wake more perfectly, and was at first dreadfully frightened, and started up in the utmost Consternation.... (RC 142)

Other examples are: "with the utmost Regret" (RC 35)/ "the utmost Enjoyment of human Society" (RC 136)/ "the utmost Despair of ever recovering it" (RC 139)/ "the utmost Affection of my Soul" (RC 165)/ "the utmost Abhorrence and

Detestation" (RC 172)/"the utmost Affection in him to me" (RC 226).

It is interesting to find that *GT* has almost twice as many instances as *RC*. Most of them, needless to say, have intensive and often emotional effect: "the utmost Disapprobation" (Pt. 1, Ch. VII, 70)/"the utmost Distress for Water" (Pt. 11, Ch. 1, 84)/ "the utmost Shame, Confusion and Horror" (Pt. 1V, Ch. XI, 289)/ "the utmost Grief and Despair" (Pt. 1V, Ch. X. 280)/ etc.

6. Numerical expressions

"Few writers on language," Charleston observes, "have pointed out the effect of numerical statements on mood, and vice versa, although Philbrick mentions some points in connection with this fact."³¹ Just a few years ago, however, Pat Rogers in his reliable and stimulating work of reference and guidance made a brief mention in this connection.³² As Charleston points out, *hundred, thousand, million, billion, trillion*, both in the singular and in the plural, are used as highly affective expressions of great size, quantity, number of times, measure, etc.³³ Some varieties have been found in *RC* and *GT*, between which there is little if any disparity found in the frequency of this expression:

(55) ...I told him some of my Story; at the End of which he burst out with a strange kind of Passion, What had I done, says he, that such an unhappy Wretch should come into my Ship? I would not set my Foot in the same Ship with thee again for a Thousand Pounds. This indeed was, as I said, an Excursion of his Spirits which were yet agitated by the Sense of his Loss, and was farther than he could have Authority to go. (RC 15)

(56) ...what would have been my Case if it had not happen'd, Which was an Hundred Thousand to one, that the Ship floated from the Place where she first struck and was driven so near to the Shore that I had time to get all these Things out of her.... (RC 63)

Other examples are: "I might have had Hundreds of them" (RC 86)/ "'twas Ten Thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not" (RC 155)/ "in the midst of so many thousand Dangers" (RC 196)/etc.

Side by side with the cardinal numbers, multiplicative numbers are often used:³⁴

(57) ...if I can express at this Distance the Thoughts I had about me at that time, I was in tenfold more Horror of Mind upon Account of my former Convictions, and the having returned from them to the Resolutions I had wickedly taken at first, than I was at Death it self; and these added to the Terror of the Storm, put me into such a Confusion, that I can by no Words describe it. (RC 11—12)

(58) ...besides these, and what was a thousand times more useful to me, he brought me six clean new Shirts, six very good Neckcloaths, two pair of Gloves, one pair of Shoes, a Hat, and one Pair of Stockings, and a very good Suit of Cloaths of his own.... (RC 274)

Here are some other examples: “ten thousand Times more terrifying” (RC 159)/ “ten times more confounded” (RC 254)/ “it now lay on me to reward him, which I could do a hundredfold” (RC 285)/ “I was twenty Times thinking” (GT Pt. 11, Ch. V, 118)/ “they are Fifty Times more violently bent upon” (GT Pt. 111, Ch. 1V, 177)/ etc. The underlined numerical statement in (55) is said in disgust or annoyance, while those in (56) and (58) are said in wonder and thankfulness. Mention should be made of the underlined phrase in (57) which sounds rather hyperbolic. It is interesting to find that this numerical phrase is in immediate proximity to another type of intensive expression, i.e. “such a Condition, that I can by no Words describe it.” It seems that the narrator, after emphasizing his horror with a numerical expression which is also metaphorical, could hardly find any phrase more intensive than “I can by no Words describe it.”

7. *It is not easy to express...*

Last but not least is a form of expression which is considered to be characteristic of Defoe's narratives when the narrator is under stress.³⁵ My count shows that there are twenty-eight instances in RC as against no more than eight in GT:

(59) It is impossible to express the Astonishment and Confusion of my Thoughts on this Occasion.... (RC 78)

(60) Nothing can describe the Confusion of Thought which I felt when I sunk into the Water.... (RC 44)

(61) It is not easy for any one, who has not been in the like Condition,

to describe or conceive the Consternation of Men in such Circumstances; we knew nothing where we were, or upon what Land it was we were driven, whether an Island or the Main, whether inhabited or not inhabited.... (RC 42)

Other examples are given in quite an abbreviated form: "I was stupid...and cannot describe my Temper" (RC 11)/ "these...put me into such a Condition, that I can by no Words describe it" (RC 12)/ "It is scarce possible to imagine the Consternation" (RC 139)/ "his Countenance was...dreadful, impossible for Words to describe" (RC 87)/ "No one...will expect that I should be able to describe the Horrors of my Soul" (RC 88)/ "I cannot express what a Satisfaction it was to me" (RC 111)/ "the Joy...was such as I cannot describe" (RC 250)/ "My Horror and Astonishment are not to be described" (GT Pt. IV, Ch. 11, 229—30)/ "the Reader can hardly conceive my Astonishment" (GT Pt. 111, Ch. 1, 157)/ etc.

All of these as have been illustrated above are used at intensely emotive moments. But even in these cases it does not seem to be the narrator's habit to elaborate on his state of mind. Kazuhira Yamamoto in his recent article refers to this formula in Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* and observes that Defoe's tendency is to sum up the narrator's emotion in a brief emotive word or phrase such as "dreadful Condition" and concludes that he seldom or never goes on to describe in what manner the narrator was terrified.³⁶ But Yamamoto does not proceed any further. Here Richetti's remarks seem to be worth noticing. He gives us a more detailed interpretation of the expression taking (60) and (61) for example. In (60) he observes "signs of control that keeps us sufficiently in control to read and sufficiently out of control to participate."³⁷ Crusoe "leaves us to insert or to charge what follows with the appropriate turmoil, but the invocation of that turmoil is necessary."³⁸ His recourse to the formula of the impossibility of rendering experience may be regarded as evidence of Crusoe's awareness of the desirability of conveying the emotional immediacy of the situation.³⁹

To round off it may not be beside the point to quote some examples which though syntactically different have much the same effect semantically: "I was most inexpressibly sick in Body" (RC 8)/ "It was an inexpressible Joy to me" (RC 33)/ "his Countenance was most inexpressibly dreadful, impossible for Words

to describe" (RC 87) (this seems pleonastic)/ "to my unspeakable Consolation" (RC 176)/etc.

8. *Final remarks*

It can be argued that Defoe had been exposed to the scientific and rational outlook which dominated during the post Restoration period, and that the plain and simple quality of his prose to a great extent embodies it,⁴⁰ with a necessary caveat that it is not his only style. Therefore keen attention should be paid to the fact that in some way the impersonal and objective quality of the style of his "speech-based prose" is proceeding towards "subjective consciousness and personal interpretation," though his depiction of personal feelings in everyday life has a tendency to be a summary and stereotyped one.

The intensive formulae, discussed in the present paper, are, as was mentioned in the introductory remarks, not peculiar to Defoe. They are, of course, common forms of expression which can be found in any time and in any writer. But it is supposed that a writer's peculiarities in some way or other are partly reflected in the various features of his language, and our interest throughout has been in what forms of intensification Defoe employs and how. In this respect it is hoped that our brief examination of Defoe's language in RC has shown some aspects of his peculiarities reflected in his manipulation (or rather exploitation) of intensive means of expression.

Notes

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1 Britta M. Charleston, *Studies on the Emotive and Affective Means of Expression in Modern English* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1960). Besides her work Stoffel's earlier *Intensives and Down-toners: A Study in English Adverbs* (Heidelberg, 1901) ought to be mentioned. But as its chief concern is with adverbs it seems to be of less relevance here.

2 Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. J. Donald Crowley (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); hereafter cited as RC

3 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,

1965); hereafter cited as *GT*.

4 In any case, there seems as yet to be no work on Defoe's intensive means of expression.

5 Ian A. Gordon, *The Movement of English Prose* (London: Longman, 1966), pp. 133ff. Gordon observes that the speech-based prose finally triumphed in the third quarter of the seventeenth century and remained dominant for the hundred years (1660—1760).

6 Robert Adolph, *The Rise of the Modern Prose Style* (Cambridge: The M. I. T. Press, 1968), pp. 262ff.

7 Charleston, pp. 9—10.

8 Charleston, pp. 9—10.

9 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), pp. 101—02.

10 Ian Watt, "Defoe as Novelist," in *From Dryden to Johnson*, ed. B. Ford (London: Cassell & Co., 1957), p. 199.

11 Tateo Kimura, "Eigo Kyoihyogen to Sono Tokucho," *Karibane*, 8 (1969), pp. 1—10.

12 Charleston, pp. 9—10.

13 Underlines are mine.

14 There is a natural tendency to exaggerate by using the superlative for a very high, instead of the highest, degree. This is sometimes termed the "absolute superlative," sometimes the "elative." Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p. 247.

15 ...apart from such set phrases as *the lower lip, the upper end, the lower* (and *upper*) *classes*, the natural tendency in colloquial speech is to use the superlative in speaking of two, and this is found very frequently in good authors. Otto Jespersen, *A Modern English Grammar*, Part II (1913; rpt. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 204.

16 ...it is worth noting that in Moll's long third sentence, the phrases "as if somebody had thrust me against her" and "as if I had been killed" furnish not facts but Moll's commentary on the facts. G. A. Starr, "Defoe's Prose Style: 1. The Language of Interpretation," *Modern Philology*, 71 (1974), pp. 289—91.

17 Other examples are: "...that ever I heard" (*RC* 28)/ "...that ever I tasted in my Life" (*RC* 86)/ "...that I made at all" (*RC* 104)/ "...that ever I had been in, in all my Life" (*RC* 186)/etc. *GT* similarly has some examples: "...I ever beheld" (Pt. 1, Ch. 111, 40)/ "I ever underwent in that Kingdom" (Pt. 11, Ch. V, 121)/etc.

18 Ian Watt, *Rise*, pp. 14—15.

19 G. A. Starr, pp. 289—91.

20 Randolph Quirk et al., *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 287.

21 This type of comparison is discussed in the following section.

22 Randolph Quirk et al., pp. 773—74.

23 *Such...as* as illustrated in the following has a similar kind of intensive and often emotional effect.

...now being to enter into a melancholy Relation of a Scene of silent Life, such perhaps as was never heard of in the World before, I shall take it from its Beginning, and continue it in its Order. (*RC* 63)

...the Ground I stood on shook three Times at about eight Minutes Distance, with three such Shocks, as would have overturn'd the strongest Building that could be suppos'd to have stood on the Earth.... (RC 80)

But it seems advisable that, as Quisk et al. say (p. 776), we should classify such clauses as relative rather than as comparative.

24 The passage he cites for his discussion is:

I had full hold of her watch, but giving a great jostle as if somebody had thrust me against her, and in the juncture giving the watch a fair pull, I found it would not come, so I let it go that moment, and cried as if I had been killed, that somebody had trod upon my foot, and that there was certainly pickpockets there, for somebody or other had given a pull at my watch. *Moll Flanders*, in *Romances and Narratives of Daniel Defoe*, ed. George A. Aitken (London, 1902), 8: 19.

25 G. A. Starr, pp. 290—91.

26 G. A. Starr, p. 278.

27 Robert Adolph, p. 284. G. A. Starr calls Adolph's view on Defoe's language into question however valid they seem to be with respect to the evolution of seventeenth century as a whole.

28 It is also the case with Defoe's other narratives.

29 G. A. Starr, p. 280.

30 Instances which have little intensive effect are rarely to be found. Here is one:

...I put out, and Rowing or Padling the Canoe along the Shore, I came at last to the utmost Point of the Island on that Side....(RC 189)

It seems that the "utmost" here is not in the sense of 'to, of, the greatest, highest, degree' but of 'situated at the farthest extreme or limit.' (cf. *The Universal English Dictionary*, ed. H. C. Wyld, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961)

31 Charleston, p. 204.

32 Pat Rogers, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp. 122—23.

33 Charleston, p. 208.

34 Charleston, p. 209.

35 John J. Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 35—36.

36 Kazuhira Yamamoto, "An Essay on Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*," *The Hitotsubashi Review*, 88, No. 6 (December 1982), 63.

37 Richetti, pp. 36—37.

38 Richetti, p. 37.

39 Richetti, p. 36. With respect to this type Richetti's conclusion is worth noticing that what Crusoe is in fact doing is establishing a narrative point between the world of experience and the world of narrative.

40 It is interesting that Defoe himself in his scattered remarks seems to have made allusion to his own view of style. See, for example, his 'Of Academies' in *An Essay upon Several Projects*, 1702, pp. 228ff., as quoted in Susie I. Tucker, *English Examined* (1961; rpt. Archon Books, 1974), p. 59.

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