This article develops an analysis of verbless exclamative clauses in Romance; in this type of reduced clause the predicative complement precedes the subject and is separated from it by an intonational break, while the missing verb is interpreted as a copula. After the discussion of some peculiar properties of evaluative predicates, the crosslinguistic interpretive hallmarks of verbless exclamatives are described on the basis of data from Italian, Spanish and French. It will be argued that the absence of a wh-modifier in this structure corresponds to the speaker’s intention to establish a relation between the subject and an evaluative predicate. The fact that the property expressed by the predicate must belong to the individual-level category follows from its being presented as an intrinsic feature of the subject. Moreover, the fact that comparatives and relative superlatives are generally excluded from verbless exclamatives witnesses that no comparison with other entities is allowed, as this would restrict the validity of the evaluation.1

1. This paper develops some aspects of Munaro (2005a), a preliminary descriptive work I carried out on this topic. I owe thanks to Adriana Belletti and Paola Benincà for discussing various aspects of the analysis and to Laura Brugè and Maria Martínez-Atienza for reading and commenting on a previous version of this article. I also wish to thank Cassian Braconnier for providing the judgements on some of the French data. The usual disclaimers apply.
1. Introduction

The illocutionary function of the exclamative clause is to present a propositional content—or a part of it—as somehow unexpected or noteworthy. The act of exclamation can affect the event as a whole, like in (1a), or focus on a single constituent displaced in initial position, like in (1b):

(1)  a. Gianni ha superato numerosi esami!
     ‘John passed many exams!’
    b. Quanti esami ha superato Gianni!
     ‘How many exams John passed!’

In this article I will focus on some syntactic and semantic properties of a particular type of exclamative clause attested in Romance and exemplified in (2a). It is a kind of reduced clause where the missing verb is interpreted as a silent copula; the predicative complement linearly precedes the subject and is separated from it by a slight intonational break, rendered graphically by means of a comma:

(2)  a. Noioso, il tuo amico!
     ‘Boring, your friend!’
    b. Che noioso che è il tuo amico!
     ‘How boring your friend is!’
    c. Il tuo amico è (proprio) noioso!
     ‘Your friend is (really) boring!’

From an interpretive point of view, (2a) corresponds superficially to a canonical exclamative focussing on a predicative complement introduced by che, like in (2b). The linear order of the elements entering the predicative relation is inverted with respect to the order found in the declarative copular clause (2c).

The article is organized as follows: in section 2 some relevant properties of evaluative predicates are presented; section 3 and section 4 are devoted to the discussion of some crosslinguistic properties of verbless exclamatives; section 5 aims at

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2. The linear order found in (2a) is generally analyzed as deriving from the preposing of the predicate to a structural position higher than the one occupied by the subject (cf. Vinet (1991) and Hernanz and Suñer (1999)); that conclusion is forced adopting Kayne's (1994) antisymmetric framework.
highlighting the relevance of the presence vs absence of the \textit{wh}-item in triggering the relevant interpretation; finally, in section 6 some of the previously described properties are shown to follow from the proposed analysis.

2. Evaluative predicates

Milner (1978) identifies a class of adjectives and nouns—labelled here \textit{evalutative}—which are primarily, though not exclusively, used as predicates in structures like (2a).

2.1. Evaluative adjectives

Milner (1978) distinguishes two classes of adjectives.

The first class includes \textit{referential} adjectives that are neutral from the affective-expressive point of view and cannot be used in exclamative contexts. For instance, it is commonly assumed that the virtual reference of the colour adjective \textit{red} is formed by the class of entities endowed with the common property of ‘being red’; therefore, a proposition like (3a) is interpreted as stating that the element $X$ belongs to the set of red elements, while its negative form (3b) is strictly symmetrical as it indicates that $X$ does not belong to that set. Moreover, these adjectives can be used restrictively to isolate a subclass of elements from within a larger set (the current interpretation of definite DPs, like (3c)):

(3)  
\begin{enumerate}
  \item $X$ is \textit{red}
  \item $X$ is not \textit{red}
  \item The \textit{red} books
\end{enumerate}

The second class includes \textit{evaluative} adjectives (like \textit{divine}, \textit{wonderful}, \textit{marvellous}, or, negatively, \textit{horrible}, \textit{tremendous}, \textit{abominable}) which have a strong affective connotation and are appropriate in exclamatives. The sentence in (4), where one of these adjectives is used as attribute, cannot be interpreted as stating that $X$ belongs to the set of \textit{wonderful} entities:

(4) $X$ is \textit{wonderful}
As a consequence, utterances in which an evaluative adjective is attributed to an entity functioning as subject cannot be assigned a truth value.\footnote{Notice that the adjectives belonging to this second class coincide with (a subset of) the adjectives which are defined \textit{predicative} (as opposed to \textit{referential}) in Giorgi and Longobardi (1990).}

According to Milner, the interpretive peculiarities of this second class of adjectives are particularly evident in negative contexts and quotation contexts. Evaluative adjectives are not easily used in negative sentences:

(5)  
\begin{itemize}
  \item a.  \# Ce vin n’est pas extraordinaire.  
    ‘This wine is not extraordinary’
  \item b.  \# La perspective n’est pas excitante.
    ‘The perspective is not exciting’
\end{itemize}

In (5) the presence of negation favours an interpretation in which the entity functioning as subject of the clause is assigned the opposite property; the context remains evaluative, but the orientation is inverted, so that the interpretation becomes \textit{devaluative}. To the extent that these sentences are acceptable, they convey an ironical shade of meaning, and their interpretation is widened with respect to the one which would derive from the literal meaning.\footnote{Conversely, in sentences containing devaluative adjectives, the presence of negation induces an interpretation of positive evaluation:}

If used in quotation contexts, these adjectives entail the speaker’s agreement on their evaluative function. The sentence in (6a) is therefore contradictory; by introducing an operator which restores the distance between the speaker and the evaluative term—like inverted commas—the value of the term is neutralized, and the coherence of the discourse is restored (cf. (6b-c)):

(i)  
\begin{itemize}
  \item a.  Il vino che abbiamo comprato non è cattivo.
    ‘The wine we bought is not bad’
  \item b.  Il suo comportamento non è stato sgradevole.
    ‘His behaviour was not rude’
\end{itemize}
Finally, there does not seem to be—beyond a simple and naive bipartition between laudatory and devaluative adjectives—a clearly expressible difference among the various evaluative adjectives; this semantic continuity has the effect that the substitution of a term by another does not substantially change the evaluative force of the utterance.

2.2. Evaluative nouns

Milner introduces a parallel distinction between noms ordinaires and noms de qualité; what Milner defines as noms de qualité are actually nominalized adjectives or nouns which are connected morphologically and semantically to an adjectival basis.

While ordinary nouns have a classificatory function, like referential adjectives, evaluative nouns can also have other uses. First, they can be employed anaphorically, in contexts where their reference is determined by a nominal antecedent:

(7) Jean a fermé la porte; l’idiot avait froid.
   ‘John closed the door; the idiot was cold’

Moreover, in predicative contexts they may have an unavoidable pragmatic effect; (8a) is not parallel to (8b), as it is necessarily interpreted as an insult:

(8) a. Tu es un imbécile.
   ‘You are an imbecile’
   b. Tu es un professeur.
   ‘You are a professor’
The peculiarity of evalutative nouns is again clear in quotation contexts. According to Milner, in (9a), under the de dicto reading ce salaud de Paul is reported literally as pronounced by Jean, while under the de re reading ce salaud de is introduced by the speaker as a personal comment. However, under the first reading, there is not the further ambiguity found with ordinary nouns, as in this case the speaker necessarily shares Jean’s judgement; this is clear by the contradictory nature of (9b), given the addition:

(9)  
  a. Jean m’a dit que ce salaud de Paul était arrivé en retard hier.  
  b. # Bien que ce garçon charmant soit en général à l’heure, Jean m’a dit que ce salaud de Paul était arrivé en retard hier.  
    ‘(Although that gentle boy is generally punctual,) John told me that Paul, that rascal, had arrived late yesterday’

This witnesses the impossibility of using an evalutative noun without expressing its intrinsically affective component.

Finally, as long as their performative property is preserved, evalutative nouns are reciprocally substitutable without a significant change in the interpretation of the clause.5

3. Crosslinguistic properties of verbless exclamatives

3.1. Italian

As pointed out by Benincà (1995), the preposed predicative complement in Italian can be an adjective or a whole DP, optionally introduced by che, like in (10), or a noun, obligatorily introduced by che, like in (11):

(10)  
  a. (Che) triste, questa storia!  
    ‘(How) sad, this story!’  
  b. (Che) storia triste / triste storia, quella che mi racconti!  
    ‘(What a) sad story / story sad, the one you’re telling me!’

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5. Consider for example predicates like cretino, idiota, imbecille, scemo, stupido in Italian.
(11) a. Che divertimento, questo gioco!
   ‘What fun, this game!’
   b. Che imbroglione, il tuo collega!
   ‘What a cheat, your colleague!’

The interpretation of these sentences tends to be temporally bound to the utterance time, like in (12), which can be taken to express a generic present in statements of general validity, like in (13):\(^6\)

(12) a. (Che) avvincente, (che è) questo romanzo!
   ‘(How) enthralling, this novel (is)!’
   b. (Che) invadente, (che è) il tuo amico!
   ‘(How) intrusive, your friend (is)!’

(13) a. (Che) seccante, (che è) perdere una coincidenza!
   ‘(How) annoying (it is), missing a connection!’
   b. (Che) rilassante, (che è) passare una giornata al mare!
   ‘(How) relaxing (it is), spending one day on the beach!’

As expected, in this structure adjectives and nouns of the evaluative class are often used:\(^7\)

\(^6\) However, as Benincà points out, the background knowledge shared by speaker and addressee may allow for a temporal interpretation different from the present indicative, like in the following examples:

(i) a. Che gentile, (che è stato) il tuo amico!
   ‘How kind, your friend (has been)!’
   b. Che lunga, (che è stata) la commedia (ieri sera)!
   ‘How long, the play (has been last night)!’

\(^7\) Non graduable adjectives, like relational adjectives, are instead excluded:

(i) a. *Cranica, questa scatola!
   ‘Cranial, this box!’
   b. *Fotografica, la macchina che hanno comprato!
   ‘Photographic, the device they have bought!’
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(14) a. Straordinario, questo vino!
‘Extraordinary, this wine!’
b. Geniale, questa idea!
‘Brilliant, this idea!’
c. Eccitante, la prospettiva che mi descrivi!
‘Exciting, the perspective you are describing to me!’

(15) a. Che pigrone, il tuo gatto!
‘How lazy, your cat!’
b. Un genietto, quel bambino!
‘A little genius, that child!’

(16) Un vero idiota, Gianni, (ad accettare quella proposta)!
‘A real idiot, John, (to accept that proposal)!”

An infinitival clause can appear as subject, like in (13) above, or as predicate, like in (17):

(17) a. Assolutamente da vedere, quel film!
‘Absolutely to be seen, that film!’
b. Da bocciare senza rimorsi, quello studente!
‘To be failed remorselessly, that student!’

In this case the infinitive is preceded by the preposition *da* and has a deontic interpretation.

3.2. **Spanish**

The structure under analysis has been described for Spanish by Hernanz and Suñer (1999), who underline that these sentences have a deictic temporal interpretation—referring to the speaker and the utterance time—as they are generally uttered as a

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c. *Tedesca, quell’invasione dell’Austria!*
‘German, that invasion of Austria!’
reaction to a given situation or as a reply to someone’s words. The preposed predicate can be adjectival or nominal.

Adjectival predicates can appear alone or modified by the emphatic article *un*, by the *wh*-item *que* or by lexical elements favouring an evaluative reading:

(18) a. ¡Simpático, tu amigo!
   ‘Nice, your friend!’
   b. ¡Genial, tu nuevo apartamento!
   ‘Fantastic, your new flat!’

(19) a. ¡Un listillo, tu primo!
   ‘A cunning person, your cousin!’
   b. ¡Qué guapo, tu hijo!
   ‘How handsome, your son!’

(20) a. ¡Valiente miedica, este amigo tuyo!
   ‘Valuable chicken, this friend of yours!’
   b. ¡Muy ricos, estos calamares!
   ‘Very rich, these squids!’

When the preposed predicate is a noun, it must be accompanied by a quantificational element, like the emphatic article *un* or the exclamative marker *qué*:

(21) a. ¡Un tirano, tu jefe!
   ‘A tyrant, your boss!’
   b. ¡Un bocazas, el capitán Haddock!
   ‘A foul-mouthed person, the capitan Haddock!’
   c. ¡Qué insensatez confiar nuestra seguridad a la protección de una potencia extranjera!
   ‘What a nonsense to entrust our security to the protection of a foreign country!’

Ungrammatical examples become acceptable through the insertion of evaluative modifiers to the nominal predicate:
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(22) a. *¡Una soprano, la Callas!
   ‘A soprano, the Callas!’
   b. ¡Toda una soprano, la Callas!
   All a soprano, the Callas
   ‘An excellent soprano, Callas!’

(23) a. *¡Un lingüista, Chomsky!
   ‘A linguist, Chomsky!’
   b. ¡Un lingüista excepcional, Chomsky!
   ‘An exceptional linguist, Chomsky!’

(24) a. *¡Una mesa, este mueble!
   ‘A table, this piece of furniture!’
   b. ¡Una señora mesa, este mueble!
   A lady table, this piece-of-furniture
   ‘An excellent table, this piece of furniture!’

Predicates not expressing an evaluation—in particular relational adjectives and adjectives denoting objective properties—are instead excluded.8

8. As witnessed by the following examples (the ones in (ii) are taken from Hernanz (2001)):

   (i) a. *¡Eléctrica, tu máquina de afeitar!
   ‘Electric, your meat slicer!’
   b. *¡Mineral, esta agua!
   ‘Mineral, this water!’

   (ii) a. *¡Románicas, las iglesias de Segovia!
   ‘Romanic, the churches of Segovia!’
   b. *¡Jurásico, este parque!
   ‘Jurassic, this park!’
3.3. French

French verbless exclamatives have been described by Vinet (1991), who observes that the predicate—be it adjectival or nominal—must express a personal evaluation of the speaker, pointing out a noteworthy state of things:

(25)  
   a. Formidable, cette viande!  
       ‘Fantastic, this dish!’  
   b. Etonnante, cette histoire!  
       ‘Astonishing, this story!’

(26)  
   a. Un génie, ce petit!  
       ‘A genius, this child!’  
   b. Un imbécile, ce Rodolphe!  
       ‘An imbecile, this Rodolphe!’

Vinet also points out that nouns indicating a function or a profession are generally unacceptable as they note a fact rather than express a personal judgement; however, as we have seen above for Spanish, even these nouns become acceptable if accompanied by an adjective or a relative clause expressing a form of appreciation:

(27)  
   a. *Une linguiste, cette femme!  
       ‘A linguist, this woman!’  
   b. Une linguiste étrange, cette femme!  
       ‘A strange linguist, this woman!’

(28)  
   a. *Le directeur, ce type!  
       ‘The director, this guy!’  
   b. Le directeur qu’il nous fallait, ce type!  
       ‘The director that we needed, this guy!’

An ungrammatical structure can be made acceptable also through the addition of a degree modifier.\(^9\)

\(^9\) Again, we do not find adjectives which cannot be used predicatively, as shown by (i), or classifying adjectives describing objectively a state of things, like in (ii):
(29) a. *Clair, cette eau!
   ‘Clear, this water!’
b. Beaucoup trop claire, cette eau!
   ‘Much too clear, this water!’

Again, the predicate can be a deontic infinitival clause used with an adjectival function:

(30) a. A surveiller, cet jeune homme!
   ‘To be watched, this young man!’
b. A suivre, cette affaire!
   ‘To be followed up, this business!’

Vinet correctly observes that the silent verb can be interpreted not only as be, but also as have; however, even in this case an evaluative interpretation must be induced through the insertion of appropriate lexical items:

(31) a. (Elle a) la réplique vive, cette femme!
   ‘(She has) a quick retort, this woman!’
b. (Il a) un dynamisme incroyable, ce type!
   ‘(He has) an incredible dynamism, this guy!’
c. Un nez extraordinaire, ce Cléopâtre!
   ‘An extraordinary nose, this Cleopatra!’

(i) a. *Solaire, ce système!
   ‘Solar, this system!’
b. *Présumé, ce voleur!
   ‘Presumed, this thief!’

(ii) a. *Marocaine, cette guerre contre l’Algerie!
   ‘Moroccan, this war against Algeria!’
b. *Cassé, ce verre!
   ‘Broken, this glass!’
c. *Dénombrable, cet ensemble!
   ‘Enumerable, this set!’
Adopting Benveniste’s (1966) and Kayne’s (1989) analysis of avoir as an abstract form of être, it is expected that the auxiliary have —qua copular verb—can remain phonetically unrealized in some contexts.

4. Two further interesting properties

4.1. The I-level vs S-level distinction

Vinet (1991) underlines that in French only predicates expressing permanent or inherent properties can occur in a verbless exclamative, and not predicates referring to a temporary situation; the two types reflect the distinction between individual-level and stage-level predicates first proposed by Kratzer (1995). The predicate can acquire a character of permanence—thereby making the sentence acceptable—through the insertion of a lexical element which—functioning as aspectual marker—triggers a generic interpretation:

(32) a. *Disponible, ce papa!
   ‘Available, this dad!’
   b. Jamais disponible, ce papa!
   ‘Never available, this dad!’

(33) a. *Les memes, ces mecs!
   ‘The same, these guys!’
   b. Tous les memes, ces mecs!
   ‘All the same, these guys!’

Similarly, Hernanz and Suñer (1999) point out for Spanish that the predicate must express properties not undergoing change or evolution, so that no stage-level predicates are admitted; still, the insertion of elements which can modify or limit the transitory character of the predicate can make the sequence grammatical:

(34) a. *¡Cansado, tu jefe!
   ‘Tired, your boss!’
   b. ¡Eternamente cansado, tu jefe!
   ‘Eternally tired, your boss!’
(35) a. *¡Averiado, el maldito ascensor!
   ‘Out of order, the damned lift!’
   b. ¿Siempre averiado, el maldito ascensor!
   ‘Always out of order, the damned lift!’

The same restriction seems to hold for Italian, where non-evaluative predicates can appear provided an adequate lexical item is added that turns the stage-level predicate into a permanent (i.e., individual-level) property:

(36) a. *Di corsa, i giovani di oggi!
   ‘In a hurry, nowadays young people!’
   b. Tutti di corsa, i giovani di oggi!
   ‘All in a hurry, nowadays young people!’

(37) a. *Spento, questo computer!
   ‘Turned off, this computer!’
   b. Sempre spento, questo computer!
   ‘Always turned off, this computer!’

Graduable and evaluative adjectives can generally be interpreted as inherent properties of the subject, in particular if there are lexical elements favouring that interpretation, like in (38b):

(38) a. Gentile, Carlo!
   ‘Kind, Carlo!’
   b. Sempre gentile con tutti, Carlo!
   ‘Always kind to everybody, Carlo!’
   c. Gentile, Carlo, ad accompagnarti a casa!
   ‘Kind, Carlo, to accompany you home!’

They can however be interpreted as properties contingent on a given situation as well, especially if the context is made explicit, like in (38c).
4.2. A restriction on degree

As it could be expected in an evaluative context, the adjectival predicate can appear in the (absolute) superlative form:

(39)  a. Simpaticissimo, tuo cugino!
     ‘Nicest, your cousin!’
    b. Molto gustosa, questa minestra!
     ‘Very tasty, this soup!’

Rather surprisingly though, if the adjective is in the relative superlative or in the comparative form, there is a considerable degradation in the grammaticality:

(40)  a. ??Il più simpatico (dei tuoi parenti), tuo cugino!
     ‘The nicest (among your relatives), your cousin!’
    b. ??Più simpatico (di Gianni), tuo cugino!
     ‘Nicer (than John), your cousin!’

According to Hernanz and Suñer (1999), the fact that verbless exclamatives are interpreted on the basis of contextual factors has as a consequence that the degree quantification of the predicate must be grammatically fixed (otherwise it would not be appropriately limited). The superlative is therefore grammatical because in this case it is possible to fix the right degree of the relevant property; this conclusion is supported by the fact that adjectives which are normally not admitted in this structure can appear in the absolute superlative form or preceded by adverbs functioning as degree quantifiers which contribute an affective component:10

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10. According to the authors, this is true also of relative superlatives, as witnessed by the following examples:

(i)   a. ¡De lo más interesante que he visto, esta película!
     ‘The most interesting that I have seen, this film!’
    b. ¡La mejor del verano, esta novela!
     ‘The best of the summer, this novel!’
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(41) a. *¡Limpias, las copas!
   ‘Clean, the glasses!’
b. ¡Limpísimas, las copas!
   ‘Cleanest, the glasses!’

(42) a. *¡Pequeñas, las iglesias de Segovia!
   ‘Small, the churches of Segovia!’
b. ¡Super pequeñas, las iglesias de Segovia!
   ‘Super small, the churches of Segovia!’

(43) a. *¡Largo, el discurso del decano!
   ‘Long, the speech of the dean!’
b. ¡Espantosamente largo, el discurso del decano!
   ‘Awfully long, the speech of the dean!’

The ungrammaticality produced by the comparative is explained by the hypothesis that it does not permit to fix the right degree of the property expressed by the predicate:

(44) a. *¡Más interesante, esta película!
   ‘More interesting, this film!’
b. *¡Mejor, esta novela!
   ‘Better, this novel!’

As for French, as we have seen above, the adjectives most often used in this structure are the evaluative ones.\(^\text{11}\)

However, for some speakers the relative superlative does not yield fully grammatical structures when the subject is not heavy enough:

(ii) a. (?)¡El más interesante de tus libros, este! / \(^\text{ok}\) este trabajo!
   ‘The most interesting of your books, this (work)!’
b. (?)¡El más simpático de tus compañeros, Juan! / \(^\text{ok}\) este chico sevillano!
   ‘The nicest of your friends, Juan / this guy from Sevilla!’

\(^{11}\) They can be possibly modified by intensifiers like \textit{si} and \textit{tellement}, as pointed out by Vinet (1991):
(45) a. Admirable, son film!
   ‘Admirable, his movie!’
   b. Incroyable, ce spectacle!
   ‘Incredible, this show!’

However, the restriction on comparatives and relative superlatives holds for French as well:

(46) a. ??Plus interessant, cet article!
   ‘More interesting, this article!’
   b. ??Plus long, ce roman!
   ‘Longer, this novel!’

(47) a. *Le plus intéressant, cet article!
   ‘The most interesting, this article!’
   b. *Le plus long, ce roman!
   ‘The longest, this novel!’

In the next section I will try to determine the role played by the wh-modifier in verbless exclamatives.

5. On the role of the wh-item

Hernanz (2001) correctly underlines that the structure under analysis reveals the existence of an—a priori unexpected—correlation between the semantic properties of evaluative adjectives and the syntactic behaviour of wh-elements, as both these types of elements can introduce a verbless exclamative:

(i) a. Si merveilleuse, cette Hélène!
    ‘So marvellous, this Helene!’
   b. Tellement adorable, cet enfant!
    ‘So adorable, this child!’
(48) a. ¡Fantástica, esta película!
   ‘Fantastic, this film!’
b. ¡Qué fantástica, esta película!
   ‘How fantastic, this film!’

According to the author, the well-formedness of (48) is due to semantic factors; more precisely, it is the evaluative character of the predicate that licenses its presence in initial position in these constructions, as witnessed more clearly by (49):

(49) a. ¡Increíble/impresionante, esta historia!
   ‘Incredible/upsetting, this story!’
b. ¡Sorprendente/terrible, el discurso del decano!
   ‘Surprising/terrible, the speech of the dean!’
c. ¡Fantásticas/maravillosas, las iglesias de Segovia!
   ‘Wonderful, the churches of Segovia!’

Hernanz assumes that evaulutative terms encode semantically what in other cases is expressed through explicit morphological markings; their syntactic behaviour in verbless exclamatives is therefore motivated by the same factors which underlie the preposing of constituents endowed with an exclamative feature codified by the wh-element qué.12

(50) a. ¡Qué largo, el discurso del decano!
   ‘How long, the speech of the dean!’
b. ¡Qué pequeña, la iglesia de tu pueblo!
   ‘How small, the church of your village!’
c. ¡Qué limpias, las copas!
   ‘How clean, the glasses!’

12. So, according to Hernanz, the fact that the predicate occurs in initial position has the same explanation in (49) and (50), the only difference being that in (50) the relevant feature manifests itself in the morpheme -qu- of qué, while in (49) it is induced by the affective character of the evaluative term. This view is rejected by Alonso-Cortés (1999), who claims that the simple preposing of the predicate in (49) is not sufficient to express an evaluation or a quantification; therefore the examples in (49), unlike the ones in (50), cannot be considered exclamative clauses.
In Italian, if the predicate is an adjective, the introductory wh-element che can be dropped; the (exclamative) illocutionary force of (51b) can be expressed without resorting to the overt realization of a wh-feature, and the interpretive properties and function of the wh-item seem to be taken over by the adjective:

(51) a. Che interessante, questo libro!
   ‘How interesting, this book!’
 b. Interessante, questo libro!
   ‘Interesting, this book!’

As for French, unlike Italian and Spanish, it does not allow the preposed adjective to be preceded either by que or by other interrogative elements, as pointed out by Vinet (1991).\textsuperscript{13}

(52) a. *Qu’étonnante, cette histoire!
   ‘How astonishing, this story!’
 b. *Comme merveilleux, cet enfant!
   ‘How wonderful, this child!’

Obenauer (1994) identifies a basic semantic property of exclamative wh-phrases: differently from what happens in wh-interrogatives, in wh-exclamatives the value of the variable is determined, and situated outside the pertinent domain. This view has been further developed by Portner and Zanuttini (2000), who identify—among others—the two following properties of exclamatives: (a) factivity, i.e. the fact that exclamatives presuppose their propositional content; (b) scalar implicature, i.e. the fact that exclamatives indicate that some entity has a property which falls at the extreme end of some contextually given scale of properties; this extreme quality may give rise to the feeling that the fact expressed is surprising or noteworthy in some way.

\textsuperscript{13} The same holds for nominal predicates:

(i) a. *Combien un genie, ce Charlie!
   ‘How genial, this Charlie!’
 b. *Ce qu’un excellent artiste, ce Renoir!
   ‘What an excellent artist, this Renoir!’
Looking closer at the minimal pair in (51), it is easy to recognize that the difference between (51a) and (51b) does not simply lie in the phonetic (non)-realization of the *wh*-item, as the two sentences are not synonymous; more precisely, in (51a) the scalar implicature effect is much stronger than in (51b); in this sense, (51a) is closer to (53) than (51b):\(^{14}\)

(53) Interessantissimo, questo libro!
   ‘Very interesting, this book!’

In (53), the *extremeness* of the predicate is expressed by the prototypical morphological template of high degree, the superlative, thereby triggering the scalar implicature effect induced in (51a) by the *wh*-item. This effect is minimally present in (51b), where it is due to the mere presence of an evaluative predicate, which is compatible with the scalar component of the semantics of exclamatives. Indeed, what characterizes (51a)—as opposed to (51b)—is the fact that the speaker shares with the addressee a previous common evaluation of the relevant property, that is, they share a generic appreciation and agree on the fact that the article is interesting to some extent; simply, the speaker intends to express an emphatic confirmation of this. Differently, in (51b), by using the bare adjective, the speaker introduces a property of the subject, involving the addressee into a first evaluation, that the addressee may not share.

If the predicate is a bare noun, the omission of *che* requires either the insertion of semantically emptied adjectives like *bel(lo)-gran(de)* or the presence of the indefinite article:

(54) a. Che/Gran divertimento, guardare la TV!
   ‘What/Great fun, watching the TV!’
b. Un divertimento, guardare la TV!
   ‘A fun, watching the TV!’

\(^{14}\) The hypothesis that the *wh*-item and the superlative perform the same function in this structure gains support from the fact that *che* is not compatible with an adjective in the superlative degree:

(i) *Che interessantissimo, questo libro!*
   ‘How very interesting, this book!’
(55)  a. Che/Bello spreco, usare questa carta!
    ‘What/Nice waste, using this paper!’
    b. Uno spreco, usare questa carta!
    ‘A waste, using this paper!’

It is tempting to assert that the relation between (54a)/(55a) and (54b)/(55b) reflects the one between (51a) and (51b), with the adjectives gran and bel performing the same function as che. 15

The present analysis predicts the oddity of examples like (56b)—as opposed to the full grammaticality of (57b)—where the context suggests that there must be a shared background of evaluation between speaker and hearer:

(56)  a. Che simpatica, la ragazza che abbiamo conosciuto tre anni fa in Grecia!
    b. # Simpatica, la ragazza che abbiamo conosciuto tre anni fa in Grecia!
    ‘(How) nice, the girl we met in Greece three years ago!’

(57)  a. Che gentile, la ragazza che abbiamo conosciuto ieri sera; come si chiama?
    b. Gentile, la ragazza che abbiamo conosciuto ieri sera; come si chiama?
    ‘(How) nice, the girl we met last night; what is her name?’

The hypothesis that the similarity between (51a) and (51b) is only superficial is confirmed by the fact that the two examples can be paraphrased—with the overt realization of the copula—as (58a) and (59a) respectively; interestingly, in the two cases the copula surfaces on different sides of the preposed predicate:

15. This is confirmed by the fact that (54) and (55) can be rephrased as follows:

(i)  a. (Che) divertente, guardare la TV!
    ‘(How) amusing, watching the TV!’
    b. (Che) antieconomico, usare questa carta!
    ‘(How) uneconomical, using this paper!’

Incidentally, this also shows that the semantic contribution of the nominal predicate can be reduced to the one of the corresponding adjective (though the reverse is not always true).
(58) a. [Che interessante], (che è) questo libro!
   ‘How interesting, (that is) this book!’
   b. Questo libro è [molto interessante]!
   ‘This book is very interesting!’

(59) a. [(E’) interessante], questo libro!
   ‘(Is) interesting, this book!’
   b. Questo libro [è interessante]!
   ‘This book is interesting!’

This suggests that the basic copular structures from which the two examples derive are (58b) and (59b) respectively, i.e., that the preposed predicate does not include the (empty) copula in the former case, but that it does in the latter. So in (59a), unlike in (58a), what is highlighted and brought to the attention of the addressee through preposing is precisely the cluster formed by (unrealized) copula and predicate, hence, ultimately, the relation which is being established between subject and predicate.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{16}\) As for the exact landing site of the preposed predicate, I will leave a detailed investigation of this issue for future research, limiting myself to suggesting that it could be identified with the specifier position of \textit{FocusP}; on the idea that this position can be activated in exclamatives the reader is referred to Gutiérrez-Rexach (2001) and Munaro (2005b). That the pragmatic function of the structure with the bare adjective is to submit the relation between subject and predicate to the attention of the addressee encouraging his approval is confirmed by the fact that only in this case a tag like \textit{vero} can be added to the verbless exclamative:

(i) a. Interessante, questo libro, (vero?)
   b. Che interessante, questo libro, (# vero?)
   ‘(How) interesting, this book, (isn’t it?)’

This contrast might be interpreted as suggesting that (ia), unlike (ib), is not a real exclamative, as claimed by Alonso-Cortés (1999).
6. Deriving the relevant properties

In the previous section it has been argued that in a verbless exclamative in which the predicate is not modified by a *wh*-item the speaker is simply interested in stating an relation between the entity functioning as subject and an evaluative predicate; this entails that there is no real commitment of the speaker as to the degree in which the relevant property is present, and that such property is situated at a point just above the standard one in a contextually given scale of default expectations. This approach seems to provide an account for both the facts described in section 4 above.

First, the act of evaluation realized through a verbless exclamative without realization of a *wh*-item presents the property expressed by the predicate as an intrinsic feature of the subject; we therefore expect such property to be a permanent one, that is, to be of the *individual*-level type, as witnessed by the oddity of (60b) as opposed to the full grammaticality of (60a), where the *wh*-item is realized:

(60)  
   a. Che sporco, quel tavolo!
   b. # Sporco, quel tavolo!
   ‘(How) dirty, that table!’

Second, given that the relevant property is presented as an intrinsic feature of the subject, we can also predict that no comparison with other entities is allowed, as this would restrict the validity of the evaluation to a transitory situation; this may account for the fact that comparatives (and—less uniformly—relative superlatives) are generally excluded from verbless exclamatives.

The analysis proposed here sheds new light on the contribution of the *wh*-item in the clause typing strategy of exclamatives; in particular, it reveals that, unlike what is commonly assumed, despite the superficial similarity of the two structures in (51), the exact interpretation of verbless exclamatives is driven by the presence *vs* absence of a *wh*-modifier to the preposed predicate.
References


