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## “*I REMAINS YOUR EVER WISHER & SO FORTH*”: ON THE TWO TYPES OF FORMULAIC CLOSINGS IN 19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY PRIVATE LETTERS

Although formulaic expressions found in earlier correspondence have drawn scholarly attention, their (un)grammaticality has not been thoroughly researched. The present paper thus focuses on the two types of formulae with the verb *remain* found in private correspondence: one headed by 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun (as in: *we remain(s) your daughters*), the other one starting with *but/so/also/and/only* (as in: *but remain(s) your affectionate child until death*). For the purpose of the study a corpus of 19<sup>th</sup>-century correspondence has been compiled and analyzed; additionally, the data from Dylewski (2013) have been taken into account. Next to the corpus scrutiny, an Internet search has been carried out to verify whether the use of the formulae at issue goes beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An analysis from both a qualitative and quantitative angles allowed for putting forth a number of hypotheses concerning the origin of variation between *-s*-marked and unmarked forms as well as their distribution across letter-types and different geographical locations. The results of the analysis also corroborate the claim that *-s* on *remain* in the structures under discussion is neither a “part of the authentic local vernacular nor of authentic contemporary standard English, but part of a specific, localized practice of letter writing, which had its own linguistic rules” (Pietsch 2015: 226).

Keywords: *formulaic expressions, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, private letters, vernacular English, vernacularity*

### 1. Introduction

Due to increased literacy levels as well as a number of other factors, for example dramatic political circumstances, the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an evident increase in exchange of private correspondence – oftentimes written by those who did not exhibit mastery in letter writing. This was especially evident in the

US where during the American Civil War an unprecedented number of letters gushed from soldiers' tents and huts; soldiers from both sides of the conflict reached for their pens to write to those back home and, needless to say, those at home responded, which resulted in a flourishing exchange of correspondence.

An examination of the preserved 19<sup>th</sup>-century correspondence, be it written by the more articulate writers or by those who struggled to put words together, reveals a common denominator: letter structure. But for dates, places, names of addressees, signatures, all elements of a letter which must vary, letters would usually open and close with one of the limited set of formulaic expressions. The openings, or, to be more precise, salutations, would be followed by the body which, in turn, would be followed by one of the day's formulaic expressions.

Formulaic expressions in earlier correspondence have long been subject of scholarly interest; however, these have mainly been looked at from epistolary or pragmatic perspectives (e.g., Nevalainen – Raumolin-Brunberg 1995; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1999; Fairman 2000; Nevala 2007; Bijkerk 2007; Chaemsaitong 2012), but for Dylewski (2013), who devotes a section of his monograph to “unorthodox -s” found in his corpus of Civil War letters and Pietsch (2015), who briefly focuses on the obsolescent *but remains* in Irish emigrant correspondence. Finally, Meurman-Solin (2007 and 2012) mentions -s on *remain* in passing while discussing relatives in Scottish correspondence.

The grammaticality of formulaic expressions present in earlier correspondence seems thus understudied; this paper aims at filling, at least partially, this gap. It builds on Dylewski's (2013) study and focuses on the two types of closings depicting alleged violation of agreement between subject and verb<sup>1</sup> attested by him in the semi-literate Confederate writings; more specifically, conventionalized closing formulae in which the verb *remain*<sup>2</sup> appears: “*I/we remain(s) yours/your (loving, humble, etc.)...*” and “*(nothing/no more at present), but/so/also/and/only remain(s) your...*”<sup>3</sup> and in which variability between -s and -Ø is observable. Since the number of instances attested allows for it, both formulae are analyzed not only qualitatively but also quantitatively on the basis of the corpora comprising three types of letters described below. This paper also attempts to provide plausible historical roots of verbal -s in these two formula types.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the current normative point of view, of course. Next to these two types of closings, salutations of the kind “*I hope these lines come(s)/leave(s)/reach(es) you...* (along with its variants) have also been researched and are the subject of analysis in Dylewski (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Also *rest* (mainly in *I rest*, but also in *but rests*), which seems a typical part of a conventional letter-closing formula in letters written by Scottish nobility (see the facsimiles and accompanying transcripts in Meurman-Solin 2013a and 2013b).

<sup>3</sup> Of course, alongside an array of their numerous variants. These two are basically treated separately because even though at first glance they are similar, “*I/we remains*” seems to have evolved from “*but remains*” (see the discussion in the body of the present paper).

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank the scholars whose diligent analysis of the manuscript and insightful comments have significantly improved the final version of this paper.

## 2. Corpora used and methodology adopted

This paper is an aftermath of a broader study of vernacular grammars in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century American South. The conventionalized closings in question, as mentioned above, were first analyzed in a corpus of vernacular Civil War letters from northwestern South Carolina (see Dylewski 2013); Dylewski's corpus (Corpus I in the present study) and his findings constitute the basis for the present analysis. Since the material collection he used derives from one specific region, the corpus compilation was expanded to take in the resources (a) available in a form of manuscripts deriving from other regions, (b) other letter collections, and (c) correspondence scattered in various websites;<sup>5</sup> consequently, Corpus II was compiled from an array of sources<sup>6</sup> and subsequently analyzed. The findings from this corpus were used *inter alia* to verify the plausible region-specificity in the variation of endings on *remain* in both letter-closings. In order to check the possible dependence of the -s-marked *remain* on the "standardness" of correspondence, next to the corpus comprising only documents produced by the less skilled writers (Corpus I), Corpus II, apart from letters similar in their character to the ones comprising the former corpora, also contains sub-corpora depicting semi-vernacular and non-vernacular letters representing the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Table 1).

Next, assuming that the existence of the two formulae could not have been confined solely to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century material, and, more importantly, could not have come out of nowhere, but for the said two corpora the Internet was scoured to check the plausible broader context/time span in which the two phrases might appear.

Before the corpora description and discussion proper unfold, a more elaborate explanation regarding the collected material is called for. When it comes to vernacular letters<sup>7</sup> which constitute a great part of the material subject to analysis, the merits of using them in linguistic endeavors have been described *in extenso* in a series publications (i.e. Montgomery and Fuller 1996; Montgomery 1992, 1995, 2003; Ellis and Montgomery 2011, 2012; Pablé and Dylewski 2007; Dylewski 2013). It has been assumed and subsequently established in these publications that in correspondence of the kind, scribbled down by those little/not exposed to formal education and for whom writing was not a daily habit, elements of spoken idiom and vernacular grammar permeate. However, despite these traits of vernacularity, letters conformed to certain epistolary standards and it is in such letters, according to Dylewski (2013), that one may most likely

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<sup>5</sup> With the advent of "Private Voices" – an online resource offering transcriptions of approximately 4,000 letters from four Southern States, available at <http://altchive.org/private-voices/> – the analysis of -s-marked *remain* will be successively expanded.

<sup>6</sup> Individual letters were drawn from (a) sources available on the Internet, (b) various edited collections, and (c) existing corpora. Especially in the case of (a) and (b), the locations/sources from which the pertinent material was obtained are far too numerous to list them individually.

<sup>7</sup> Dubbed by some "pauper letters" (i.e. Fairman 2000; Chaemsaithong 2012).

encounter closing formulae exhibiting grammatical variation (*but remain* vs. *but remains* and *I remain* vs. *I remains*).

As for letters culled from edited collections as well as the Internet, whilst the latter offers a plethora of correspondence, they pose one major problem, especially pertinent to the students of inflectional grammar: the fidelity of transcriptions from originals. In the majority of cases, nonetheless, this issue is mitigated by editors and/or transcribers who make it clear that they stick to the spelling, wording, and grammar of the original(s). Occasionally, in order to make reading easier, two versions of the same letter are provided on-line: one a verbatim transcription, the other, a modernized version. On some websites orthographic and morphosyntactic idiosyncrasies are marked in the text itself (see Example (1)):

- (1) It is with pleasure that I seate [sic] my self [sic] to try to wright [sic] to you a fiew [sic] lines to let you know that we are enjoying reasonable health at this time hoping [sic] when these fiew [sic] lines comes [sic] to your hand they may find you enjoying good health.<sup>8</sup>

Transcribed versions are ideally accompanied by facsimiles (see Appendix), in which cases verification of whether the originality of a given letter has been faithfully rendered poses no problem.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, while choosing the material constituting the corpus to be analyzed, preference was given to facsimiles, transcribed letters accompanied by originals, and the letters whose editors indicated what their editorial policy had been. In the case of the former – namely when a given letter was in a manuscript format – it has been transcribed, converted into electronic format, tagged appropriately, and handled manually (as clipped forms, pseudo-phonetic spellings, and clustered words made a computer search unsuitable).

But for an analysis of compiled corpora described below, in order to get a fuller insight into the evolution and to attempt to explain the plausible roots of such phrases, a number of other sources have been consulted; for instance, on-line editions of historical and etymological dictionaries. Also, as mentioned above, an additional Internet search has been carried out in order to check if the usage of *-s*-marked forms goes beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the search has been performed on the basis of queries consisting of word strings with an asterisk to retrieve specific results: “*I/we remains \**”, “*\* but/...\* remains you \**”.<sup>10</sup> In order to achieve maximum accuracy, plausible spelling variants (or simply mistakenly rendered forms), as in Examples (2) and (3), have also been sought on the web:

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.southernhistory.co/2015\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.southernhistory.co/2015_01_01_archive.html). Date of access: [06.06.2017].

<sup>9</sup> In linguistic endeavors the need to study manuscripts is clear, but edited versions ought not to be discarded. When dealing with the transcribed material one has to be very cautious to avoid the possible pitfalls of unfaithful or careless rendering of the originals.

<sup>10</sup> An asterisk after a slash in “*but/\* remains you \**” has been used to search for cases of such other alternatives as *so remains*, *and/only* and *also remains*.

- (2) nothing more at present but remains yo Deare wife and children un till death [A. E. Murph; Lincoln County, North Carolina; July 5, 1863].<sup>11</sup>
- (3) Nothing more at present to say, but remains you acquaintance [Abram Blackford; Monrovia, Liberia; September 9, 1844].<sup>12</sup>

Instances of letters appearing as reprints have been excluded. Every single case found on the Internet has been handled manually and fed into an Excel file and tagged appropriately.

It must be emphasized at this point that vernacularity (of letters) is the key notion in the present study due to the initial hypothesis that the presence of -s on *remain* is exactly heavily dependent on the letters' level(s) of vernacularity, especially in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This hypothesis is assumed to find its empirical verification in the remaining parts of the paper.

Due to the geographical and social homogeneity of Dylewski's (2013) corpus, its structure and results he obtained are presented separately, whenever applicable.

## 2.1. Corpus I (Dylewski 2013)

As stated above, Dylewski's (2013) findings have been used as a starting point for the present study. He obtained his results on the basis of a corpus comprising 209 vernacular letters, amounting to 71,500 words (Dylewski 2013: 185). The correspondence written by exclusively privates to the ones left back home was culled from three counties of northwestern South Carolina: Pickens, Greenville, and York.

These are all letters written by Civil War soldiers who, prior to the onset of the war, were either craftsmen or farmers. The spelling, orthography, and grammar of their letters are indicative of their being poor writers who for the most part struggled to string words together.

As well as the original manuscripts,<sup>13</sup> Dylewski (2013) made use of letters found in edited collections. These, however, had been approached with appropriate caution: the fidelity of the transcriptions was randomly checked against samples of available originals.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2. Corpus II – the 19<sup>th</sup>-century corpus of private correspondence

Corpus II comprises 19<sup>th</sup>-century correspondence and has been divided into three sub-corpora on the basis of the character of letters and their geographical provenance. In the process of its compilation some of the following were pursued:

<sup>11</sup> "Private Voices"; <http://altchive.org/private-voices/node/9211>. Date of access: [07.08.2017].

<sup>12</sup> In Blassingame (1977: 62).

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion in Dylewski (2013: 170-173).

<sup>14</sup> For a more elaborate discussion of the choice of material and plausible editorial practices, cf. Dylewski (2013).

(a) selected Schneider's (2002) principles which sanction the suitability of a given text for variationist studies and (b) the methodology of textual selection of Urbańska (2009).

In the case of (a), Schneider's (2002) assumptions are that (1) texts should approximate vernacular style, thus formal and literary pieces of writing should not be taken into account; (2) they should come from "... several authors from different social classes, possibly also age groups, and both sexes, and should represent varying stylistic levels" (2002: 71);<sup>15</sup> (3) they ought to exhibit variability of the phenomena which are to be sought, and (4) they should be sizeable enough as to allow for qualitative analysis. Because my initial assumption was that the use of -s-marked forms might be dependent on the levels of letter vernacularity, I partially disregarded Schneider's assumption (1) simultaneously adapting Urbańska's (2009) approach.

In her (2009) master's thesis devoted to variation between *was* and *were* in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Civil War letters from New England, Urbańska distinguishes between three sub-corpora: "vernacular", "less-standard", and "standard". While her last sub-corpus comprising letters which do not diverge from present-day standard does not require explanation, the difference between the former two needs a word of clarification: this discrepancy lies in the presence of semi-phonetic spellings. Thus, "the "less standard" collection of letters contains grammatical peculiarities, but orthography does not diverge from what one calls present-day English standard", whereas the vernacular sub-corpus "contains both grammatical variation and semi-phonetic spellings" (Dylewski 2013: 106, fn. 69).

Accordingly, I compiled three sub-corpora of private letters – "vernacular", "semi-vernacular", and "not vernacular" – depicting varying levels of vernacularity. I have presumed that letters belonging to the category "vernacular" are those replete with semi-phonetic spellings and specimens of grammar which would nowadays be deemed faulty. Semi-vernacular correspondence, in turn, would be that whose orthography, morphosyntax, and wording display certain deviations from modern standards, but in general they are characterized by only a handful of elements ostensibly "nonstandard". The "not vernacular"<sup>16</sup> category includes the material that exhibits no divergence from present-day normative rules with respect to the adopted spelling practices, morphology, and syntax.

When it comes to the corpus in its entirety, the compilation of letters from a vast array of sources allowed for tailoring the corpus of 19<sup>th</sup>-century

<sup>15</sup> Differences in the use of -s-forms between men and women or users representing various age groups are beyond the scope of the present study. Accordingly, a part of Schneider's second requirement is not met here.

<sup>16</sup> The term "standard" is avoided here purposefully, since, in my understanding in the first place (non-) standardness is not appropriate to the fluid linguistic situation of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century (Southern) American Englishes. Secondly, letters in Corpus II also come from across the ocean; hence, one ought to talk here about a number of standards (be it Southern American, Irish, Scottish) or even the epistolary standard of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

correspondence of varying degree of vernacularity (see Table 1).<sup>17</sup> It amounts to 227,157 words and comprises 781 letters representing not only the US, but also the British Isles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The culled material also contains a sub-corpus defined as “other” briefly described at the end of this section.

Table 1. Corpus II – the 19<sup>th</sup>-century corpus of private correspondence

Letter type Letter provenance	vernacular		semi-vernacular		not vernacular	
	number of letters	number of words	number of letters	number of words	number of letters	number of words
American South	141	45,036	58	15,398	72	18,028
American North	66	17,345	70	18,863	68	15,303
Scotland	40	11,419	29	8,214	35	11,645
Ireland	29	10,290	22	7,001	21	6,872
England	31	9,109	33	9,982	47	13,008
Other	9	3,845	4	2,890	6	2,909
Total:	316	97,044	216	62,348	249	67,765

The sources from which the letters were culled are far too numerous to be dealt with in detail: in the majority of cases these were individual letters scattered across websites of libraries, archives, historical societies, existing corpora as well as letters drawn from edited collections. For the sake of brevity, the choice of the material is shortly tackled below.

In the case of letters coming from the Southern United States preference was given to the ones coming from the states other than the ones covered by Dylewski’s (2013) corpus.<sup>18</sup> As for the American material coming from the Northern states, it was compiled from various sources ranging from original letters collected by me in various archives and libraries scattered in New England, Boston, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, facsimiles of letter collections available in rich on-line repositories to selected correspondence available in edited collections.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The corpus is skewed toward letters originating in the US due to their (increasing) opulence both in edited collections and various websites.

<sup>18</sup> Thus, for example letters coming from the printed collection of correspondence published by Wilson (2004) and written by a Civil War soldier from Bland County, Virginia, Thomas O. Wilson as well as his wife, and members of their close-knit network (family, friends, and acquaintances) were included.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, Silber and Sievens (1996) or Marshall (1999).

In a similar vein, letters which made their way to the “Scottish”, “Irish”, and “English” parts of the corpus were compiled from various sources: letters found in available corpora<sup>20</sup> as well as the ones constituting edited collections;<sup>21</sup> apart from these, facsimiles found on the Internet were also included in the corpus. Finally, the “other” sub-corpus groups letters written by former slaves from Liberia as well as correspondence written by African Americans during the American Civil War.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. Formulaic expressions – preliminaries

Letters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century preserved a fixed layout, and one might say, even traditional for the time, which appears in the following way:<sup>23</sup>

formulaic opening <--> body of a letter <--> formulaic closing  
(address, salutation, invocation)

This layout was also present in informal letters of vernacular nature, whose authors had a low level of literacy and whose grammar, spelling, and punctuation diverged from present-day standards. In the context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish emigrants’ letters, Dossena (2012: 48) tells us that correspondence would be inestimable in maintaining social relations between distant correspondents: this meant that formality inherent in the written medium was to be reconciled by both relative informality of the content of the letter and the friendliness of the exchange *per se* and her claim is pertinent to the present discussion. This mixture of formality and informality resulted in “what Jones (2005: 24, quoting Fitzpatrick 1994: 22) has labelled a ‘sandwich’ format. In this format stereotypical salutations and farewell formulae precede and follow the text of the message (Austin 2004), which goes beyond the recommended models and in which the actual meaning and (vernacular) linguistic choices of the encoder are reflected” (Dossena 2012: 48).

This is corroborated by Allen (2015: 208) and Henkin (2008). The former maintains that less-educated authors of letters demonstrate a certain acquaintance with letter writing practices, which finds its manifestation in the conventional layout of pages. She also notes that it seems clear that authors were aware of

<sup>20</sup> Among other sources, I have used correspondence being a part of the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (2006) or *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers* (ARCHER).

<sup>21</sup> Some of the Irish correspondence, in turn, comes from Miller *et al* (2003).

<sup>22</sup> For example, selected letters written by African Americans, but for the ones found on the Internet, were taken from Berlin *et al* (1982); letters from Liberia were found in Wiley (1980).

<sup>23</sup> Of course, but for the date, addressee, signature, etc.

the repertoire of “proper forms and formulaic phrases for beginning and ending letters, although their choices might often have been considered inappropriate by those higher up the social scale” (Allen 2015: 208).

The latter points out in reference to the resources in question, “...much of what appeared in personal letter during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (and no doubt subsequently) was highly formulaic”. He goes on to say that:

This was, in fact, one of the most important senses in which ostensibly private correspondence was conspicuously public. Broadly shared conventions of salutation, address, and expression forged a powerful link between the individual letter and a larger epistolary discourse. Letter-writing formulas and clichés were largely matters of propriety and habit. They provided reassurances that an author was qualified and experienced in the practice of correspondence, and thus they could be useful in enabling, excusing, or even disclaiming whatever intimacy might follow. Formulas, in other words, explicitly framed the intimacy of a personal letter as a particular instance of a popular practice subject to norms and conventions (Henkin 2008: 111).

Typical invocations beginning personal letters included “having an opportunity to write”, and “taking pen in hand”, and, as Henkin (2008: 113) posits, their aim was not to capture “the goals and values of correspondence”, but to mark “a piece of writing as properly epistolary”. He (2008: 113) further explains that:

The ubiquitous invocation of the “opportunity” to write, which was typically “embraced” or, slightly less frequently, “improved” (both expressions mean to capitalize upon), was a relic of an earlier era when letter-writing occasions were typically created by the fortuitous availability of a personal courier. It may not be coincidental that the words *embrace* and *improve*, which emphasized two different sets of values central to correspondence (interpersonal intimacy and literate upward mobility), loomed so large in the formulaic opening (on occasion the recipient might replace the opportunity as the direct object of the intended embrace), but surely for most users those terms had lost much of their edge.

Henkin (2008) also comments that conventional letter-opening formulae seem to have been extremely popular among such writers for whom writing correspondence was by no means a usual practice. “Enslaved African-Americans, recent immigrants from Europe, female mill workers just off the farm, Civil War soldiers from small towns, and rural migrants heading westward” relied “upon standard announcements about taking pens in hand, embracing opportunities, writing a few lines, and hoping the reader is enjoying the same blessing of good health” (Henkin 2008: 113).

In general, the usage of conventionalized formulae and clichés by writers were indicative of their status. As early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (and possibly a little earlier) fixed formulae of the kind seemed to be falling into obsolescence in the use of educated writers; they were, nonetheless, still grasped by those who

struggled with letter-writing or were simply less gifted correspondents; the less trained letter authors apparently modeled their writings on the letters they had earlier received (Decker 1998: 95) and it is highly likely that these were then read aloud. As a consequence, the correspondence would usually be prefaced and finished with certain commonplace beginnings and endings, which would usually be imperfectly rendered. As Decker (1998: 95) writes in the context of formulae used as letter-openers:

When Abream Scriven begins the letter to his wife with the phrase, “I take the pleasure of writing you these few with much regret to inform you that I am Sold,” the first nine words create the impression of a conventional opening grasped hurriedly (and fragmentarily, as “these few” are an obvious truncation of the phrase “these few lines”) to deliver a message in which no pleasure can be taken, yet the line serves Scriven as a way to commence the writing of his experience. For many letter writers, the clichés of the genre are part of its condition and are instrumental in articulating epistolary relationships.

As indicated in the introduction to the present paper, the morphosyntactic structure of conventionalized formulae, which frequently defies the rules of modern grammar, has hitherto been insufficiently explored (see Dylewski 2013). Generally, in discussing the structure of earlier personal letters and formulaic expressions used to open and close this type of correspondence, the authors focus on the functions of these formulaic expressions, but not on the apparent “ungrammaticality” of some of them.

Only relatively recently does Pietsch (2015: 225) touch upon the issue of *-s*-marked *remain* while elaborating on archaic elements in historic Irish emigrant letters. He claims that not only does the “no more but remains” salutation formula represent an example of archaic wording in the writings of 19<sup>th</sup>-century emigrants of Irish or Scottish extraction, but it also:

regularly displays a conspicuous non-standard grammatical feature: the use of the verbal *-s* on the final verb (typically *remains*, *concludes* or similar). It is typically part of a subjectless clause linked to the preceding context by a coordinating device (*but* or *and so*), with the writer as the understood subject (often, but not always, with an anaphoric reference to an overt instance of a subject *I* in a preceding clause). In letters from more literate English writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the formula was still part of educated repertoire, the verb regularly appears in the *s*-less base form...

Pietsch goes on to say that verbal *-s* on *remain*<sup>24</sup> does not occur in late eighteenth-century English letters written by less educated writers (from the *Corpus of Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Prose*), but it does in the examples drawn from

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<sup>24</sup> Or some other verbs: *conclude*, *rest*, etc.

the *Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots (HCOS)* and the *Hamburg Corpus of Irish English (HCIE)*; below is an example from the *HCIE*:<sup>25</sup>

- (4) So may God Bless you and watch Over you untill we meet again no more at present But Remains your Affectionate Father & mother till Death (McKeowon, 1881; in Pietsch 2015: 126).

The presence of the *-s* marked variant of *remain* in the formula *but remain* is hard to account for, as Pietsch (2015) admits. He (2015: 226) observes that

It is not entirely clear from these letters what exactly motivates the *-s* form in these contexts. Is it simply the effect of the dialectal northern *-s* rule, which was part of the local vernacular in much of Ireland and would have been available to many of the writers in the corpus, just as it was to the Scots writers in the seventeenth-century examples... However, the ‘but remains’ formula is also found in the letters of writers whose English is otherwise fairly close to the standard, and who avoid non-standard verbal *-s* elsewhere. The verbal *-s* tends to appear with much greater regularity in the salutation formula than it does elsewhere in the letters. Or is the usage to be explained as a syntactic reanalysis, such that the salutation formula was felt to be a subject-verb inversion structure, with the writer’s signature acting as a postponed grammatical subject, hence demanding a verb in the regular third person singular form? Did the availability of verbal *-s* in the vernacular and its occurrence in perceived models of standard English reinforce each other to produce this stereotyped usage? Whatever the motivation, the crucial fact is that we are dealing with a structure that is neither part of the authentic local vernacular nor of authentic contemporary standard English, but part of a specific, localized practice of letter writing, which had its own linguistic rules.

The questions raised by Pietsch (2015) and cited above demand a response. The discussion that follows constitutes an attempt to evaluate both qualitatively and quantitatively the 19<sup>th</sup>-century status and (earlier) potential derivation of both *but remain(s)* and *I/we remain(s)*. The investigation starts with an analysis of these two formulae in the corpus of Civil War letters written by inexperienced writers.

### 3.2. Results

#### 3.2.1. Two types of formulaic expressions with variation of verbal *-s* in Civil War correspondence (based on Dylewski (2013))

As previously discussed, verbal *-s* exhibits variation in two kinds of formulae for the sake of convenience referred to here as the *I remain(s)*-type (the type headed by a 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronoun, either *I* or *we* and including

<sup>25</sup> It seems evident that all examples mentioned in Pietsch (2015) are subjectless clauses with *remain* and there are no formulae where the 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronoun(s) are present, as in *I/we remains*.

such formulae as in: “*I remain(s) your beloved husband*”, etc.), and the *but remain(s)*-type (strings without an overt subject, as in: “(no more at preasant) *but/so/also/and/only remains your humble servant*”). Data for both have been gleaned from the corpus of vernacular letters described above. Numerical data for these two formulae are grouped in Table 2.

Table 2. Two kinds of formulae in Corpus I

Type	<i>I remain(s)</i> -type		<i>but remain(s)</i> -type	
Ending	-s	-Ø	-s	-Ø
Total	31/34 (91.2%)	3/34 (8.8%)	24/24 (100%)	0/24 (0%)

As evident in Table above, in this corpus the purportedly “ungrammatical” variant is by far the dominant (Dylewski 2013: 229).<sup>26</sup> An interesting case found amongst collected -s-marked forms calls for attention. It is exemplified by Example 5, where the presence of the modal verb *shall* does not prevent the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular marker form appearing on the verb *remain*:

(5) I Shall Remains your Soon [William T Martin; Richmond; July 21, 1862].

In this corpus one letter writer in particular, William T. Martin, is a heavy user of *I remains*: 28 out of the 31 recorded cases were encountered in his correspondence. In only one case, however, is he inconsistent in the pattern he uses (Example 6) and in this one we can find an instance without -s:

(6) I Remaine your loving son untill Death [William T. Martin; Sullivan’s Island; November 10, 1861].

In the case of the *but remain(s)*-type of formula, *remain* categorically occurs with the -s ending (as in Example 7).

(7) so no moer at pres ant but remains your affectionate brother until Death [William Templeton; Culpepper; November 20, 1862].

### 3.2.2. Two types of formulaic expressions with variation of verbal -s: *Corpus and Internet data*

Table 3 below pools the results recorded in Corpus II; because more numerous attestations than the ones retrieved from Corpus I allow for it, in the sections to follow the two types of expressions are dealt with separately.

<sup>26</sup> Dylewski (2013) treats *I/we remains* and *but remains* together; accordingly, the numbers given in Dylewski (2013) differ from the ones given here.

Table 3. Two kinds of formulae in Corpus II

Type	<i>I remain(s)-type</i>		<i>but remain(s)-type</i>	
Ending	-s	-Ø	-s	-Ø
Total	21/134 (15.7%)	113/134 (84.3%)	127/183 (69.4%)	56/183 (30.6%)

**(a1) *I remain(s)-type (Corpus II data)***

In the corpus under discussion 21 cases of both *I remains* and *we remains* have been recorded; these are broken down in Table 4 according to types of letters and their geographical provenance.

Table 4. Geographical and letter-type dispersal of *I remain(s)-type* in Corpus II

Letter type Letter provenance	vernacular		semi-vernacular		not vernacular	
	-s	-Ø	-s	-Ø	-s	-Ø
American South	12/21 [0.27]	49/57 [1.1]	0/1	8/20 [0.52]	0/0	9/36 [0.5]
American North	1/21 [0.06]	2/57 [0.16]	0/1	3/20 [0.16]	0/0	6/36 [0.4]
Scotland	0/21	3/57 [0.26]	0/1	4/20 [0.49]	0/0	6/36 [0.52]
Ireland	0/21	2/57 [0.19]	0/1	2/20 [0.29]	0/0	7/36 [1.02]
Britain	6/21 [0.66]	1/57 [0.11]	0/1	2/20 [0.2]	0/0	5/36 [0.38]
other	2/21 [0.52]	0/57	0/1	1/20 [0.35]	0/0	3/36 [1.03]
Total:	21/21 (100%)	57/113 (50.4%)	0/21 (0.0%)	20/113 (17.7%)	0/21 (0.0%)	36/113 (31.9%)

\* Results calculated into normalized frequencies per 1000 words.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the table above: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century verbal *-s* on *remain* accompanied by the 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronoun seems to have been (a) solely confined to letters of vernacular nature (21/21 = 100% attested cases of *I/we remains*), thus the ones displaying elements of vernacular grammar, "erratic"<sup>27</sup> spelling and problematic/no punctuation and (b) region-specific, largely confined to the correspondence which came from under the

<sup>27</sup> Of course, from the 21<sup>st</sup>-century perspective.

pens of British authors and American Southerners. As for the British ones, all attestations of *-s*-marked forms come from letters of British Northerners. Even though 1 instance out of 6 has been found in a letter addressed from India (Example 8), its close inspection revealed that it is actually a letter representing the dialect of the north of England.<sup>28</sup>

- (8) At all events measter thought so and made me a present of money to the vally of twenty pounds. He wun a matter of a hundred; I remains your loving brother [John Dockery; India; *New Sporting Magazine* 9; 1835: 170].

However, the greatest number of raw tokens (12/21 = approximately 57%) come from the American South (see examples: 9-10), interestingly from the Civil War correspondence (11/12 cases):

- (9) Tell Car howda so no more at present only I remains your son as ever [E.P. Landers; Richmond; 25 October 1861].<sup>29</sup>
- (10) I hope to hear from you soon we remains yours forever [Wm Brown & Evelena Brown; Fort Adams; 22 January 1864].<sup>30</sup>

Two cases with the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular marker have also been recorded in letters of two former slaves writing from Liberia. Bearing in mind the historical links between White Southern American English and African American English (see: Montgomery and Fuller 1996; Cukor-Avila 2001; Kautzsch 2000, 2002), these two might have fallen into the American South sub-corpus; the sake of transparency, however, dictated otherwise.

Finally, 1 case (Example 11) has been instanced in the letter of the Pennsylvania-based Unionist:<sup>31</sup>

- (11) we are going back to Pennsylvania to do provost duty but I can hardly believe it there is always flying throuh camp I must now close for the present but we remains your friend AJ Campbell [Andrew Campbell; Newbern; April 12, 1863].<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The letter was a report sent by John Dockery to his brother in Tadcaster. The style is highly vernacular and the letter *per se* contains references to Tadcaster which indicates that this was the former place of residence of John Dockery (for example: ... “the gooses being not quite so big as our Tadcaster uns. But the rats beats ourn ollur”). This has led me to treat this material as the one representing Northern England English.

<sup>29</sup> In: Roberson (1996: 145).

<sup>30</sup> In: Sewall (2009: 74).

<sup>31</sup> For its more elaborate discussion, see Conclusions.

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view\\_letter&Letter=870](http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view_letter&Letter=870). Date of access: [29.05.2017].

Historical data discussed in the conclusion show that the *-s* ending on *remain* could be brought mainly to the Southern States by the waves of Scottish-Irish through Pennsylvania.

**(a2) *I remain(s)-type: Internet search***

As stated earlier, an additional Internet search has been carried out with the aim to check if the usage of *remains* with *I/we* has been used prior to and/or gone past the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It allowed for a retrieval of one late 18<sup>th</sup>-century example (see Example 36) and one case of *I remains* from 20<sup>th</sup>-century fiction: in a letter included in an anti-war novel by Irene Rathbone first published in 1932. In fact there are two subsequent letters in the novel which are of interest at this point. The first was received by the main protagonist from a soldier named Tupper. The letter ends as follows:

- (12) I remains your sincerely friend, ‘Pte. TUPPER, Buffs’ (Rathbone 1988: 82).

It is worth noting that the use of an *-s* marked variant is attributed to a soldier who ostensibly had certain difficulties with correct spelling practices, as the extract below indicates (italics mine):

- (13) I hope you are all *write* as I am... Dear Joan if you write I will *answere* it as I have not got *anythink* else to do only write to Mother every day (Rathbone 1988: 81-82).

In the second letter, of different authorship, the *-s*-less form of *remain* is recorded in the letter-closing formula:

- (14) I remain your affectionate HINKLEY (Rathbone 1988: 82).

Here, nonetheless, the author of the letter makes no orthographic mistakes of the kind shown in Example 13. The presence of *-s* on *remain* and the accompanying spelling idiosyncrasies found in the body of Tupper’s letter are reminiscent of the vernacular letters written in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bearing in mind that no other 20<sup>th</sup>-century attestations of *I/we remains* have been recorded, one might assume that Rathbone modeled the epistolary style of an allegedly unlettered soldier on the existing letters, presumably from the Civil War (and, supposedly, the earlier ones).

All things considered, the instances of *I/we remains* largely originating either from the Southern Civil War letters<sup>33</sup> or the northern parts of the British

<sup>33</sup> It might, however, also be stated that the picture we get might be skewed by the richness of American Civil War letters available today on the World Wide Web.

Isles, might serve as a further piece of evidence<sup>34</sup> supporting the hypothesis of solid transoceanic links between Southern American Englishes and donor dialects, specifically Northern Englishes (see the concluding remarks).

**(b1) but remain(s)-type (Corpus II data)**

The search of the corpus retrieved 127 cases of the string *but/so/also/and/only remains* alongside *your/you (affectionate/humble...) son, daughter, servant*, etc. as well as 56 cases of zero-ended *remain*. In the discussion to follow, the regional distribution, the time-span of the presence of *but remains* and *but remain* as well as the levels of vernacularity are to be dealt with.

First, regarding the regional dispersal of the cases at issue, interestingly, the search generated the following cases given below in a tabulated form (Table 5).

Table 5. Geographical and letter-type dispersal of *but remain(s)*-type in Corpus II

Letter type Letter provenance	vernacular		semi-vernacular		not vernacular	
	-s	-Ø	-s	-Ø	-s	-Ø
American South	70/127 [1.6]	2/56 [0.04]	11/127 [0.7]	6/56 [0.4]	6/127 [0.3]	18/56 [1.0]
American North	2/127 [0.1]	0	2/127 [0.1]	3/56 [0.2]	2/127 [0.1]	15/56 [1.0]
Scotland	4/127 [0.4]	0	0	0	3/127 [0.3]	2/56 [0.2]
Ireland	15/127 [1.4]	0	8/127 [1.1]	1/56 [0.1]	0	4/56 [0.6]
Britain	3/127 [0.3]	0	0	0	0	2/56 [0.2]
other	1/127 [0.3]	1/56 [0.3]	0	0	0	2/56 [0.7]
Total:	95/127 (74.8%)	3/56 (5.3%)	21/127 (16.5%)	10/56 (17.9%)	11/127 (8.7%)	43/56 (76.8%)

\* Raw frequencies have been calculated into normalized frequencies per 1,000 words.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Montgomery (among other publications, Montgomery 1997a and b; Montgomery 2000) has sought to document various grammatical, lexical, and phonetic phenomena which were transplanted from Ulster Scots (but not exclusively) to the new linguistic setting of the USA.

Figure 1, in turn, presents graphically the geographical distribution of *-s* vs *-Ø* on *remain*, where all cases of *-s*-full and *s*-less variants have been pooled together from respective letter types and calculated against the corpus size.

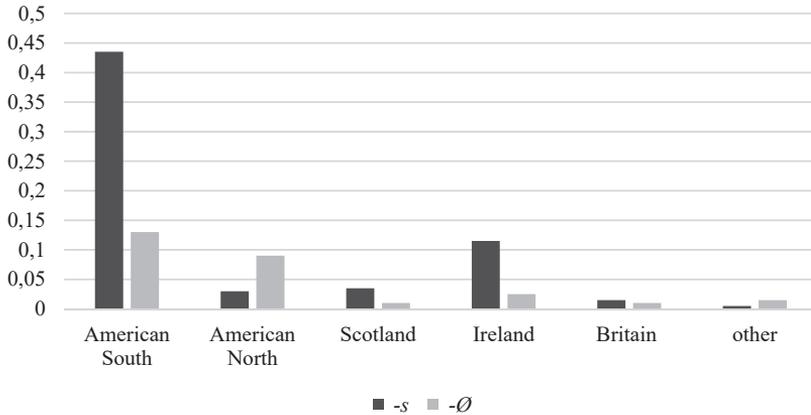


Figure 1. The geographical concentration of *-s*-full and *-s*-less forms of *remain* in Corpus II

It is evident that *remain* with the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person singular marker is most common in the letters representing the American South. Not much can be said about other regions from which just a few cases have been recorded. *But remains*<sup>35</sup> dominates over *but remain* in both Irish and Scottish correspondence (it is a slight domination in the case of the latter). Three individual attestations of *but remains* have also been recorded in the letters coming from northern parts of Britain, whereas two instances of the endless variant have been found in letters coming from the London area. In the category dubbed here “other”, scant cases of both *but remains* and *but remain* have been found in letters from Liberia and the ones produced by African American soldiers during the Civil War.

Interestingly, when compared to the American South, the situation is reversed in the letters drawn from Northern American states, where the domination of *but remain* is visible.

Second, the level of vernacularity seemed to play a role in the distribution of *but remains* (see Table 5 above and Figure 2 below).

As evident in Figure 2, the presence of *-s* on *remain* is highly conditioned by vernacularity levels: the more replete with semi-phonetic orthography, “erratic” morphosyntax, and problematic, or nonexistent, punctuation letters are, the more is their likelihood of containing *but remains*.

<sup>35</sup> Alongside their variants.

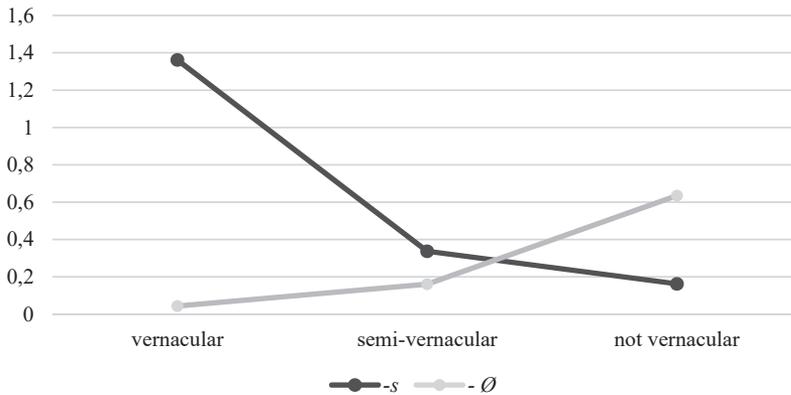


Figure 2. Distribution of *but remains* and *but remain* as dependent on the levels of letter vernacularity

It is important to note that 11/127 instances (8.7%) were recorded in those letters whose authors do not otherwise violate subject-verb agreement and whose grammar in general does not deviate from modern normative rules. This observation is in accordance with that of Pietsch (2015: 226), who noticed exactly the same phenomenon in the context of Irish letter writers. “[T]he ‘but remains’ formula is also found in the letters of writers whose English is otherwise fairly close to the standard, and who avoid non-standard verbal *-s* elsewhere,” and – of pertinence to the context of the present paper – “the verbal *-s* tends to appear with much greater regularity in the salutation formula than it does elsewhere in the letters” (Pietsch 2015: 226).

### **(b2) *but remain(s)*-type (Internet search)**

An Internet search carried out to verify the hypothesis of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century popularity of *but remains* also yielded isolated 18<sup>th</sup>-century attestations as well as the ones in which *remains* gives place to *rests*.<sup>36</sup> Two pertinent facts are worthy of note: a) these isolated cases were detected in letters written by Scottish authors (see Example 15, found in a fictional letter from the novel of Tobias Smollett,<sup>37</sup> an author of Scottish origin); b) as the grammar, lexical choices, and punctuation of the letter indicate, their authors were skilled writers (Example 15):

<sup>36</sup> See the section devoted to *hypothesis four* for more discussion on *I rest* present in earlier Scottish correspondence.

<sup>37</sup> “The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle”. Available at: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/smollett/tobias/pickle/>. Date of access: [02.02.2017].

- (15) I should be glad to see you at the Garrison, if the wind of your inclination sits that way; and mayhap it may be a comfort to your aunt to behold you alongside of her, when her anchor is a-peak. So no more at present, but rests

“ Your friend.

“ And humble servant to command,

JOHN HATCHWAY.”<sup>38</sup>

(Smollett 1821: 442)

A further search on the Internet unearthed other cases of formulae with *rest*, for instance Example 16, where *so rests* occurs in a vernacular letter produced also by an author of Scottish extraction:

- (16) Not Omiting my lord his most loveing remembrance to zow, and all the bairnes altho zour some hugh will not grant to cum wast be no meanes, So restis. Zour most a?ffectionat love To serue zow [Anna Hay; Seton; September 8, 1617].<sup>39</sup>

The Scottish usage of this formula finds its support in the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (s.v. *rest* v.<sup>2</sup>)<sup>40</sup> which gives the following definition of *rest* (which might be related not only to *but rests*, but also *but remains*): “b. To remain (to be done or dealt with). Also const. clause compl. and with ellipsis of comp.”. This meaning is exemplified in the dictionary, *inter alia*, by the following:

- (17) Nothing resteth, but that we lay our grievances before ... Jesus

The definition above suggests that *rest*, in the meaning of *remain*, could occur with an ellipted complement, which is in line with some of the cases dealt with here. Also, formulae with *remain* headed by *nothing* are also present in Southern American correspondence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

- (18) Moody’s dog left us in Guilford County and we wish to know if he got back (he did return two weeks later). Nothing more remains.  
Your affectionate brother [John Fowler; Hopkins County, Kentucky; May 17, 1849]<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Original punctuation and page layout have been preserved.

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/14/meurman-solin\\_a/index.html](http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/14/meurman-solin_a/index.html). Date of access: [20.01.2017].

<sup>40</sup> Available at: [www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk). Date of access: [20.01.2017].

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/fowler/9116/>. Date of access: [20.01.2017].

### 3.2.3. Other cases

Amongst the recorded cases not discussed thus far, in the American South sub-corpus there are also instances in which either the verb *remain* or the whole two-word string is not present (see Examples 19 and 20):

- (19) Louisa has the history of our trip you can her her red it and you will now whar we slept and when we got her So no more at present but  $\emptyset$  your husband till deth [John E. Jacobs; Richmond; August 2, 1862].<sup>42</sup>
- (20) I will add no more at this time hoping this may find all well no more  $\emptyset$  your affectionate husband [Daniel Brown Boutinghouse; Chappel Hill; October 9, 1863].<sup>43</sup>

As Meurman-Solin (2012: 188) observed, letter-closing formulae in 16<sup>th</sup>-century and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish epistolary prose might “also occur as reduced forms of fuller variants”. This observation is also applicable to 19<sup>th</sup>-century (American) vernacular letters. On the one hand, the presence of such reduced forms in both early Scottish and American correspondence might be purely coincidental. On the other, these forms might serve as a piece of evidence for transoceanic links between American and, in this particular case, Scottish epistolary traditions.

### 3.3. Plausible grammatical explanation of *but/so/also/and/only remains* and *I/we remains*

Examples found in the analyzed body of letters make it possible to venture the following hypotheses as to the plausible origin of constructions *but/so/also/and/only remains* and *I/we remains*.

#### (a) Hypothesis one: the (in)dependence of *-s* on *remain* in *but/so/also/and/only remains* (of)/on the subsequent nominal phrase

The presence of *-s* on *remain* in *but/so/also/and/only remains* may be explained by the fact that it is caused by the single referent following it (see Example 21 below). This hypothesis, however, can be undermined by the following examples (22 and 23), where the referent is either a noun phrase consisting of conjoined nouns in singular or a noun phrase in plural:

- (21) I will bring my few lines to a close so no more at present but remains your affectionate son as ever to his mother [William C. Penland; Zollicoffer Sullivan County East Tenn.; March 23, 1863].<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> In: Jones (2007: 131).

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.whispersfromthepast.net/letters.html>. Date of access: [09.01.2017].

<sup>44</sup> [www.blindpigandtheacorn.com/blind\\_pig\\_the\\_acorn/2014/09/march-23-1863-headquarters-65th-n-c-regt-letter-8.html](http://www.blindpigandtheacorn.com/blind_pig_the_acorn/2014/09/march-23-1863-headquarters-65th-n-c-regt-letter-8.html). Date of access: [11.10.2015].

- (22) but Remains your Affectionate unkle and family until death [William Dunne; Belfast; November 16, 1846].<sup>45</sup>
- (23) No more at present but remains your affectionate parents  
Nathan and Rebecca Sullins [Nathan and Rebecca Sullins; Athens Tenn.; April 19 1848].<sup>46</sup>

One may clearly postulate that in Example 22 the proximity of a noun in the singular form is a factor triggering the appearance of a marked 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verb form. However, the following case (Example 23) seems to indicate that the presence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular marker is independent of the following nominal phrase. This assumption is corroborated by *but remains* found in contexts where it is separated from the remaining part of the formula by a comma or a line break; in a number of attestations (see Table 6) the rest of the letter-closing is indeed found in the next line, as shown in Example 23 above and Example 24 provided below:

- (24) Larry Runian and wife are on the Iland and sister ill of feaver. Mrs. Do-land Connor and family are well the Husband is in the states.  
No more at Present But remains  
Your Son truley [FERENCE MCGOWAN; SAINT JOHN; OCTOBER 13, 1847].<sup>47</sup>

In some other examples there are commas separating *but/so/also/and/only remains* from the segments following it:

- (25) Now I must bring my letter to a close by requesting you to write to me. So no more but remains, your Son until Death [William H. Chapman; Gal- latin, Tenn].<sup>48</sup>
- (26) Excuse my short awkward letter. The children all want to see you. Nothing more at present.  
Only remains,  
your affectionate child until death from: Elizabeth Jane Cannon and family [Elizabeth Jane Cannon and family; Marion Co, Arkansas; April 2, 1857].<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> [https://hsp.org/sites/default/files/attachments/curtis\\_letter\\_1846.pdf](https://hsp.org/sites/default/files/attachments/curtis_letter_1846.pdf). Date of access: [01.12.2017].

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.thecolefamily.com/hobby/nsullinsltr.htm>. Date of access: [01.11.2017].

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.dippam.ac.uk/ied/records/32851>. Date of access: [06.01.2016].

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.tnmuseum.org/files/1143/File/tsm%20civil%20war%20interior%20pages.pdf>. Date of access: [03.02.2017]; date of the letter is not given.

<sup>49</sup> [http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rhio/EJH\\_letter\\_2.htm](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rhio/EJH_letter_2.htm). Date of access: [18.11.2017].

We see that the examples listed above corroborate the assumption that the string under discussion seems independent of the phrase following it. It ought to be mentioned in passing that in the analyzed corpora there are also cases separated by commas, where the *-s-less* variant is present.

Table 6 presents results for *but/so/also/and/only remain(s)* taken from the two corpora at issue and divided in accordance with the element(s) following this word string.

Table 6. The dependence of the *-s* vs. *-∅* ending on the following element

following element \ ending	Corpus I		Corpus II		Total
	<i>-s</i>	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-s</i>	<i>-∅</i>	
NP <sub>sing.</sub>	14 (58.3%)	0 (0%)	70 (55.1%)	22 (39.3%)	106 (51.2%)
NP <sub>pl.</sub>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (3.1%)	3 (5.4%)	7 (3.4%)
conjoined NPs (NP <sub>sing.</sub> + NP)	4 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	23 (18.1%)	16 (28.6%)	43 (20.8%)
conjoined NPs (NP <sub>pl.</sub> + NP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (1.8%)	2 (1%)
line break/coma	6 (25%)	0 (0%)	29 (22.8%)	14 (25%)	49 (23.7%)
Total	24	0	127	56	<b>207</b>

Obviously, when it comes to personal letters, especially the ones written by a soldier to family and friends (which constitute Corpus I in its entirety), there is an obvious bias toward the sequence *but/so/also/and/only remain(s)* + NP in singular due to letters' author/signer who is usually an individual (see Table 6). There are also instances, especially in Corpus II, where *but/so/also/and/only remains* precedes a line break/coma (29 raw figures = 22.8%, out of which 9 letters are signed by more than one author). Generally one can surmise that *but/so/also/and/only remain(s)*, at least for some letter writers, comprised a unit itself, independent of what followed it.

**(b) Hypothesis two: *but remains* as a remnant of the formula *but while life remains***

One plausible scenario is that *but remains* might be a remnant of the clause (*but*) *while life remains*, albeit somewhat distant, as exemplified in quotes 27-29:

- (27) so I close by saying that I am and still shall be while life remains, your affectionate husband [Thurstin Baxter; El Dorado County; April 11, 1852]<sup>50</sup>
- (28) Yet rest affur'd, I e'er *shall* be,  
While life remains,  
Your ... Friend. (*The Scots Magazine*, Volume 3; page: 565)
- (29) I will not repeat assurances of regard, but while life remains I shall remain your [Lewis Cass; Marietta; July 12, 1803]<sup>51</sup>

The last quotation (Example 29) might be used as a piece of evidence suggesting that the full variant of the conventionalized letter-closing formula was *but while life remains*; this formula, at a certain point in the history of epistolary art, began to be used in an abridged variant: as *while life remains*, or as *but remains*, especially in the letters of less skilled writers. Bearing in mind that vernacular correspondence was intended to be read out loud, the latter might indeed be a residue of a longer, letter-final polite formula imperfectly rendered by unlettered writers and, with the passing of time, extended to other coordinating devices (*so* and *only*).<sup>52</sup>

**(c) Hypothesis three: remains in and/also remains as a noun phrase**

During an analysis of the letters written by Irish immigrants to America, the following examples were recorded:

- (30) ...besure Come to Newyork and if you Cant come this year besure write to Me and My wife and Me Me Joins in Love To all friends and relations and *Remains* your Dutiful son and Daughter Whilst <living>  
[John and Jane Chambers; Freehold Township, New Jersey; March 20, 1796]<sup>53</sup>
- (31) I may say My Hannah & the Boys truly unite with me in D<sup>r</sup> Love to thee & my Dear Mother, Sister Martha & Sam to Bro Ne<sup>a</sup> & his family Uncle Jos<sup>h</sup> Smith<son> & Aunt with Cousins James Morison & Eliza & all our enquiring relations & *remains* thy Dutiful & affec<sup>t</sup> Son  
Jos Wright [Joseph Wright; McMahan's Creek, Ohio; September 25, 1803]<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> <http://californiahistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/2014/11/manuscript-mondaygold-rush.html>. Date of access: [06.08.2017].

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item\\_id=1942&mode=transcript&img\\_step=1#page1](http://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=1942&mode=transcript&img_step=1#page1). Date of access: [06.12.2017].

<sup>52</sup> The hypothesis below is hard to verify without access to more pre-19<sup>th</sup>-century letters of a vernacular character from both sides of the Atlantic.

<sup>53</sup> In: Miller et al. (2003: 199).

<sup>54</sup> In: Miller et al. (2003: 218).

The lack of punctuation impedes drawing definite conclusions, however, *remains* used in this particular context apparently does not function as a verb, but as a noun phrase conjoined with another one/other ones by means of *and/also*. Its meaning might be tantamount to the one given, for example, by the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*<sup>55</sup>: “the surviving or remaining members of a group or company of persons; those left” (s.v. *remain*, n<sup>1</sup>). The *OED*<sup>56</sup> provides a similar definition amongst the ones offered for the noun *remain*: “the remaining representative of a family or lineage. *Obs. rare*” (s.v. *remain*, n). Accordingly, the following scenario seems plausible: *and/also remains* and *but remains* took disparate paths of development. Whereas the former is a remnant of a larger noun phrase consisting of conjoined constituents (also mistakenly rendered by less-skilled writers), the latter derives from the formula described in section above, namely: *but while life remains*.

**(d) Hypothesis four: *but/so/also/and/only remains* giving rise to *I/we remains***

Thus far the emphasis has been on *but/so/also/and/only remains*. It might be assumed that not only *but/so/also/and/only remains*, but also *I remains* originated in northern parts of the British Isles and was transplanted to America with waves of settlers; such an assumption justifies looking for the predecessors of both, for instance, in Scottish and Irish correspondence.

A search of letter-final closings present in private letters from the periods preceding the 19<sup>th</sup> century was thus carried out and it indicated that both *I rest* (Examples 32 and 34) and *I remain* (Examples 33 and 34) would end the letters of Scottish writers. In Meurman-Solin’s (2013a and 2013b) articles containing specimens of earlier Scottish correspondence, these are the letters written by authors of noble origin:

- (32) we sal heir farder schortly remembir my louit to zour dochtir and hir hisband so uising zou al happienes I rest Zours louing as to my seluf [Anna Cunningham, Marchioness of Hamilton; Hamilton; October 15 c. 1600].<sup>57</sup>
- (33) I think it in my simple Iudgementt werie fitt it schuld be so bot I do lewe it to your lo self and I will euer Remyne your lo faithfull kinsman and serwantt [Patrick Murray, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Tullibardine; London; May 20, 1629].

Occasionally both *I remain* and *I rest* appeared in earlier Scottish writings in the very same sentence:

<sup>55</sup> [http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/remain\\_n\\_1](http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/remain_n_1); Date of access: [19.01.2017].

<sup>56</sup> [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com). Date of access: [02.04.2017].

<sup>57</sup> Examples 32-34 have been taken from Meurman-Solin 2013a.

- (34) ... so til new ocausioun I rest as I sall euer remain Zour mest affectiounatt self to do zou seruice [Anna Hay; Dalgatie; September 17, 1613].

The presence of *I remain* in letter-closing clichés is also noted in the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (s.v. *remain*; v) as an element appearing in the closing formula of a letter.

As for Irish letters, a close scrutiny of Irish correspondence found in Miller et al. (2003) allowed for the retrieval of cases of *I remain* exemplified underneath:

- (35) ... give my love and servis to my Cosens in generall but Espesially to your own two sons and your Daughter and her hosband not for geting your self my wife gives her servis to you and your Children I am and Remain your afectinate broth<er> whilst I am  
 James Wansbrough [James Wansbrough; Ballinlug, County Westmeath; April 18, 1728].<sup>58</sup>

Interestingly, cases of *I/we remains* – contrary to the ones with *I/we remain* – are absent before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries not only in Scottish and Irish, but also British and American correspondence found in various sources as well as the consulted dictionaries (the *OED*, the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* and the *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898-1905)).

On the basis of examples garnered thus far, it seems that *-s* on *remain* with the 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronouns is for the most part a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it appears that untutored writers mistakenly rendered *remains*, or, in other words, extended the *remains*-part of the closing *but/so/also/and/only remains* onto the formulae in which the subject was either *I* or *we*. This claim is substantiated by the fact that *but remains*, unlike *I remains*, has been attested prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century which testifies to its being an older variant.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4. Concluding remarks

The conclusions, albeit tentative in nature and in need of further in-depth scrutiny, are as follows. Firstly, earlier attestations of *but/so/also/and/only remains* recorded in the analyzed sources when compared to *I/we remains* might point to the former's being the predecessor of the latter. This is corroborated by Pietsch's (2015) findings, where he recorded already obsolescent formulae with *but remains* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Irish letters, but he reported no cases of *I remains*. Additionally, if one accepts Austin's (1973: 13) point that epistolary conventions would have been learned at home as a part of family tradition, and

<sup>58</sup> In: Miller et al. (2003: 22).

<sup>59</sup> Of course, this needs verification on the basis of greater corpora of letters predating 1800.

not through letter-writing manuals, the following conclusion might be justified: it seems that the development of *I/we remains*, as maintained in the preceding section, is actually an extension of imperfectly rendered<sup>60</sup> formula with *but/so/also/and/only remains* by less skilled letter-authors. *But remains*, in turn, seems to have been a residue of a longer formula *but while life remains* while *remains* in *and/also remains* could possibly function as a noun (in a nominal phrase whose constituents would be conjoined by either *and* or *also*).

Secondly, on the basis of analysis conducted thus far one may generally presume that *-s* marked forms with 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronouns mainly surfaced in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century correspondence of the less educated people, who were essentially unfamiliar with the intricacies of the letter-writing art of the day. On the other hand, *but/so/also/and/only remains* must have been a part of the letter-writing tradition prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as shown by Pietsch (2015). In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was already an obsolete form shunned mainly, though not exclusively, to the realm of vernacular correspondence.

Thirdly, when it comes to the geographical distribution of both word strings, it seems that both came to the United States with immigrants from the northern parts of the British Isles, more specifically, to the American South.<sup>61</sup> This claim, of course, requires substantiation on the basis of a greater body of material gathered from the two sides of the Atlantic; nonetheless, the greatest concentration of quotes coming from Scotland, Ireland, and the American South does not seem to be incidental and indicates certain links between the varieties of English of those regions. Knowing that the dialects of the northern part of the British Isles were for the most part responsible for molding Southern American Englishes (Montgomery 1997a, 1997b, 2000),<sup>62</sup> examples of Scottish (Example 36) or Irish (Example 37)<sup>63</sup> provenance might serve as evidence of a transatlantic link between donor dialects and the speeches of the American South:

- (36) we heard from London that Jenat was going to get married I wish her a good Husband and will be Glade to have advise of his Wellfare Bety is Nigh her time & You may Expect to here from me soon I have nothing more partiqular I remains your Brother [J. P. While, Campbeltown, Scotland; 20 December 1787].<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> And most probably imperfectly understood.

<sup>61</sup> Note that *-s*-marked *remain* with either *I* or *we* does not conform to the Northern Subject Rule.

<sup>62</sup> The plural form is used here on purpose since one cannot talk about Southern American English; it is a collection of sub-dialects which combined form this distinctive regional dialect.

<sup>63</sup> Please note that *I remains* appears in the two letters characterized by idiosyncratic spellings, which supports the claim of its being used in vernacular correspondence.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.ralstongenealogy.com/number35kintmag.htm>. Date of access: [21.10.2017].

- (37) I would have wrote a more fuller account to you of my affairs if I thought my leter would com to your hand. I must be don having nothing more at present. But I remains your affectionate son and daughter Joseph and Marey McClorg [Joseph and Marey McClorg; Mercer County; 28 August 1822].<sup>65</sup>

It should be mentioned that cases like the one below (Example 38 and 13 above) at first seem to indicate the spread of the -s-marked form with the 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronouns in America beyond the Southern states:

- (38) we are going back to Pennsylvania to do provost duty but I can hardly believe it thare is always flying throuh camp I must now close for the present but we remains your friend AJ Campbell  
[Andrew Campbell; Newbern; April 12, 1863].<sup>66</sup>

The letter author, Andrew Campbell, hailed from Pennsylvania, was a Unionist and a member of the 158<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry. Indeed, it seems that such a Pennsylvania-based example testifies to the geographical spread of the letter-closing in question. Bearing in mind that historically the route of Scottish, Irish, and Scots-Irish immigrants to the Southern U.S. passed through the Keystone State, instances of -s-marked *remain* recorded in Pennsylvania, the northern parts of the British Isles, and the American South *per se* come as no surprise. The point worthy of emphasis is that only one northern case of *I remains* has been found in Corpus II; even though there is an abundance of Union correspondence of various types on the Internet, only isolated cases of -s on *remain* with the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronominal subject have been found in the letters written in the Northern parts of the USA of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, bearing in mind that 11/127 (=8.7%) of cases of *but/so/also/and/only remains* have been found in the correspondence of authors whose grammar does not (in any other way) depict deviation from the present-day standard; thus, the results of the analysis also corroborate the claim of Pietsch that -s on *remain* in the structures at issue is neither a “part of the authentic local vernacular nor of authentic contemporary standard English, but part of a specific, localized practice of letter writing, which had its own linguistic rules” (Pietsch 2015: 226).

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.maclurg.com/Family/Letters/Letter12.htm>. Date of access: [29.01.2017]. Written to: “Mr David McClorg, in the County of London Derry, and to the care of the Poast Master in Newtown Limavady Bovevagh”. This letter constitutes a part of Corpus II.

<sup>66</sup> [http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view\\_letter&Letter=870](http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view_letter&Letter=870). Date of access: [21.10.2017].

Appendix. A sample of a vernacular Civil War letter

I found John J. Hyline just made and I wish in my letter that to father  
 I expected that we would be  
 added to Brantley but it is doubtful  
 whether we will be sent to there or  
 and I would be glad if we were to  
 don't go there and I will be a  
 doubtful when we will go to S. I  
 will close my my short and but  
 water letter so warm at present  
 but remains your husband  
 will call. J. D. Hyline

I fear got to tell you a hard thing  
 Hyline is not dead I heard from  
 of him the other day and he  
 was getting better

I found John J. Hyline just made and I wish in my letter that to father  
 I expected that we would be  
 added to Brantley but it is doubtful  
 whether we will be sent to there or  
 and I would be glad if we were to  
 don't go there and I will be a  
 doubtful when we will go to S. I  
 will close my my short and but  
 water letter so warm at present  
 but remains your husband  
 will call. J. D. Hyline

I found John J. Hyline just made and I wish in my letter that to father  
 I expected that we would be  
 added to Brantley but it is doubtful  
 whether we will be sent to there or  
 and I would be glad if we were to  
 don't go there and I will be a  
 doubtful when we will go to S. I  
 will close my my short and but  
 water letter so warm at present  
 but remains your husband  
 will call. J. D. Hyline

I found John J. Hyline just made and I wish in my letter that to father  
 I expected that we would be  
 added to Brantley but it is doubtful  
 whether we will be sent to there or  
 and I would be glad if we were to  
 don't go there and I will be a  
 doubtful when we will go to S. I  
 will close my my short and but  
 water letter so warm at present  
 but remains your husband  
 will call. J. D. Hyline

### Transcript:

I found John. L. Hylton Jacob Wade and Jessee P Epperly down thare in the Confederate Service They was well and seemed to be glad to see me Dennies Hylton and John W Wade had gone down to packs ferry to help fight the yankeys I did not git see them you wrote to me in your letter that Dennies mother sed that I was the cause of the exemps to be re-examined as to my part I had nothing to do with it but you can tell her that I am truly glad to here of him being in service as to the good that he will at home for he wont help any boddy if he was thare so maby he will do some good to the confederate service so maby he will hav to drill and [wont?] be sick every time that has to muster you may tell Dennis mother that he is not the king of the wourld that he must be lookt up to as a ruler his hed is not crowned with gold as he come by chance you stated in your letter that the people was more interrupted in Floyd than they had bin since thi war broke out I am sorry to here of it to see this calamity upon the people but I cant help it nor nither can I percure any remedy for it but I fear that it is just begun I wrote in my letter to Father I expected that we would be orderd to Kentucky, but it is doutful whether we will go thar and I would be glad if we dont go thare and it will be doutbul where we will go to so I will close my shorte and bad writen letter so no more at presant but remains your husband untill dethe

L. D. Hylton

I fur got to tell you a bout Elzy Pfliegar he is not ded I herd from him the other day and he was giting better<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> <http://virginiamemory.com/transcribe/scripto/transcribe/3868/10808>. Date of access: [01.08.2017]. Hylton family letter, 1862 August 13; image 2 of 2.

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