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# *Inanimate interrogatives and settlement patterns in Francophone Louisiana*[1]

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ABSTRACT

In the light of the extensive dialect leveling found in Francophone Louisiana, the suggestion made in Byers (1988) is a particularly interesting one, that the geographical distribution of *qui* and *quoi*, both meaning 'what', reflects the differential settlement histories of early 18th century Creoles, and Acadians, respectively. In this article I document these two interrogative patterns as to form and locales of attestation, and I explore the evidence for Byer's claim, showing that a strong case can be made by considering not only settlement history but also the interrogatives of Louisiana Creole, the origins of which arguably predate the arrival of the Acadians in Louisiana.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

My purposes in this paper are to lay out the system of interrogative pronouns (particularly concerning *qui* and *quoi*, both meaning 'what') and their geographical distribution in Francophone Louisiana; and secondly, to explore whether the geographical patterns which emerge can be attributed to the settlement history of Creoles versus Acadians in the various regions as tentatively suggested in Byers (1988).

By way of background, a few words must be said about the complex linguistic situation of Louisiana.[2] The term Colonial French (ColF) is sometimes used to refer to the French spoken by the early eighteenth-century colonists in Louisiana (the '[white] Creoles'). This population included resident military officers and troops, Canadians, and French immigrants, including convicted army deserters, smugglers, prostitutes, vagabonds, and poorhouse inmates (Klingler, 2003: 4; Marshall, 1996). Joining these groups were German speakers brought to Louisiana by John Law in 1721, who settled along the Mississippi on what became known as the German

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[2] More complete presentations of the history and issues can be found in Marshall (1996) and Brown (1996). For the linguistic varieties involved Picone (2003) is a very insightful discussion.

Coast. They would ultimately be assimilated into Francophone language and culture. There are no descriptions of the speech of these early groups, but given what is known about their social origins (and those of colonists elsewhere in the same period), it must have been quite heterogeneous and non-standard (Klingler, 2003: 13; Marshall, 1996: 14; Picone, 2003).[3] It would also have presented features similar to the varieties of French spoken elsewhere in the French colonial world around the same time period.[4]

ColF was the original linguistic input in the genesis of Louisiana Creole (LC).[5] LC developed as the vernacular of African slaves on many Louisiana plantations; in some communities it became the everyday speech of whites as well. Scholars generally consider LC to have begun to emerge 'in the first fifty or so years of the development of Louisiana, between 1699 and 1750'. (Valdman *et al.*, 1998: 16). The earliest texts containing samples of a creolised (or at least a pidginised) French spoken by Louisiana slaves date from 1748 and 1758 (Klingler, 2003: 25–92). The arrival of refugees from Saint Domingue between 1791–1810, accompanied by their slaves who spoke an early Haitian Creole, must have considerably bolstered the creole-speaking population of Louisiana. LC continues to be spoken today around the city of New Roads (Pointe Coupee Parish[6]), along the Acadian and German coasts (St James and St John the Baptist Parishes), and around Bayou Teche (St Martin Parish). Small pockets of speakers can also be found in St. Tammany Parish.

Acadian French was brought to Louisiana by the Acadian refugees from Nova Scotia in several waves of immigration between 1764 and 1785. The Acadians settled primarily along a stretch of the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge which came to be known as the Acadian Coast (modern St James Parish), and in the Attakapas and Opelousas Posts in western Louisiana. In 1785 the last large Acadian group arrived, consisting of nearly 1,600 refugees who

[3] Still later, other Francophone immigrants would be added to this 'Creole' population, including refugees fleeing the slave insurrections in Saint Domingue who came to Louisiana between 1791 and 1810, and French political refugees, who immigrated to Louisiana throughout the antebellum period. Such later groups undoubtedly spoke a much more standard French than the earlier colonists, and led to the formation of what Picone (2003) calls Plantation Society French.

[4] Chaudenson (2001: 142–193) makes a number of observations about the French colonists who settled in Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, part of Maine, St Barths, and Louisiana. The majority came from the same geographical area (the Oïl area, in northwestern France, bounded on the southeast by a line running from Bordeaux to Paris) and from the lower classes, and were essentially illiterate. They most likely spoke a nonstandard French marked by *langue d'oïl* dialect features, which had undergone some restructuring associated with informal language learning.

[5] The word 'Creole' is highly polysemous in Louisiana. The language of the 18th century immigrants, who called themselves Creoles, is not linguistically a 'creole' language in any sense of the word. LC is, however, linguistically a creole, that is a language which has undergone extensive restructuring due to having been learned as a second language in the context of colonial slaveholding society.

[6] The equivalent of the counties of other American states are called civil parishes in Louisiana.

had spent between 21 and 27 years in western France (Brasseaux, 1998; Martin, 1936; Arsenault, 1966). A number of them were accompanied by French spouses and children born to them during their exile in France. Most of these latecomers pioneered settlements in the Lafourche Basin, since little land of any worth was left in previously established Acadian communities.

The ethnic distinction between the white Creoles and the Acadians would eventually disappear. Cultural and linguistic differences between the various French groups meant little to Anglos, who applied the term 'Cajun' indiscriminately to anyone of French descent and low economic standing (Brasseaux, 1992: 104). Most importantly, however, intermarriage between Acadians and Creoles became pervasive (Brasseaux, 1992: 105–106), with the result that, in most areas, the descendants of the Creoles no longer existed as a distinct group. The label 'Cajun' came to refer to any member of a coalesced Louisiana French language and culture. Most of the linguistic differences between these groups were levelled, resulting in a network of local varieties called 'Cajun' or 'Louisiana French'. I will use the term Louisiana French (LF) to refer to this modern network of varieties.

Lexically, there is considerable overlap between LC and LF (Morgan, 1970: 53; Rottet, 2001b). Morphosyntactically, LC remains distinct from LF although some scholars have pointed to decreolisation in which LC has begun to acquire French features (e.g. grammatical gender in the noun phrase), resulting in a continuum of varieties in which distinct boundaries are replaced by a gradual fading of one variety into the next. Individual speakers control varying stretches along this continuum, with LC representing the basilect, and varieties closest to Referential French (RF) the acrolect.

Given such a complex linguistic picture, disentangling the three historical varieties is not an easy task. Revisiting a suggestion made by Byers (1988) about a feature for which this may nonetheless be possible, in this paper I will analyze the evidence for attributing the *quoi* dialects to Acadians and the *qui* dialects to pre-Acadian, or eighteenth-century ColF, populations.

This paper is organised as follows. In section 2 I will briefly discuss the classical and dialectal origins of inanimate *qui* in France. In section 3 I will lay out the interrogative pronouns of LF, with a particular view to documenting the little-known *qui* subdialects. Finally in section 4 I will examine the case for attributing the geographical distribution of interrogative pronominal variants in Louisiana to the differential settlement histories of Creoles and Acadians.

## 2 INANIMATE *QUI* IN CLASSICAL FRENCH AND IN FRENCH DIALECTS

By the term 'inanimate *qui*,' I refer to the use of the interrogative pronoun *qui*, either alone or in periphrastic expressions (e.g. *qui-ce qui*/kiski/), with inanimate or [−human] reference. Such uses stand in striking contrast to modern RF, in which *qui, qui est-ce qui* and *qui est-ce que* can only have [+human] referents.[7]

[7] In the RF periphrastic interrogatives, e.g. *qui est-ce qui* 'who (subj.),' *qu'est-ce qui* 'what (subj.),' etc., an element from the set *qui*/*que* occurs twice. The first occurrence indicates

The inanimate *qui* pattern is not a New World invention. It has a long history going back into medieval French and to dialect usage of the colonial period. Attested from around the year 1200, inanimate *qui* was the usual inanimate interrogative subject pronoun by the fifteenth century and remained common into at least the seventeenth century (Darmesteter, 1922: 672; Nyrop, 1925: 358; Grevisse, 1988: 1107).

(1) Qui fait l'oiseau? C'est le plumage. (La Fontaine, *Fables* II, V, v.26)
'What makes the bird? 'tis its plumage.'

(2) Mon père, si matin qui vous fait déloger? (Racine, *Les Plaideurs*, I scene 4, 69)
'My father, what brings you out so early?'

(3) Je ne sais qui me tient que je ne vous en fasse autant. (Molière, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, scene 17)
'I don't know what keeps me from doing the same to you.'

As a subject pronoun, it was used both in direct questions (see 1 and 2) and indirect questions (3). It also occurred as the object of a preposition:

(4) Après ce coup, Narcisse, à qui dois-je m'attendre? (Racine, *Britannicus*, II scene VI, 743)
'After this blow, Narcissus, what must I expect?'

Inanimate *qui* appeared in adjectival functions as well. According to Brunot and Bruneau (1961: 591ff.), the French interrogative *qui* (< Latin *quis*) was originally used to inquire about identity (as in 5), leaving *quel* (< Latin *qualis*) to ask about quality:

(5) Ne m'informerai-je point qui sont les principes des choses? (Malherbe, II, 507)
'Shall I not inquire what are the principles of things?'

The classical French distribution of *qui* and *quel* gave way by the 18th century to the modern pattern in which *quel* functions as an adjective and *qui* as a pronoun.

There were some conspicuous limitations on the use of inanimate *qui*. Notably, it was not used as direct object (though for regional dialects see below), and apparently it could not occur periphrastically; we do not find the sequences *qui est-ce qui* and *qui est-ce que* with [−human] reference.

Despite the common occurrence of inanimate *qui* in seventeenth-century literature, grammarians during this period began to condemn it. Ultimately it would be supplanted by the periphrases *qu'est-ce qui* in direct interrogation and *ce qui* in indirect interrogation, though it did linger on marginally into the nineteenth century and even occasionally the twentieth in poetic/literary style (cf. Grevisse 1986: 1107), especially with certain verbs such as *valoir*:

(6) Qui nous vaut cette bonne visite, madame la notairesse? (Alphone Daudet, *La Petite Paroisse* II, vi.)
'To what do we owe this good visit, madam notary?'

[+/− human] while the second indicates grammatical function (subject *qui* vs. object *que*). RF and LF differ in what occurs in the first position in these expressions.

Though it fell out of favour in RF, inanimate *qui* remained usual in a number of western dialects, including those of Normandy (Mauvoisin, 1994), eastern Brittany (Chauveau, 1984), Poitou (Rézeau, 1976; Mineau, 1982), Anjou (Verrier and Onillon, 1970), and parts of Saintonge (Doussinet, 1971) and Berry (Lapaire, 1925). An important difference from the classical pattern described above is that these dialects can use *qui* not only as subject but also as direct object, and in periphrases. Animate and inanimate interrogative pronouns are not formally distinguished, as the following Poitevin examples show (Mineau, 1982: 255):

(7) Qui qu'est venu?
'Who came?'

(8) Qui qu'tu manges?
'What are you eating?'

It also occurred as object of a preposition (9) and in indirect speech (10) (Bas-Poitou, Rézeau, 1976: 74–76):

(9) /a ki k tœ pãs/[8]
'What are you thinking about?'

(10) /i se pa ki/
'I don't know what.'

Since *qui* can be either animate or inanimate, it may be ambiguous out of context:

(11) /ki ʃærʃ ty/ (Rézeau, 1976: 74–75)
'Who/What are you looking for?'

Inanimate *qui* is also attested in periphrastic forms in Poitou (Favreau *et al.*, 1983: 143):

(12) Mais qui est-ce qu'i vous est donc arrivé, Père Sanfaçon?[9]
'But what happened to you, Père Sanfaçon?'

Inanimate *qui* also surfaces in some dialectal equivalents of RF *pourquoi* 'why' such as *pouqui* (Normand, Mauvoisin, 1994: 128), *pourtchi* (Gallo, Chauveau, 1984: 185) and *peurqui* or *peur qu'y feire* (Saintongeais, Doussinet, 1971: 159ff.). However, in most of Poitou and Saintonge, equivalents of *pourquoi* preserved fossilised uses of *quoi* (or its dialect reflexes) even when *qui* was otherwise the usual form for 'what;' thus, Saintongeais *peurquoé* or *prequé* (Doussinet, 1971), and Bas-Poitevin /pœrkɔ/ or /kode/ (Chaussée, 1966: 199).[10]

The use of inanimate *qui* survives in certain New World dialects of French, including some varieties of LF, to which we now turn.

[8] I have normalized Rézeau's orthography to conform to IPA.

[9] It is interesting to note that this and other examples from the text in question appear to mix features of patois with a *français populaire*. For instance, the neuter pronoun *ce* is not traditionally a feature of Poitevin-Saintongeais dialect.

[10] Chaussée (1966: 199) notes: 'Quoi. Il en subsiste une trace dans l'adverbe interrogatif *Pœrkó* = pourquoi, et sans doute aussi dans *Kodé* = pourquoi. Partout ailleurs, *Quoi*, forme tonique, a cédé la place à *Ki*; d'où les confusions fréquentes: *Ki dõ* = Qui donc? ou Quoi donc?'

## 3 INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS IN LF

Like many other features, interrogative pronouns are subject to great variation in LF. I will leave aside sporadic attestations of *qu'est-ce que, quèque, qu'est-ce que c'est qui* and *ça*,[11] in order to concentrate on what are by far the two most frequent inanimate forms, *quoi* (e.g. *quoi, quoi-ce que*, etc.) and *qui* (e.g. *qui, qui-ce que*, etc.). Byers (1988: 95) suggested that the distribution of these forms is, for the most part, geographically determined. Although his informant pool was relatively small (49 speakers from 14 parishes), the areal distribution he describes accords well with the data examined in this study.

The *quoi* pattern is the norm in a large southwestern area comprising most of Vermilion, Lafayette, Jefferson Davis, and Acadia Parishes and extending eastward into Assumption Parish.[12] The *qui* pattern is predominant in two geographically separated areas: the lower Lafourche Basin in the southeast (mainly Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes), and Evangeline and Avoyelles Parishes to the northwest.[13] Unlike the *quoi* dialects which formally distinguish 'who' and 'what' (as *qui* and *quoi* respectively), the *qui* dialects use a single set of pronouns to express both of these notions.

Most of the remaining parishes of Acadiana represent transitional zones between the *qui* and the *quoi* zones. In some transitional areas (e.g. parts of St. Landry, St. Martin and Iberia Parishes), variation is found not only at the inter-speaker level but also intra-speaker.[14]

These two patterns have more or less identical ranges of usage: as I show below, *qui* and *quoi* are found in the same range of functions. Direct and indirect interrogation are not formally distinguished. The various forms are summarised in Table 1 and illustrated with examples in the discussion following.

'What' as subject is generally expressed periphrastically, by *Q-ce qui* (i.e. *quoi-ce qui* /kwaski/, *qui-ce qui* /kiski/) or *Q c'est qui* (i.e. *quoi c'est qui* /kwaseki/, *qui c'est qui* /kiseki/):

[11] Interrogative *ça* is probably best viewed as a creolism and is found in places where LC and LF coexist. The other forms occur in many places in Louisiana, but less frequently than *qui* and *quoi* and in what appears to be a random distribution. They may reflect Plantation Society French (see Picone 2003) or exposure to RF.

[12] Data on the *quoi* dialect areas come from Byers (1988), Conwell and Juilland (1963), Ancelet (1994), Montgomery (1946), Faulk (1977), Guidry (1982), Daigle (1934), Trahan (1936), Stäbler (1995), my own fieldwork in Assumption Parish in 2000, and the Louisiana French Lexical Database (henceforth LFLD) headquartered at Indiana University.

[13] Data from Terrebonne-Lafourche come from written sources (Parr, 1940; Guilbeau, 1950; Byers, 1988) and my own fieldwork. Data from Evangeline Parish come from Ancelet (1994), Phillips (1936), and Reed (1976); for Avoyelles Parish, see Coco (1933), Chaudoir (1937), and Saucier (1949).

[14] Tentchoff (1975: 101) mentions variation in a single (unidentified) town in St. Martin Parish between *Ça ina?*, *Qui ina?* and *Quoi ina?* all meaning 'What's wrong?' Likewise, Ancelet (1994) contains texts from speakers who use both *qui* and *quoi*, sometimes in consecutive utterances (e.g. a speaker from St. Landry quoted on page 54).

Tableau 1. *Interrogative pronouns of Louisiana French*

| Function | QUOI-dialects | QUI-dialects |
|---|---|---|
| Subject<br>What is bothering you? | (quoi)<br>quoi-ce qui<br>quoi c'est qui<br>quoi qui | (qui)<br>qui-ce qui<br>qui c'est qui<br>?qui qui |
| Subject complement<br>What is a 'croque-mitaine'? | quoi-ce que<br>quoi c'est (que)<br>quoi-ce que c'est (que) | qui-ce que<br>qui c'est (que)<br>qui-ce que c'est (que) |
| Direct Object<br>What are you doing? | quoi<br>quoi-ce (que)<br>quoi c'est (que)<br>quoi que | qui<br>qui-ce (que)<br>qui c'est (que)<br>?qui que |
| Object of preposition<br>What are you thinking about? | quoi<br>quoi-ce (que)<br>quoi c'est (que) | qui<br>qui-ce(que)<br>qui c'est (que) |
| Tag question<br>Is he married, or what? | quoi | qui |
| Object of infinitive<br>I don't know what to do | quoi | qui |

(13) Je sais pas quoi-ce qui va nous arriver. (AP)[15]
'I don't know what's going to happen to us.'

(14) Qui-ce qui va m'arriver demain? (LP)
'What is going to happen to me tomorrow?'

(15) Quoi c'est qui se brasse là-bas? (VP, Faulk, 1977: 276)[16]
'What's going on over there?'

(16) Qui c'est qui fait ce train? (LP, Guilbeau, 1950: 169)
'Who (what) is making that noise?'

The final vowel of these expressions is subject to deletion before a vowel-initial word:

(17) Qui-ce qu'après vivre icitte avec vous-autres dans les forêts? (TP)
'What is living here with you all in the forests?'

As interrogative subject, non-periphrastic (or bare) *quoi* and *qui* are rare. Among the few examples I have encountered are the following:

(18) Le mélange de mariage avec d'autres cultures s'est fait, mais qui est devenu de ce mélange? Une joie de vivre remplie d'exubérance . . . (EP, Reed, 1976: 27)

[15] I will use the following codes to indicate a speaker's parish of origin: AP (Assumption); AvP (Avoyelles); EP (Evangeline); IP (Iberville); LFP (Lafayette); LP (Lafourche); SJP (St. James); SLP (St. Landry); SMP (St. Martin); TP (Terrebonne); VP (Vermilion). Examples not identified with a bibliographic reference come from my own fieldwork.

[16] I have normalized Faulk's highly idiosyncratic spelling to conform to the orthography of R.F.

'Intermarriage with other cultures has taken place, but what has become of this mixture? A joy of living filled with exuberance and vitality . . . '

(19) Quoi a des yeux et ne voit pas? (VP, Brandon, 1955: 14)
'What has eyes and doesn't see?'

As subject complement (that is, in questions of the form 'what is an X' or 'what are X'), the usual formula is *Q c'est* (or *Q c'était* in past contexts):

(20) Quoi c'est ça, une plaque? (SLP, Ancelet and Guidry, 1981: 284)
'What is a *plaque*?'

(21) Mais j'ai demandé à Mam quoi c'était un feu follet. (VP, Ancelet, 1994: 156)
'Well, I asked Mom what a *feu follet* was.'

(22) Mame, qui c'est le nom de cette femme-là? (TP)
'Mom, what is that woman's name?'

A variant form is *Q-ce (que):*

(23) Qui-ce que des croquemitaines? (TP)
'What are 'croque-mitaines'?'

(24) Y z'ont jamais appris quoi-ce c'était ein Acadien. (Desmarais, 1981: 304)
'They have never learned what an Acadian is.'

As direct object, bare *Q* is fairly common, and (unlike RF *que*) it does not entail subject-verb inversion:

(25) Quoi tu veux je te fais cuire? (Conwell and Juilland, 1963: 151)
'What do you want me to cook for you?'

(26) Qui vous-autres aurait fait si j'avais pas de licence? (LP)
'What would you all have done if I didn't have a license?'

Note the informal greetings *Q ça dit?* (lit. 'What do they say?') or *Q tu dis?* ('What do you say?') which are widely attested in Louisiana with both *quoi* and *qui:*

(27) Hé, quoi ça dit à ce matin? (IP, Ancelet, 1994: 126)
'Hey, how's it going this morning?'

The common expression *Qui il y a?* or *Quoi il y a?* 'What's wrong?/What's the matter?' also illustrates bare Q as subject complement.

'What' as direct object is often expressed periphrastically, with both the *Q-ce que* and the *Q c'est que* patterns:

(28) T'as pour y dire quoi-ce qu'il faut qu'il fait. (AP)
'You have to tell him what he has to do.'

(29) Qui-ce que tu veux savoir là? (TP)
'What do you want to know?'

(30) Quoi c'est que tu fais avec ça? (SLP, Ancelet, 1994: 16)
'What are you doing with those?'

(31) Tu disais qui c'est que tu voulais, alle te faisait. (LP)
'You told her what you wanted, she did it for you.'

The direct object forms sometimes drop the final *que*:[17]

(32) Ça fait, quoi-ce tu voulais qu'on faise, nous-autres? (VP, Guidry, 1982: 3)
'So, what did you expect us to do?'

(33) Et là qui-ce t'après faire, un livre? T'après écrire un livre? (LP)
'And so what are you doing, a book? Are you writing a book?'

(34) Bouki y a d'mandé qui c'est il avait à crier. (AvP, Saucier, 1949: 145)
'Bouki asked him what was wrong that he was crying.'

(35) Quoi c'est tu fais avec ma belle, toi? (SLP, Ancelet and Guidry, 1981: 286)
'What are you doing with my girlfriend?'

As object of a preposition, the same forms occur as for direct objects:

(36) Sur quoi, je mets ça? (Conwell and Juilland, 1963: 151)
'On what do I put that?'

(37) Je sais pas dans qui ça mettait ça avant. (TP)
'I don't know what they used to put that in before.'

(38) Ça dépend de qui-ce que je parle. (LP)
'It depends on what I'm talking about.'

In tag questions, exclamations (e.g. 'What?'), and wh-*in situ* questions, only the bare (non-periphrastic) forms are found:[18]

(39) Mon je sais pas s'il était après venir en enfance, ou qui. (TP)
'I don't know if he was getting senile, or what.'

(40) . . . mais ils étiont pas sûrs si c'était lui ou quoi. (LFP, Ancelet, 1994: 174)
'. . . but they weren't sure if it was him or what.'

(41) Qui, tu rôdailles toute la journée icitte? (TP)
'What, you hang out here all day long?'

(42) Quoi! Les Marais-Bouleurs l'ont quoi? (SLP, Ancelet and Guidry, 1981: 294)
'What! The *Marais-Bouleurs* did what to him?'

(43) Dis à cet-homme-là, t'as un petit qui? un petit qui tu *ride*, un petit cheval? (LP)
'Tell this man, you've got a little what? a little what you ride, a little horse?'

The same is true for interrogatives that are the object of an infinitive:

(44) Tout ce qu'il fait c'est les montrer qui faire. (LP)
'All he does is show them what to do.'

(45) O.K. Hibou et mon, on va y demander quoi faire. (Desmarais, 1981: 309)
'Okay, Hibou and I will ask him what to do.'

Finally, note the forms *n'importe quoi* and *n'importe qui* for 'whatever' or 'anything.' These can also occur periphrastically as in (47):

(46) Il pouvait faire n'importe quoi avec la forge. (SLP, Ancelet, 1994: 184)
'He could make anything in his smith's shop.'

[17] Relative *que* is frequently dropped in LF (see Rottet 2001a: 164).
[18] WH-*in situ* questions are not as common in LF as in RF.

(47) N'importe qui-ce que je fais dans mon idée à mon-même, dans ma tête à mon-même, c'est tout fait en français. (TP)
'Whatever I do in my own mind, in my own head, it's all done in French.'

As seen in many of the above examples, periphrastic interrogatives contain either *ce* /s/ or *c'est* /se/ (e.g. *qui-ce qui* /kiski/ vs. *qui c'est qui* /kiseki/). In some regions of Louisiana such as Lafourche Parish (Guilbeau, 1950: 168–169) these variants are functionally distinct, with the *ce* pattern being unmarked and the *c'est* pattern emphatic. In some other areas, though, the *c'est* forms have ceased to convey any particular emphasis, and /kise/ or /kwase/ have become grammaticalised as pronominal forms. In such cases, the fused *Q c'est* is not conjugated, even when the temporal reference of the sentence is non-present. Compare (48) and (49):

(48) Qui c'est c'est ti veux? (EP, Phillips, 1936: 40)
'What do you want?'

(49) Qui c'est c'était cette grande bâtisse? (SMP, Patin, 1976: 31)
'What was that big building?'

Similar phenomena can be found in other varieties of North American French (cf. Carrière, 1937, whose spelling *quocé* suggests complete grammaticalisation in Missouri French).

A third periphrastic pattern is sporadically attested, namely *quoi qui* and *quoi que:*

(50) Mais quoi qu'a arrivé? (LFP, Ancelet, 1994: 202)
'Well, what happened?'

I have not recorded any instances of *qui qui* or *qui que* although this may be an accidental lacuna.

We saw in section 2 that in some (but not all) French dialects of western France where *qui* is used for 'what,' the question word 'why' takes a form like *pourqui* (rather than *pourquoi*). A similar picture is found in Louisiana. Where *quoi* dialects have *pourquoi* or *quoi faire* (usually pronounced /kofær/), in Evangeline Parish (a *qui* dialect area), the forms *quifaire* and *pourqui* are attested (Reed, 1976: 59), though *quoi faire* and *pourquoi* also occur there. In the lower Lafourche Basin *quifaire* and *pourqui* are unattested, and only the *quoi* forms appear for 'why':

(51) Je connais pas quo'faire on fait ça, mais on a tout le temps fait ça. (LP)
'I don't know why we do that, but we've always done that.'

The interrogative *pourquoi* 'why' thus has a geographical extension greater than that of the question word *quoi* 'what.' Another such expression is *de quoi* 'something,' which is used in *qui* and *quoi* dialect areas alike:

(52) Qui tu fais avec ces *tape* que tu ramasses? T'apprends de quoi là-dessus? (TP)
'What do you do with the tapes you collect? Do you learn anything on them?'

Apart from these frozen lexical items (*pourquoi, quoi faire,* and *de quoi*), the pronoun *quoi* is rare in the lower Lafourche Basin. This situation has not changed much from that described by Guilbeau (1950: 168).

In the *qui* dialect areas, questions with 'who' and 'what' are not formally distinguished.[19] The intended reading is generally clear from context, but occasionally there is total ambiguity between animate and inanimate readings:

(53) Quand il était un *teenager* il voulait apprendre. Je sais pas qui-ce qui lui a donné l'idée, il a pris le français dans l'école. (LP)
'When he was a teenager he wanted to learn. I don't know who/what gave him the idea, he took French in school.'

Having briefly characterised the interrogative pronominal forms of LF, let us turn now to an examination of the case for attributing the geographical distribution of these forms to the differential settlement histories of Acadians and Creoles.

## 4 INANIMATE *QUI* AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN LOUISIANA

Given the rather extensive history of dialect leveling which the originally distinct varieties of French in Louisiana have undergone, it is somewhat remarkable that the interrogatives *qui* and *quoi* retain such a clear cut geographical distribution down to the present day. The fact that their distribution is so clearly geographically determined leads one naturally to look for an explanation. One place to seek such an explanation would be in the differential settlement history of these areas.[20] Byers (1988: 97–98) sketched out the beginnings of such an account:

> . . . the distribution of *qui, quoi,* and the verb suffix *-ont* is more precisely explained in terms of geographical variation. Their use suggests two main dialectal regions: a southwest/south central area (including Assumption Parish), and a north/southeast area. The former has *-ont* with the subject pronoun *ils*, and the interrogative *quoi*; the latter lacks the verb inflection and uses *qui* for interrogative 'what.' No clear dividing lines can be drawn to separate these areas, partly because of the leveling of the variants in question, partly because too few variants were examined to establish 'bundles of isoglosses.' However vague, though, the emerging patterns do reflect the historical settlement of the original Acadians as opposed to those of the French colonials.

Establishing the Acadian origin of the *quoi* pattern is a fairly straightforward matter. While we may not have direct evidence of what Acadian dialects were like in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the modern Acadian varieties still spoken in the Maritime Provinces are reasonably well documented, and they are solidly *quoi* dialects (as well as using the *ils -ont* pattern which Byers referred to, e.g. *ils dansont* 'they dance'). They even make use of both types of periphrastic expression found

[19] Byers (1988: 96) claimed: 'Almost all of the informants who used *qui* for both interrogatives also had an unambiguous form available for 'who' whenever necessary. The most frequent forms were *qui c'est qui*, *qui-ce qui* and *qui qui*.' However, this statement does not agree with the observed data, since *qui c'est qui* and *qui-ce qui* occur with both animate and inanimate reference. The form *qui qui* is too rare in the data for a decision to be made about it.

[20] I do not by any means wish to suggest that all clearcut geographical distributions of linguistic features are necessarily related to settlement patterns, merely that this is one possibility, which makes sense in the present case.

in Louisiana, that is, the variation between *quoi c'est qui* ~ *quoi-ce qui* (subject) and *quoi c'est que* ~ *quoi-ce que* (object):

(54) Quoi ce qui t'a arrêté de souhaiter pour le paradis . . . ? (Péronnet, 1989: 192)
'What stopped you from wishing for heaven?'

(55) Je peux pas ouère quoi c'est qu'ils avont contre les sapins. (Maillet, 1975: 23)
'I can't see what they have against fir trees.'

Inanimate *qui*, on the other hand, is completely absent from the descriptive literature on Maritime Acadian (e.g. Péronnet, 1989; Motapanyane, 1997; Cormier, 1999).[21]

Broadly speaking, there does seem to be a correlation, as Byers suggested, between Acadian settlement areas and use of *quoi*, and conversely, areas of predominantly Creole settlement, and use of *qui*. A fair amount of information is available about settlement patterns in Louisiana, in large part thanks to the scholarship of the Cajun historian Carl Brasseaux (1987, 1992 and 1998).[22] The following predominantly Acadian parishes are also *quoi*-dialect areas (sources in parentheses provide information about the interrogatives of the parish in question): Acadia (Daigle, 1934; Ancelet, 1994; Stäbler, 1995, LFLD); Assumption (Trahan, 1936, LFLD, Rottet fieldwork, 2000); Lafayette (Conwell and Juilland, 1963; Ancelet, 1994; LFLD); Vermilion (Montgomery, 1946; Faulk, 1977; Guidry, 1982; Ancelet, 1994; Stäbler, 1995; LFLD). Similarly, the following predominantly Creole parishes are *qui*-dialect areas: Avoyelles (Coco, 1933; Chaudoir, 1937; Saucier, 1949; LFLD); Evangeline (Phillips, 1936; Reed, 1976; Ancelet, 1994; LFLD); St Martin (Voorhies, 1949; Calais, 1968; Patin, 1976; Ancelet, 1994; LFLD).[23]

It is less clear how the lower Lafourche Basin fits into Byers' proposal. The upper and lower stretches of Bayou Lafourche were originally settled predominantly in and after 1785 by Acadians who had spent between 21 and 27 years in western France, primarily in Brittany and Poitou (Brasseaux, 1998; Martin, 1936; Arsenault, 1966). Many of them came to Louisiana with French spouses (Brasseaux, 1987: 70–71).[24] The census of 1788 reveals that Acadians formed 61% of the Lafourche District population, while Creoles represented only 14%. These figures would slowly

[21] Inanimate *qui* is attested in Saint-Pierre and Miquelon (Brasseur 1990), where a number of Acadians settled. These islands also received immigration from elsewhere and experienced extensive contact with fishermen from Brittany and other French coastal areas (Chauveau 1998).

[22] A large number of other works treat the history or settlement of individual parishes (e.g. see Breton and Louder, 1983 and Dorais, 1980 on Avoyelles and Evangeline, which were settled by Creoles in the eighteenth century and never received large contingents of Acadian immigrants).

[23] Extending this comparison to some of the other parishes of Acadiana proves difficult because of the insufficiency of available linguistic documentation.

[24] According to Brasseaux (1987: 111–112), 823 of the 1363 passengers aboard the seven shiploads of Acadians coming from France selected settlements in the Lafourche district. Another 271, first settling along Bayou des Ecores, ended up along Bayou Lafourche after a hurricane in 1794. Terrebonne Parish, the area surrounding Bayou Terrebonne, a distributary of Bayou Lafourche, was settled from Lafourche after 1795 (Brasseaux, 1987: 115). The region was nearly unpopulated before these Acadian settlements.

change, and by 1870, Creoles in Lafourche Parish would outnumber Acadians 3,124 to 2,314. In Terrebonne Parish also, Creoles outnumbered Acadians, though by a rather small amount (1,493 to 1,452) (Brasseaux, 1992: 167). It is possible that the spoken French of the lower Lafourche Basin reflects this significant historical Creole presence in the area.

One might also wonder, however, what may have been the linguistic effects of the 21–27 year Acadian exile in western France, during which time many Acadians took French spouses and bore children with them.[25] It should be recalled that the dialects of French spoken in Brittany and Poitou are ones where inanimate *qui* was the norm. The Abbé Grégoire's famous linguistic survey of France, conducted shortly after the Acadian exile, clearly reveals that *patois* were still widely spoken a decade later in both of the regions in question. These Acadians, during their stay of more than twenty years, must then have had frequent exposure to inanimate *qui*, and many took spouses from the area, thus bringing a fresh infusion of this and perhaps other western dialect features into southeastern Louisiana.[26] When large numbers of Creoles would later move into Lafourche and Terrebonne, inanimate *qui* may therefore already have been in place among the Acadians settled there.

In Byers' tentative suggestion linking the distribution of *qui* and *quoi* to settlement histories, he coupled this linguistic variable with another, namely the presence or absence of the 3pl verb ending *–ont* as in *ils dansont* /dãsɔ̃/ 'they dance' (cf. RF *ils dansent* /dãs/), and he proposed two dialect areas, one having *quoi* and 3pl *–ont*, and the other having *qui* and 3pl *-Ø*. While the northern *qui* dialect region (Evangeline and Avoyelles) does fit his description nicely by using *qui* but little or no *–ont*, the speech of the lower Lafourche Basin is of a somewhat more mixed character. It overwhelmingly uses *qui* 'what,' but it also makes moderate use of the *ils -ont* pattern as seen in Byers' own data.[27] Indeed, it is not uncommon to find speakers who use both inanimate *qui* for 'what' and the 3pl ending *-ont:*

(56) Il avait été un maître d'école, et là il était un *bookkeeper*. Ça fait ils savont qui c'était là l'éducation, ça fait ils voulont que leurs enfants va à l'école. (LP)
'He had been a schoolteacher, then he was a bookkeeper. So they knew what education was, so they wanted their kids to go to school.'

If Byers' association of *qui* with ColF and *ils -ont* with Acadians is correct, then we have a concrete example of dialect mixing in the lower Lafourche Basin with speakers such as the one quoted in (56), who uses both of these features. This is

[25] Arsenault (1966: 216–217) lists 47 French surnames that entered Louisiana through intermarriage with Acadian women as a result of this exile in France.

[26] It is interesting that the lower Lafourche Basin also differs from other LF dialects in its frequent aspiration of /ʒ/ (e.g. /mãhe/ for /mãʒe/ 'manger'), found in parts of Poitou and Saintonge.

[27] And mine as well. Some 20% of the speakers I have interviewed in Terrebonne-Lafourche use 3pl *-ont* with present tense verbs, some speakers more systematically than others. Well over 90% of these speakers use interrogatives with *qui* rather than *quoi*.

compatible with what we know about the settlement history of the lower Lafourche Basin.[28]

To summarise, the comparison of parish settlement histories with interrogative patterns does tend in the direction of confirming Byers' claim. Admittedly, given the complexities of settlement patterns and koineisation, this is a crude comparison, and one would like to find additional kinds of evidence suggesting the same conclusions. There is, in fact, another kind of evidence that appears to confirm the association of inanimate *qui* with the pre-Acadian 'Creole' population. In section 1, I noted that LC began to emerge during the first half of the 18th century, prior to the waves of Acadian arrival in Louisiana. It follows that the linguistic input to which slaves were exposed on Louisiana plantations was the speech of slaveholding colonists before 1750. It would, of course, be naïve to assume that modern LC is a pure reflection of early eighteenth century ColF. Nonetheless, without denying subsequent contacts between LF and LC, it is reasonable to expect that some of the features of LC reflect the ColF speech which gave it birth. For instance, one feature of ColF pronunciation was nicely preserved in 19th century LC. Berquin-Duvallon in his 1803 travel memoir noted that many of the Creoles (i.e. descendants of the original white settlers of Louisiana) 'prononcent les *j* en *z* et le *ch* en *ce*.' Neumann-Holzschuh (1987: 8) comments on the high frequency of this pronunciation in 19th century LC, as in *zonglé* ~ *jonglé* 'to think,' *manzé* ~ *mangé* 'to eat,' *dimance* ~ *dimanche* 'Sunday'.[29]

The feature of LC that is of most interest here is its system of interrogative pronouns. It happens that LC is solidly a *qui* variety, in which *quoi* is generally only found in the frozen lexical items *kofêr* (< *quoi faire*) and *pourkwa* (< *pour quoi*). Space does not permit a thorough exposition of the complex system of LC interrogative

[28] Another feature of the area is of some interest here. The southernmost part of this region is populated mainly by a Native American people, the Houma. The Houma have a long history of intermarriage with their French-speaking neighbors, from the colonial period to the present. As a result, most Houma people have French surnames, but few of these are of Acadian origin. There were nineteen Houma surnames listed in the petition to the Secretary of the Interior for Federal recognition of the Houma as an Indian tribe (Abbe, Billiot, Chiasson, Courteaux, Creppel, Dardar, Dion, Enerisse, Galley, Gregoire, Iacalobe, Jeanne, Lamatte, Naquin, Renaud, Sauvage, Solet, Verdin, Verret, plus variant spellings of most of these). Of these, only two (Chiasson and Sauvage) are Acadian surnames. Two others (Galley and Lamatte) may have been introduced into the lower Lafourche Basin when Acadian women married Frenchmen during their extended exile in western France. Arsenault (1966: 216) claims that Gallet and Lamothe or Lamotte were among the last names introduced into Louisiana in this way. A small number of additional surnames (such as Hotard, Brunet, Dupre, Frederick) are common among the Houma, but none of these are of Acadian origin either. The record of intermarriage reflected in Houma surnames suggests that they acquired their French largely through intermarriage with French speakers not of Acadian, but of Creole descent. In this light it is noteworthy that Houma French is a solidly *qui* dialect.

[29] In modern LF it seems to only show up in a few isolated lexical items, e.g. Terrebonne-Lafourche /se/ for *chez*. Even there, it could be a survival from the large number of Creoles who settled in the area.

pronouns here (see Rottet, 2004 for a detailed analysis), so a few examples of the major forms must suffice.

The subject pronoun interrogatives *ki-sa ki, ki-se-sa ki, sa ki,* and *ki ki* are used with animate and inanimate referents alike:

(57) Qui ça qui senti si bon dans chaudière la, Compair Lapin? (Fortier, 1895: 30)
'What smells so good in the kettle, Brer Rabbit?'

(58) Ki-sa ki nouzot kandida? (Neumann-Holzschuh, 1987: 99)
'Who is our candidate?'

(59) Ça qui tchué li? (Wogan, 1931: 8)
'What killed him?'

(60) Sa k'ale monje le chat? (Neumann, 1985: 412)[30]
'Who is going to eat the cat?'

Direct objects and subject complements can be conveyed with *ki-sa* or *ki-se-sa,* and again, [+human] and [−human] referents are not distinguished:

(61) Qui ça t'olé? (Broussard, 1942: 10)
'What do you want?'

(62) Kisa to wa? (Lane, 1935: 12)
'Who did you see?'

Frequently, [−human] direct objects are expressed with *ça* (or *sa*):

(63) Ça to gaignin dan panier là? (Wogan, 1931: 14)
'What do you have in the basket?'

LC also makes use of 'bare *ki*,' namely the pronoun *ki* by itself. This usage is attested both for animates and inanimates, and in all grammatical functions:

(64) Ki apé tué mo piti? (Mercier, 1881: 170)
'Who is killing my child?'

(65) Me Bouki, ki sa va som, gen en gro dine kom sa e nou p ale gen bal? (Neumann, 1985: 396)
'But Bouki, what will it look like if we have a big dinner like that and we don't have a dance?'

It is also used in tag, echo, and wh-*in situ* questions and after a preposition, again with both [+human] and [−human] reference.

What implications do these facts have for our understanding of the kind of French to which slaves on early-18th century Louisiana plantations were exposed? Based on the LC data, one would reconstruct French input of the form *Qui c'est qui* or *Qui ça qui*[31] for 'who' or 'what' as subject, and *Qui c'est (que)* or *Qui ça (que)* for 'who' or 'what' as object, subject complement, or object of a preposition. One

[30] I normalize the spellings from Neumann (1985) to conform to the system used in Valdman *et al.* (1998). I do not alter the spellings of published texts which used a Frenchified orthography.

[31] A reinforcing use of *ça*, as a popular variant of *c'est*, was common in the French of the colonial period and later (Chaudenson 1989: 124).

would reconstruct *quoi* only in the interrogative adverb 'why,' usually expressed in LC as /kofær/, though /puki/ and /pukwa/ are also attested.[32]

I do not wish to suggest that eighteenth century ColF was uniformly a *qui* dialect. It must certainly have been quite heterogeneous (see section 1). It is, however, clear that apart from the frozen lexical items *pourkwa* and *kofèr* 'why,' data from LC provide no evidence for French *quoi*. This is despite the fact that LC interrogatives are transparently derived from French forms (dialectal or Standard) rather than being fashioned anew on the bimorphemic pattern found in most creole languages. These observations are compatible with a scenario in which users of inanimate *qui* were present in significant numbers among French speakers to whom African slaves were exposed on eighteenth century Louisiana plantations, and for whatever reason, it is the *qui*-dialect interrogatives which were preserved from an undoubtedly larger set of French interrogatives in use in ColF.

The possibility that LC interrogative pronouns may preserve a feature common in ColF is all the more compelling in that some pockets of LC speakers were under little subsequent French influence, such as those of Mon Louis Island, Alabama (Marshall, 1991). It has also been argued that function words (including interrogatives) generally develop early in the formative stages of a pidgin or a creole and subsequently tend to be less subject to change than content words (Clements and Mahboob, 1999: 460).

One might ask if inanimate *qui* was a fairly frequent feature of ColF speech, why it is not more widespread than it is today. In fact, evidence for inanimate *qui* is not lacking from other places in the French colonial world. For instance, it is attested in Laurentian:

(66) Dit's-moé don qui c' qui'i y â écitt' que tout's lés drapeaux sont en de'il [deuil]? (Lemieux, 1975: 239)
'Tell me what's going on here that all of the flags are at half mast.'

(67) Qui c' qu'on va faire? (La Follette, 1969: 64)
'What are we going to do?'

Inanimate *qui* is also found in the speech of l'Ile aux Coudres (Seutin, 1975: 156–157) and it is recorded in some lexicographic works on Québécois such as the GPFC (Rivard and Geoffrion, 1968: 551):

(68) Qui que t'as de besoin?
'What do you need?'

(69) Pourqui faites-vous tant de tapage?
'Why are you making so much noise?'

Data from French creoles of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, in which *kisa (ki)* 'what' is fairly widespread, further suggest that interrogative forms resembling

[32] Klingler (2003: 31) discusses what may be the earliest attestation of inanimate *qui* in Louisiana. In the 1748 transcript of the trial of a slave accused of murder, the question *Qui toy tuer Charlot?* was asked by a slave. Klingler argues from context that this may mean 'What did you kill?' (rather than 'who'). This interpretation is further supported by the accused slave's answer *Moy na rien tué* 'I didn't kill anything' (as opposed to 'anyone').

*qui ça qui* and *qui ça que* meaning 'what' must have been fairly common in the ColF period. That inanimate *qui* is not more common today reflects the koineisation and dialect leveling, as well as subsequent influence from RF, which we know to have taken place throughout the colonial world.[33]

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Byers (1988) made the fascinating suggestion that the geographical distribution of *qui* and *quoi* as 'what' in Louisiana could best be explained in terms of the differential settlement patterns of Creoles and Acadians respectively. This paper has put forth several kinds of evidence to examine Byers' suggestion. The comparison of settlement patterns with the geographical distribution of interrogatives broadly supports Byers. Other evidence comes from the interrogative system of LC, whose *qui*-based interrogative system was argued to reflect the pre-Acadian linguistic input. Attestations were provided of *qui* interrogatives from other parts of the colonial world (such as Laurentian); these were argued to be the fragmented remains of a pattern that must have once been more widespread.

Together, this evidence makes a rather strong case for concluding that despite extensive dialect leveling, the inanimate *qui* pattern widely attested in LF can be reasonably assumed to derive from the speech of the pre-Acadian, colonial population of Louisiana. These findings raise the possibility that, despite extensive dialect levelling, it is still possible to attribute certain LF features to ColF, the earliest variety of French in Louisiana.

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[33] In Byers' study of language attitudes (1988: 139–140), 94.7% of *quoi*-dialect users also thought *quoi* was the best form, whereas only 54.5% of *qui*-dialect users believed *qui* to be the best form. Given such atttitudes, *qui* appears less likely to win in cases of direct competition.

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