The Northern Subject Rule in the Breadalbane collection[1]

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One of the most distinctive features of Scots and northern English is the Northern Subject Rule, which governs the selection of inflections (0 vs. -S) in the present indicative depending on the type and the position of the subject. This syntactic constraint is described by Macafee in the following terms:

> In OSc (and to some extent still in ModSc) there are two systems of concord between subject and verb in the present tense. In the terminology of Montgomery,[2] if the subject is a personal pronoun (the Type of Subject Constraint), and comes immediately before (or after) the verb (the Proximity to Subject Constraint), the inflections are as follows:

Singular	1st	0
	2nd	-is
	3rd	-is
Plural	All	0

> Otherwise, the inflected form is used with all persons and numbers:

Singular	1st	-is
	2nd	-is
	3rd	-is
Plural	All	-is

> If a personal pronoun governs two conjoined verbs, the first is affected by the contiguity of the pronoun, the second not.[3]

The following examples illustrate the operation of the NSR. (1) exemplifies the Type of Subject Constraint: the subject is not a personal pronoun, but a noun phrase, and therefore the verb takes –S. (2) and (3) exemplify the Proximity to Subject Constraint: the verb takes 0 when adjacent to the personal pronoun (*have*) and –S when non-adjacent (*thankis, is*):

(1) quhone sic occationis **happynis**

'when such occasions occur'

Breadalbane Letters, GD112/39/2/17, 21 June 1563, Atholl (4th) to Argyll (5th)

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[2] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord'.
[3] Macafee, 'History of Scots', cxii.

(2) I **have** sene zour written and **thankis** zow grettumlie

'I have seen your letter and thank you greatly'

Breadalbane Letters, GD112/39/1/4, c 1555/56, MacLean of Duart to Grey Colin

(3) We resawit zowr writingis and **is** glaid of ye gud service yat Makrennald hes done

'We received your letters and are glad of the good service that Makrennald has performed'

Breadalbane Letters, GD112/39/7/4, 9 May 1563, Argyll (5th) to Grey Colin

Although the NSR is operative both in Scots and northern English, there seem to be differences between these varieties with regard to the strength of the Proximity to Subject Constraint. In studies focused on Middle English, this constraint has generally been assumed to be much less robust than the Type of Subject Constraint (cf. de Haas and Fernández Cuesta).[4] De Haas, for example, states that 'even in the core NSR area, a subject effect often occurs where it was not expected, in nonadjacent contexts. This seems to imply that the distinction between subject types is more essential to the NSR than the distinction between adjacency and non-adjacency'.[5]

The situation in Older Scots, however, is different. Montgomery finds that both constraints are just as robust in his corpus, which spans the period from the late 14th to the mid 17th centuries.[6] These findings are in line with those obtained in my study of the NSR in 14th-15th-century Scots, which show that the Proximity to Subject Constraint in first person singular contexts is near-categorical in Scots in the period 1380-1500: thus, out of a total of 371 examples in non-adjacent contexts in *The Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots* (*LAOS*), 367 take a sibilant ending (98.9%).[7]

In the present article the NSR is analysed in different grammatical contexts (plural and first person singular) in a collection of letters written in the second half of the 16th century, a period generally considered as the beginning of the decline of Scots, subject to the influence of anglicisation. The corpus for this study is the Breadalbane Collection, an online corpus of 16th-century Scottish documents edited by Jane Dawson. The interest of the source material lies, on the one hand, in its date (given the possible influence of anglicisation) and on the other, in the fact that the letters were written in an area in which the first language was not Scots but Gaelic.

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[4] De Haas, *Morphosyntactic variation*; Fernández Cuesta, 'Northern Subject Rule'; and Fernández Cuesta, 'DO periphrasis'.

[5] De Haas, *Morphosyntactic variation*, 107. Similarly Cole, in an overview of the NSR in northern Middle English and Middle Scots, mentions the fact that 'even in the historical record the effect of subject type is generally found to be stronger than that of adjacency' (Cole, *Old Northumbrian Verbal morphosyntax*, 41).

[6] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 88. He argues that 'the small number of contexts for this type of subject in the pre-seventeenth-century data do not significantly question such a conclusion, since the constraint operated at greater than 90% in all but the Grandtully letters (mid 17th century)' (ibid.).

[7] Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule', 167.

The present article aims first to determine the strength of both the Type of Subject and the Proximity to Subject Constraints in the Breadalbane Letters. The strength of the NSR in the corpus is measured by whether examples of this syntactic constraint are restricted to formulaic expressions in the opening and closing of letters, or are also found elsewhere. The findings are compared with those obtained from northern Middle English and from previous studies on Scots in order to establish whether the NSR patterns differently in northern English, 'Lowland' Scots (areas having Scots as their first language) and 'Highland' Scots (areas having Gaelic as their first language).

Since the letters date from 1548 to 1583, the study takes into account the chronological dimension and aims to determine whether the influence of the anglicisation process can be seen in the course of the 16th century with regard to this syntactic feature. The Breadalbane collection is also compared with other letters written in Scots in the same period (*Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine*) in order to establish whether this collection stands alone with regard to the NSR or not.

Finally, this study compares the results found in the Breadalbane Letters (late 16th-century Argyll) with those obtained by Montgomery in his analysis of 18th-century South Argyll,[8] and establishes a connection between both corpora, since in both cases the NSR is found to penetrate to areas having Gaelic as their first language.

The article is organized as follows: section 1 contextualizes the data. The socio-historical context of the Breadalbane Letters is described in section 1.1, and section 1.2 characterizes briefly the genre of letters. Section 2 provides a detailed quantitative analysis of the NSR in the Breadalbane Letters. The different grammatical contexts are studied in the following order: the first person singular in section 2.1, the first person plural in 2.2, the second person in 2.3, and the third person plural in 2.4. A summary of the results is offered in section 2.5. Section 3 compares the Breadalbane Collection with letters written in the same period (16th century) or the same area (Argyll). Finally, section 4 provides conclusions.

1. Introduction

1.1. The socio-historical context of the Breadalbane Letters

The corpus for this study is the Breadalbane Collection, more specifically the sixteenth-century letters it contains, dating from 1548 to 1583 and edited by Jane Dawson.[9] The letters focus on Colin Campbell, the sixth laird of Glenorchy, known also as Grey Colin, and his wife Katherine Ruthven.[10] Their main base was Breadalbane, part of the Gaelic-speaking central Highlands, but their interests and power spread to Argyll and Perthshire. The letters reveal, therefore, not only the internal workings of an important Highland clan (the Campbells being the dominant group within West

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[8] Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape'.
[9] Dawson, *Clan Campbell Letters*, and online version http://www.ed.ac.uk/divinity/research/resources/breadalbane/letters.
[10] What follows is a summary taken from the Introduction to the Campbell Letters: Dawson, *Clan Campbell Letters*, 1-8.

Highland Gaelic society in the sixteenth century), but also 'how Highland and Lowland society interacted'.[11] As Dawson argues:

> With its many layers of interest ranging from national to local affairs and covering both the Highlands and the Lowlands, this correspondence provides a sixteenth-century Scottish equivalent to the Paston Letters of fifteenth-century England.[12]

Letters in the 16th century had a different function from their modern counterparts. Their main purpose was not to exchange personal information, but to conduct business and discuss political affairs, and they were resorted to when face-to-face communication was not possible, usually because of distance. Secret information was not conveyed by letters, but entrusted to special messengers who would deliver it orally to the intended recipient and return with the replies. These messengers were normally of high social status and a close relative, and in the Highlands they were often members of the Gaelic learned orders, as these were not only highly educated, but also regarded as neutral in a dispute.[13]

With regard to the language of the letters, all are written in Scots, 'even though nearly two-thirds of them [about 200 out of 324 letters] passed between Gaelic speakers'.[14] Some were penned by scribes who were members of the Gaelic learned orders and were therefore able to write in Gaelic. According to Dawson, the choice of Scots in the Breadalbane Letters shows that it was regarded as 'the appropriate language for this type of communication. Though it is impossible to be certain in which language the letters were dictated, they give the impression of having been spoken in Scots, without any polish being added in translation'.[15]

Some Highland correspondents had to employ scribes because they were not able to write or even sign their own names.[16] The situation seems to have been different in the Lowlands, where by the 16th century literacy was common among noblemen.[17] Within the Highlands, however, literacy varied among clans, with almost all the Campbells being able to pen their own letters.[18]

Gaelic seems to have been seldom used in personal letters at that time. Bannerman reports that only two letters written in Gaelic by laymen of the sixteenth century have survived: the first was written c.1595 by Lachlan Mór MacLean to his physician, Malcolm Beaton.[19] According to Bannerman and Black, this letter 'is unique in that we possess no other document of its kind written by a person who was not a member of the

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[11] Ibid., 1.

[12] Ibid., 1.

[13] Ibid., 5-6.

[14] Ibid., 7.

[15] Ibid., 7.

[16] In GD112/39/2/4 (SHS ed. No. 4), 28 Jan 1561, the correspondent (MacDougall of Dunollie (14th)) mentions in the body of the letter that he was not able to write: 'And becaws I mycht nocht writ I cawsit ye Deyne of Lorn to subscrivit yis with his hand.' Another indication of the absence of a letter-writing culture in the Highlands was the scarcity of paper, some letters being written on small pieces of paper (Ibid., 8).

[17] Cf. Bannerman's statement: 'It has been estimated that, by 1500, at least 60 per cent of the greater nobility were able to sign their names in Scots. Such was not the case in the Highlands and many of the remaining 40 per cent belonged to his area' (Bannerman, 'Literacy', 215).

[18] Dawson, *Clan Campbell Letters*, 7.

[19] Bannerman, 'Literacy', 232.

professional learned orders of contemporary Gaelic society'.[20] The other was probably written in 1604 by Sir James MacDonald of Islay. Three Gaelic letters have also survived, dating from 1579 and addressed to kinsmen of Sir James MacDonald. Most of the extant letters written in Gaelic, therefore, involve members of the Clan Donald of Islay in contexts relating to Ireland.[21]

The linguistic situation of 16th-century Scotland is also addressed by MacGregor, who argues that by that time 'Latin and Scots had established themselves as the truly normative languages of written prose throughout the Scottish kingdom, because of their official standing within church and government at both local and national levels',[22] the process being governed by 'pragmatic and widespread acceptance of language status and roles'.[23] In Gaelic Scotland the situation seems to have depended on the area: in Argyll and the Isles, Gaelic was used to record classical Gaelic culture, both poetry and prose, but everything else, including legal texts, 'seems to have become the province of Latin and Scots'.[24] Outside the west the influence of these languages was deeper, monopolizing all types of prose, including letters.

1.2. The genre of letters

Letter-writing in England in the 15th century followed certain epistolary conventions based mainly on the principles of *ars dictaminis*, established in the Middle Ages.[25] Following these, a letter may be divided into five parts: 1. the *salutatio*, or formal greeting, 2. the *captatio benevolentiae*, a section to win the receiver's good will, 3. the *narratio* or background of the letter, 4. the *petitio* or request and 5. the *conclusio* or formal ending, normally involving a blessing and the place and date of the letter.[26]

These conventions seem to have loosened by the 16th century, as shown, for example, by Nevalainen in her analysis of the Jonson letters, edited by Barbara Winchester in the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*. The salutation is the convention that persists most consistently in her corpus and, following Christian decorum, a reference to Almighty God in the conclusion, committing the addressee to His keeping.[27]

This relaxation of the conventions can also be found in the Breadalbane Letters, which exhibit considerable variation, formulaic expressions notwithstanding, especially at the beginning and close. Different writers use different formulae, and even letters written by the same person show variation. This is in line with Nevalainen's suggestion that 'despite some linguistic conventions arising from the letter form, it is important not

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[20] Bannerman and Black, 'Gaelic letter', 62. There have also survived some letters from him in fluent Scots to Robert Bowes, the English resident in Scotland during the years 1593-1595 (ibid., 62-63). They are in the handwriting of his servitor, John Auchinross, but were dictated and signed by Lachlan Mór (ibid., 65).

[21] Bannerman, 'Literacy', 232–33.

[22] MacGregor, 'Campbells', 131-32.

[23] Ibid., 132.

[24] Ibid. Following Bannerman, 'Literacy', 232–34, MacGregor states that there is also limited evidence of its use for personal letters, although in contexts often involving Ireland.

[25] For the study of the different linguistic conventions found in early English correspondence, see Davis, 'Litera Troili'; Richardson, 'Dictamen'; Richardson, 'Ars Dictaminis'; and Nevalainen, 'Continental conventions', among others.

[26] Richardson, 'Ars Dictaminis', 56.

[27] Nevalainen, 'Continental conventions', 209-10.

to forget the sociolinguistic dimension of authentic register variation to be found in early English correspondence'.[28]

This individual variation can be illustrated by comparing the opening and closing of two letters written by Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll, on the same day:

Date: 29 January 1565
REF: GD112/39/3/14
Place: Carrick Castle (Cowal)
From: Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll
To: Colin Campbell of Glenorchy

1. Address and Salutation: Traist cousyng efter maist hairtlie commendatiounis

2. Acknowledgement of previous letter from the addressee: We rasaivit zour letter and wunderstandis be ye contenttis off ye saymin zour mynd

3. Final salute/blessing: And yis we commit zou to God.

4. Place and date of writing: Off ye Carrik ye xxix daye off Januar 1564

Date: 29 January 1565
REF: GD112/39/3/15 (SHS ed. No. 28)
Place: Carrick Castle (Cowal)
From: Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll
To: Katherine Ruthven, Lady Glenorchy

1. Address and Salutation: Ant efter maist hairtlie commendatiounis

2. Acknowledgement of previous letter from the addressee: We rasavit zour letter and wnderstandis ye contenttis of ye saymin quhilkis we thynk rasonabill

3. Final salute/blessing: And yis we commit zou to God

4. Place and date of writing: Off ye Carrik the xxix daye off Ianuare 1564

The formulae at the beginning and close of these two letters, written on the same day, are quite similar, but there are minor differences which seem to depend on the gender of the addressee: when addressing Katherine, the kinship noun stands alone (*ant*) and is not preceded by a modifying adjective (*traist*). Also in the second formula (acknowledgement of previous letter), there is a reference to the contents of the addressee's letter being reasonable, which is missing in the letters to Colin Campbell of Glenorchy.[29]

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[28] Ibid., 216.
[29] There are also differences in spelling: *rasaivit* vs. *rasavit*, *wunderstandis* vs. *wnderstandis*, *off* vs. *of*, *Januar* vs. *Ianuare*.

These differences can also be observed in two letters written by Argyll three days later to the same addressees:

Date: 1 February 1565
REF: GD112/39/3/17 (SHS ed. No. 30)
Place: Carrick Castle (Cowal)
From: Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll
To: Colin Campbell of Glenorchy

1. Address and Salutation: Traist cousyng efter maist hairtlie commendatiounis

2. Acknowledgement of previous letter from the addressee: We haiff rasavit zour wryittyng and wnderstandis ye saymin yat ze are content

3. Final salute: And yis we commit zow to God

4. Place and date: Off ye Carrik ye first day of Fabruare 1564

Date: 1 February 1565
REF: GD112/39/3/18 (SHS ed. No. 31)
Place: Carrick Castle (Cowal)
From: Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll
To: Katherine Ruthven, Lady Glenorchy

1. Address and Salutation: Ant efter maist hairtlie commendatiounis

2. Acknowledgement of previous letter from the addressee: We rasavit zour letter and wnderstandis ye saymin and thinkis it were resonabill and guid

3. Final salute/blessing: And yis we commit zou to God

4. Place and date: Off the Carrik ye first daye off Fabruare 1564

Although addressed to the same individuals only three days later, there are differences concerning not only the spelling, but also the phrasing, especially with regard to the second formula (acknowledgement of previous letter), such as the use of the present perfect instead of the past, use of *wryittyng* vs. *letter*, or the omission of *be ye contenttis off ye saymin*. Differences can also be observed in the letter addressed to Katherine: not only has the NP *ye contenttis of* been omitted, but also the relative and personal pronoun, affecting therefore the form of the following verb according to the NSR: *think* vs. *thinkis*.[30]

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[30] Although Argyll normally uses the first-person plural pronoun in his correspondence, there are also letters written in the first-person singular pronoun, such as the following:

Date: 28 March 1563
REF: GD112/39/2/14
Place: Dundee
From: Archibald Campbell, 5th Earl of Argyll

As the previous example shows, discussion of the discursive formulae of the Breadalbane letters is relevant to the operation of the NSR, since they have been shown not to be fixed or rigid, but subject to individual variation. The examples of the NSR they contain should not therefore be considered as 'dead' or fossilized tokens (i.e., the result of learning these formulae by heart), but rather as instances of a 'living' productive constraint in full operation in the language of the letters.

2. A detailed quantitative analysis of the NSR in the Breadalbane Letters

The NSR has been studied in a selection of 100 letters: the first 51 (18 October 1548 - 29 January 1565) and the last 49 (15 October 1570 (2nd) -15 July 1583), in order to establish whether there are differences that depend on the date, since the influence of the anglicisation process becomes especially apparent from the middle of the sixteenth-century onwards. The number of words is roughly the same in both periods: 13,194 vs. 13,133. These figures represent the number of words contained in the body of the letter and the postscript (PS), if there is one (cf. GD112/39/1/3, 30 April 1554). Most of the letters are written by men and addressed to men, although there are some written by women (5)[31] and a larger number addressed to women (10).[32]

The online edition has been checked with the transcriptions in the SHS volume of Campbell Letters,[33] which are reasonably faithful, although the abbreviations and contractions have been silently expanded. The online edition is not tagged, so a manual search of the corpus (entailing a careful and meticulous analysis of the letters) was carried out to compile all the examples of the NSR. All the grammatical contexts for the NSR have been considered (plural and first person singular), and both the Type of Subject and the Proximity to Subject Constraints have been studied for all persons. The verb *have* patterns with the lexical verbs with regard to the operation of the NSR (cf. Kuipers, Montgomery and Rodríguez Ledesma)[34] and, therefore, has been included with them. The verb *be*, however, has been considered separately, since the NSR operates

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To: Colin Campbell of Glenorchy

1. Address and Salutation: Cousing efter hartlie commendatioun.
2. Acknowledgement of previous letter from the addressee: I resavit zour writting and as concerning ye deliverans of ye letters thay war deliverit to ye Thesawrar
3. Final salute/blessing: And God preserve zow
4. Place and date: Of Dunde ye xxviij day off Merche 1563

The letter is shorter (186 words) and the style more direct (as if written in urgency), as can be seen in the omission of the modifiers *traist* and *maist* in the address, or the omission of the coordinate clause 'and wnderstandis ye contenttis of ye saymin' in the second formula. An even more extreme example is the letter dated 24 June 1563 (101 words), where the address has been reduced to just 'Cousing' (GD112/39/2/18).

[31] Two are written by Katherine (17 October 1570 and 16 September 1571), two by Countess of Mar (28 April 1571 and 14 June 1571) and one by Lady Dunivaig (11 September 1564).

[32] One of them is written by a woman and addressed to a woman: GD112/39/14/20 (SHS ed. No. 193), 16 September 1571, Katherine to Lady Drummond. The remaining nine are addressed to Katherine.

[33] Dawson, *Clan Campbell Letters*.

[34] Kuipers, 'Kennedy's Language', 96; Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 86; and Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.

only as a variable rule in this case (cf. Kuipers, Montgomery and Rodríguez Ledesma).[35]

2.1. First person singular

Table 1: *Breadalbane* results for first person singular present indicative

	1548-1565		1548-1565		1570-1583		1570-1583	
	0		-S		0		-S	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Subject pronoun adjacent to the verb	113	100	0	0	132	100	0	0
Subject pronoun not adjacent to the verb	0	0	9	100	0	0	13	100
No explicit/Zero subject	0	0	19	100	0	0	20	100

As can be seen in Table 1, the results show no difference between the two periods. The Proximity to Subject Constraint is found to be categorical for the first-person singular, as was the case in my previous study for the period 1380-1500.[36] The verb takes 0 when adjacent to the personal pronoun and –S otherwise, as in the following examples:

(4) quhylk I **belef** and **belevis** ye sammyn

'which I believe and credit the same'

GD112/39/1/8, c Mar 1556, Lawers to Grey Colin

(5) I am alss sik as ony wyer man may be and **tinkis** nocht to schepe parrall of my lyf

'I am as sick as any other man can be, and do not expect to escape without peril of my life'

GD112/39/2/4 (SHS ed. No. 4), 28 Jan 1561, MacDougall of Dunollie (14th) to Grey Colin

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[35] Kuipers, 'Kennedy's Language', 96; Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 90; Rodríguez Ledesma, *Anglificación*; and Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.
For this reason, the figures for the verb *be* have not been included in the tables. The following examples illustrate the variability of the rule with this verb:
(i) yair **is** na newis yair bot that my Lord Duik and my Lord of Arrane **is** nocht aggreit as zit
GD112/39/15/8 (SHS ed. No. 201), 3 February 1582, Grey Colin to Black Duncan
(ii) we persaif that on nawayis can we leif ye Kinges Maiestie ffor sic effares as **ar** to do quhilk **ar** nocht neidfull to wreit
GD112/39/15/5 (SHS ed. No. 199), 29 January 1581, Argyll (6th) to Grey Colin
[36] Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.

(6) I wil nocht trubbil zow with langer letter for yis present bot efter my hartliest commendatioun **committis** zow to ye protectioun of God

'I will not trouble you with a longer letter for the present, but after my heartiest commendation commit you to the protection of God'

GD112/39/11/10 (SHS ed. No. 180), 19 Oct 1570, Grandtully to Katherine

These examples show the NSR as a productive pattern, not restricted to epistolary formulae or fixed expressions, such as (4) and (6), but found in more general contexts, even in cases in which the verbs are very far from the subject, with adverbial and relative clauses in between, as in the following:

(7) I **haif** vnderstaund be yis beraris informatioun ye guid will yat MacGregor and ye rest off his surname beris to serve ye Laird zour husband and to keip ye conditiounis off yis last appoyntment and yairfoir respecting yair guid mening **thinkis** meit and als **desyris** zow tobe ye instrument to labour at ye Lairdis hand to accept yaim eftir yer guid mening and tobe ane patrone and defender of yame in tymes cuming in yair guid causses.

'I have understood by this bearer's information the good will that McGregor and the rest of his surname bear to serve the laird, your husband, and to keep the conditions of the last appointment, and therefore respecting their good intentions, think it appropriate and also desire you to act in the laird's service to accept them according to their good intentions, and to be their patron and defender in times to come in their good causes'

GD112/39/13/1 (SHS ed. No. 188), 7 Jan 1571, Ruthven (4th) to Katherine

Although the number of tokens in non-adjacent position is not very numerous as compared to those in adjacent position (22 vs. 245), all of them follow the NSR and take -S. The situation is similar in other corpora. In the Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots (which comprises 600,000 words and covers the period 1450-1700), for example, the construction illustrating the Proximity to Subject Constraint with the first person singular is 'relatively rare in all time periods', with only 35 tokens, and mainly occurs in letters and diaries.[37] However, notwithstanding the meagre data, Meurman-Solin concludes that 'there is a clear tendency to use suffixless first verbs and suffixed second and later verbs in the first person singular'.[38]

With regard to the Type of Subject Constraint, the NSR is found to be categorical as well, since in all the examples in which there is no explicit or zero pronoun (39 tokens in the corpus) the verb takes –S. In most letters subjectless clauses are found at the end (8) or in the middle (9), after clauses with a pronoun subject, so that the pronoun can be supplied:

(8) And sua with my hartly commendatioun to zour bedfallow **committis** zow to Godis protectioun

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[37] Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs', 248.
[38] Ibid., 255.

'And so with my hearty commendation to your wife [I] commit you to God's protection'

GD112/39/15/2, 28 Dec 1580, Tullibardine (11th) to Grey Colin

(9) Therefor **prayis** zou cawss zour said servand send me ye instrument yat I ma be awyssit yairvyth for my part as Collin hes beyin with his part

'Therefore [I] pray you to ensure that your said servant sends me the instrument that I may be advised by it for my part, as Collin has been for his'

GD112/39/1/9, c 27 Apr 1555, Lawers to Grey Colin

In some letters, however, the initial clauses are subjectless, as in the following:

(10) And **hes** rasawit zour wryttyngis and **hes** hard ye beraris credens and **thankis** zow greitumlye of zowr gwid will towart MacGregar and **hes** talkit wyth MacGregar at lynth in all pwnctis contenit in zowr wryttyngis afoir MacNachtan and Jhon MacAlister.

'And [I] have received your letters and have heard the bearer's credence and thank you greatly for your good will toward MacGregor, and have talked with MacGregor at length about all points contained in your letters before MacNachtan and John MacAlister'

GD112/39/2/3, 30 Nov 1562, Ardkinglas to Grey Colin

These constructions in which the first person subject is left implicit are also attested in the Helsinki Corpus and, as happens in the Breadalbane Letters, the verb always takes the sibilantic ending.[39] According to Meurman Solin, the construction is attested only in letters (both private and official), but not in those dating from the latter half of the 17th century. She also points out that 'with only one exception, the construction is used in epistolary formulae with the verbs *pray, commit* or *rest*'.[40] Although examples of subjectless clauses with these verbs are frequent in the Breadalbane Letters, especially in formulaic expressions at the close of letters (cf. (8)), the omission of the first person pronoun is not limited to them, as shown in (10).

In the corpus used by Montgomery, there are 113 tokens of non-adjacent personal pronoun *I*, 106 of which take –S (94%),[41] and he points out that most of them 'represent contexts with a null subject –where the *I* is implied, often in fixed phrases at the close of letters'.[42] Although he does not mention any restriction with regard to the verbs appearing in these constructions, the two examples he gives use the verb *commit*.[43]

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 248.

[41] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 89, Table 3.

[42] Ibid., 89. He adds that there are 41 such contexts in the Montgomery letters (early 17th century), in all of which the verb takes -S.

[43] Ibid.: 'Thus having presentlie no vthir occasioun, *comittis* zow in the protection of God. From Polnone, the second of Nouembir 1576; and geif credeit to the berar. Zour lufing gud friend assuritlie' (*Memorials of the Montgomeries*, 178).

2.2. First person plural

Table 2: *Breadalbane* results for first person plural present indicative

	1548-1565		1548-1565		1570-1583		1570-1583	
	0		-S		0		-S	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Subject pronoun adjacent to the verb	84	98.8	1	1.1	52	100	0	0
Subject pronoun not adjacent to the verb	3	25	9	75	0	0	6	100
No explicit/Zero subject	0	0	11	100	0	0	7	100

For the first person plural, the results are similar: with regard to the Type of Subject Constraint, the NSR is found to be categorical as well, since in all the examples in which there is no explicit or zero pronoun (18 tokens in the corpus) the verb takes –S. As in the previous case, subjectless clauses are found not only in epistolary formulae, but also in the body of the letter, and are not restricted to a particular set of verbs, as the following examples show:

(11) And yairfor **prayis** zow afor zour awin passing to Glenwrquha for eshewing of suspitioun to be had be yame yat ze will send ane faithfull and ane secreit serwitour and freind of zour awin to Glenwrquha

'And therefore [we] pray you, before your own journey to Glenorchy to escape any suspicion they may have, that you send a faithful and secret servitor and friend of your own to Glenorchy'

GD112/39/1/3, 30 Apr 1554, Argyll (4th) to Grey Colin

(12) we thocht expedient to putt end to all thingis or we cam furth of yis partis yat in neid ze suld nocht want ws. And for yis caus **hes** appontit ze noble men of ye congregatione

'we thought it expedient to put an end to everything before we come forth from these parts, so that you should not require us in any emergency. And for this reason [we] have appointed the noble men of the congregation'

GD112/39/1/6 (SHS ed. No. 2), 26 Aug 1559, Argyll (5th) and Lord James to Grey Colin

(13) And farder **intendis** befoir Hir Majesteis returne from thyne to se a stay put to zour trowbillis[44]

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[44] James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton, begins writing in first-person plural and at the end of the letter changes to the singular.

'and [we] further intend, before her majesty's return from there, to see an end put to your troubles'

GD112/39/3/3 (SHS ed. No. 16), 13 Jan 1564, Morton (4th) to Grey Colin

With regard to the Proximity to Subject Constraint, the NSR is categorical in the second period, in both adjacent and non-adjacent positions, whereas there are some exceptions in the first (cf. Table 2). The following examples conform to the syntactic pattern: the verb takes 0 when adjacent to the personal pronoun and –S otherwise:

(14) And quhat ze say yat ze mayd ws gud service in heland and lawland bayth be zour self and zour frendis ye quhilk we **knaw** is of verite and **thankis** zou.

'And what good service you say that you did us in Highland and Lowland, both by yourself and your friends, which we know is true and thank you'

GD112/39/1/2, 18 Oct 1548, Argyll (4th) to John of Glenorchy

(15) We **are** sorre of zour wyiffis deseiss and zouris and **prayis** zow gif ze man best to gif hir guid comferte and treitment

'We are sorry about your wife's illness and your own, and pray you, if you think best, to give her good comfort and treatment'

GD112/39/14/11, 15 Nov 1572, Argyll (5th) to Grey Colin

The following are the exceptions to the NSR in this context:

(16) For ye quhilk and vther causis we maist effectuslie **requeist** zou to cum to ws with all possible diligens

'For this and other reasons, we most earnestly request that you come to us with all possible diligence'

GD112/39/1/5 (SHS ed. No. 1), 10 Jun 1559, Argyll (5th) and Lord James Stewart to Menteith, Ruthven (3rd), Tullibardine (10th) and Grey Colin

(17) [PS] We ar informit yat Dowgall Maktarliche and Tarlich Makkillip wantis wthaair grayth and **pray** zow to caus restoir yame to yair geir seing it is manifest wrang

'We are informed that Dougal MacTarlich and Tarlich Makkillip need other materials, and request that you restore them to their property, seeing it is manifestly wrong'

GD112/39/2/7 (SHS ed. No. 6), 27 Jun 1562, Argyll (5th) to Grey Colin

(18) We haif resavit zour wrytting be ye quhilk we now **onderstand** ye grett crweltye yat Clan Gregor hes laytlie committit vpon zow

'We have received your letter, by which we now understand the great cruelty that Clan Gregor has lately inflicted upon you'

GD112/39/2/15, 3 Apr 1563, Argyll (5th) to Grey Colin

The fact that there are only one or two words between the pronoun subject and the verb may account for the 0 ending in examples (16) and (18).[45] With regard to (17), the expected form in accordance with the NSR (*prayis*) could be ambiguous and thought to refer to the third-person plural, as the previous verb ending in sibilant (*wantis*) does, whereas uninflected *pray*, as found in the text, is unambiguously first-person plural.

There is also one instance of the verb taking –S when adjacent to the subject pronoun:

(19) sa lyk wyis we **desyris** zou maist ernistlie to kep ye samyn

'so likewise we desire you most earnestly to keep the same'

GD112/39/1/6 (SHS ed. No. 2), 26 Aug 1559, Argyll (5th) and Lord James to Grey Colin

This is found, however, after examples in which the pronun subject has been omitted, which may account for the presence of the sibilant inflection.

These results are similar to those found by Montgomery: in his corpus there are 34 tokens of non-adjacent personal pronoun *we*, 32 of which take –S (94%).[46]

The NSR in the first person plural is also attested in the Helsinki Corpus, and Meurman-Solin gives instances illustrating both the Type of Subject and the Proximity to Subject Constraints. She remarks that 'despite the scarcity of evidence it seems possible to claim that the structure is typical of public records and occurs in stereotyped introductory statements'.[47] As shown above, this statement finds no support in my data: the structure is found in letters (though to a lesser extent than the first person singular) and, although frequent in formulaic expressions, is not restricted to them.[48]

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[45] Cf. Kuipers, 'Kennedy's Language', 96: 'when the linguistic unit separating a personal pronoun from the corresponding verbal predicate was of negligible length or importance, the verb might occur with or without the suffix'.

[46] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 89, Table 3.

[47] Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs', 252.

[48] Nurmi and Palander-Collin also report the use of first-person plural pronouns in their study of letters selected from *The Corpus of Early English Correspondence Extension* (*CEECE*), a large electronic collection of 18th-century personal correspondence. According to them, 'although the overall frequency of first-person plural pronouns (7 instances per 1,000 words) is fairly low, it is worth mentioning that men seem to use the first-person plural more than women (8 vs. 5 instances per 1,000 words)' (Nurmi and Palander-Collin, 'Letters', 37). They also conclude that 'first-person plural pronouns occur most frequently in letters to superior family members (11 instances per 1,000 words)' (Ibid., 38).
In the Breadalbane Collection, the number of letters written in first person plural is also lower than those using the first person singular. However, since the corpus includes very few letters written by women (5), it is not possible to test their hypothesis that men use the first person plural more than women. The choice of pronouns in the Breadalbane Collection seems to depend on the writer, rather than on the addressee, with some people using normally the plural and others the singular. Argyll 5th, for example, tends to use

2.3. Second person

In the case of the second person, there are no contexts illustrating the Type of Subject Constraint.[49] With regard to the Proximity to Subject Constraint, the NSR is categorical in both adjacent and non-adjacent position (cf. Table 3), although the number of tokens is much lower than for the first person. The following examples illustrate the syntactic pattern in both periods:

(20) I haif sayne zour wretin makand mentioun yat certane of zour servantis mett iiij or v ky of myn in ye brays of zour cuntrey passand to ye Clanrandis boundis and yat ze **haiff** comprehendit ye samen and **desyris** to wit quhat salbe done with yaim.

'I have seen your letter mentioning that some of your servants came across four or five cows of mine in the hills of your land passing to Clan Ranald's boundaries, and that you have taken them and desire to know what shall be done with them'

GD112/39/2/5 (SHS ed. No. 21), c. 3 Aug 1564, Grey Colin to Weem

(21) I rassavit zour writting fra yis berare makand mentioun yat ze had send ane writting to ye Lard my husband dissyrand ane assurance quhill zour messinger mycht speik ye Lard and siclyk **dissyris** me and my barnis to pass to ye wost end of ye loycht

'I received your letter from this bearer mentioning that you had sent a letter to the laird, my husband, desiring an assurance until your messenger might speak to the laird, and likewise desire me and my children to go to the west end of the loch'

GD112/39/11/16 (SHS ed No. 178), 17 Oct 1570, Katherine to Ewin MacGregor

Table 3: *Breadalbane* results for second person present indicative

	1548-1565		1548-1565		1570-1583		1570-1583	
	0		-S		0		-S	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Subject pronoun adjacent to the verb	79	100	0	0	53	100	0	0
Subject pronoun not adjacent to the verb	0	0	1	100	0	0	5	100
No explicit/Zero subject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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the first person plural in his letters when writing to both men and women, although occasionally he also uses the singular (cf. 1.2. above). There are also letters in which he alternates both pronouns, as GD112/39/14/11, 15 November 1572, Argyll (5th) to Grey Colin.

[49] As previously mentioned, in the case of the first person there are many examples in the corpus with a zero subject, in which the writer (either singular *I* or plural *we*) is implied.

These results are in line with those obtained by Montgomery, with regard to both the scarcity of data and the operation of the NSR. Thus, in Montgomery's corpus there are only 3 tokens of non-adjacent personal pronoun *ye*, all of which take –S (100%).[50]

2.4. Third person plural

In the case of the third person plural, there are no contexts illustrating the Proximity to Subject Constraint (cf. Table 4). With regard to the Type of Subject Constraint, it is near-categorical in both periods: the verb adds 0 when adjacent to a personal pronoun (28 out of 29 tokens, 96.5%), and –S when the subject is not a pronoun (35 out of 38 tokens, 92.1%) or there is no explicit subject (2 out of 2 tokens, 100%), as illustrated by the following examples:

(22) yis is dissonant with zour informatioun quhairfor my counselloris **hes** forbiddin me to cum yair

'This does not tally with your information, wherefore my counsellors have forbidden me to go there'

GD112/39/2/12 (SHS ed. No. 9), 12 February 1563, Larg to Glenlyon

(23) And thairfoir becaus we may nocht write sik thingis as **movis** us to ye Lauland we will maist effectuuslie desyre zow to meit us in Streveling

'And therefore because we cannot write those things that move us to the Lowlands, we most earnestly desire you to meet us in Stirling'

GD112/39/14/11, 15 November 1572, Argyll (5th) to Grey Colin

Table 4: *Breadalbane* results for third person plural present indicative

	1548-1565		1548-1565		1570-1583		1570-1583	
	0		-S		0		-S	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Subject pronoun adjacent to the verb	18	100	0	0	10	90.9	1	9
Subject pronoun not adjacent to the verb	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No explicit/Zero subject	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
Subject other than a pronoun	1	4.7	20	95.2	2	11.7	15	88.2

These results are similar to those given by Montgomery, with -S marking reaching 93% in the case of nouns functioning as subject and 95% in the case of relative

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[50] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 89, Table 3. Meurman-Solin does not offer figures for the second person, but simply remarks that '*ye* and *you/yow* are sometimes used with a suffixed second verb', with examples dating from as late as the 1680s (Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs', 249, 250).

pronouns in that function.[51] Meurman-Solin does not offer percentages for the Helsinki corpus, but remarks that 'a suffixless verb is extremely rare after plural noun subjects in the corpus, and that the rare examples attested typically occur in texts that reflect early anglicization or date from the last decennia of the seventeenth century'.[52]

2.5. The NSR in the Breadalbane Letters. Summary of results

The study of the NSR in the Breadalbane Collection reveals a near-categorical operation of both the Type of Subject and the Proximity to Subject Constraints in the different grammatical contexts, as illustrated in Table 5:

Table 5: *Breadalbane* results for the NSR

	Type of Subject Constraint	Proximity to Subject Constraint
First person singular	Categorical (zero subject)	Categorical
First person plural	Categorical (zero subject)	Near-categorical (97.4%)[53]
Second person	-----	Categorical[54]
Third person plural	Near-categorical (94.2%)[55]	------

With regard to the chronological dimension, the study reveals no significant differences depending on date.[56] The results are similar for both periods: 1548-1565 and 1570-1583. Only in third person plural contexts (with both adjacent personal pronouns and subjects other than personal pronouns) are there more exceptions to the NSR in the second period. However, in first person plural contexts (in both adjacent and non-adjacent position), the NSR is categorical in the second period, whereas there are some exceptions in the first.

These findings are in line with those obtained from my study of the NSR in first person singular contexts in early Scots[57] and reveal no influence of the anglicisation process in the course of the 16th century with regard to this syntactic feature. These results contrast with those obtained by Fernández Cuesta in her study of the NSR in first person singular contexts in a corpus of 15th-16th-century wills and testaments from Yorkshire, where the consonantal ending reached 64% in non-adjacent contexts in the early period (1450-1499) and declined thereafter: 34% in 1500-1549 and 19.4% in the period 1550-1600.[58]

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[51] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord', 88, Table 2.
[52] Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs', 253.
[53] In 151 out of 155 examples the verb takes 0 or –S in accordance with the NSR.
[54] Very few examples, however, are attested in non-adjacent position in the corpus: only 6 tokens.
[55] In 65 out of 69 examples the verb takes 0 or –S in accordance with the NSR.
[56] Since the results show a near-categorical operation of the NSR in the corpus object of this study, it has not been thought necessary to carry out statistical tests of the data.
[57] Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.
[58] Fernández Cuesta, 'Northern Subject Rule', 96.

3. The NSR in other sixteenth-century Scots letters and in eighteenth-century South Argyll

3.1. The NSR in other sixteenth-century Scots letters

In the previous section, I compared the results obtained from my study of the Breadalbane Collection with those found in other corpora, such as the Helsinki Corpus or that used by Montgomery, both of which include letters written in the 16th century.[59] As mentioned in the discussion of the different grammatical contexts of the NSR, my findings are in line with those obtained by these authors, and show that the Breadalbane Collection is typical of the period with regard to the operation of the NSR.

This conclusion is also borne out by a cursory examination of the letters included in the *Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine*.[60] The following are some examples illustrating the Type of Subject Constraint (24)-(25) and the Proximity to Subject Constraint (26) in these letters:[61]

(24) I **belief** yat few Inglis **has** sleppit (Henry, Lord Methven, 1548, CLXXXVI)

'I believe that few Englishmen have slept'

(25) Madem yar **is** Scottis men quhilkis spak with part of yam (Henry, Lord Methven, 1548, CLXXXVI)

'Madam, there are Scottish men who spoke with some of them'

(26) ya **haif** fortefeit ye tovn in greit sort at ye begining & in ye nycht **workis** as ya may (Henry, Lord Methven, 1548, CLXXXVI)[62]

'They have heavily fortified the town at the beginning and in the night work as they can'

Examples of the NSR are even found in writers such as John Knox. Traditionally he has been considered as having forgotten his Scots and writing in English, the language associated with Protestantism (cf. complaint voiced by the Catholic writer Ninian Winzet, reprinted in Smith).[63] However, Knox's use of language seems to depend on his interlocutors, moving along the English/Scots continuum according to the addressee. Thus, in his letters to English correspondents, Knox often uses *–eth* for the

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[59] Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs'; and Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord'.

[60] Cameron, *Scottish Correspondence*. Cf. also Aitken, 'Anglicised speech', 4:
    At this time [the 16th century] the normal language of letters, holograph and scribal, from Scottish noblemen and others resident in Scotland to their compatriots is almost anglicism-free Scots, with low or nil token counts of the new anglicisms. This is true, for example, of almost the entire contents of *Corr. M. Lorraine* [the *Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine*].
These anglicisms include <o> in place of Scots <a> in words such as *go, so, also, none, both*, the forms *any, many* (Scots *ony, mony*), the inflection *–eth* for 3sg. present indicative, among others.

[61] Examples taken from Cameron and Smith: Cameron, *Scottish Correspondence*; and Smith, *Older Scots*.

[62] Cf. also the following example in a letter from George Buchanan to Sir Thomas Randolph (1577):
        (i) he is ane of the most singular poetes that **has** beine thys lang tyme
        (Brown, *George Buchanan*, 58)

[63] Smith, 'Scots and English', 1.

3ps. inflection and even sometimes *-est*. Similarly, he sometimes uses *–eth* for the 3ppl. in contexts where the subject is not a personal pronoun and, therefore, Scots would have –S in accordance with the NSR (cf. Aitken and Smith):[64]

(27)   as other things **occurrith** (XXXV)

'as other things occur'

He sometimes uses Scots –S in these contexts, even in his letters to English correspondents:

(28)   as our ennemis **supposes** (XXX)

'as our enemies suppose'

(29)   to thame that **dependis** vpon Jesus Christ (CI)

'to them that depend upon Jesus Christ'

(30)   both the parties **stands** as it were fighting against God himself (CII)[65]

'both the parties stand as it were fighting against God himself'

The previous examples illustrate the Type of Subject Constraint. But even the Proximity to Subject Constraint is sporadically illustrated in his letters to English correspondents, as in the following instance given by Smith:[66]

(31)   for I **prase** my God I **have** laid my compt, and **fyndes** my hol debtis discharged (LXXI)

'for I praise my God I have done my accounts and find my whole debts discharged'

The fact that examples such as these are sporadically attested in his letters to English correspondents seems to reveal the pervasiveness of this syntactic constraint, which is assimilated at an unconscious level (covert Scotticism) and, therefore, more difficult to avoid than mere spellings, much easier to anglicise (by simply replacing <a> by <o>, for example, in words such as *knaw, ald, sa, na*, etc.).

3.2. The NSR in eighteenth-century South Argyll

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[64] Aitken, 'Anglicised speech', 14; and Smith, 'Scots and English', 6. According to Aitken, 'these errors would be easy to a Scot whose normal speech had only the morpheme /-(I)S/ for all of these' (Ibid., 18).
[65] Examples taken from Smith, 'Scots and English', 6.
[66] Ibid., 7. Aitken argues that these instances of the NSR and the lexical Scotticisms in letters addressed to English recipients 'suggest a speaker of Scots who heavily anglicised his writing but not to the same extent his speech' (Aitken, 'Anglicised speech', 18).

In this section I compare the results found in the Breadalbane Letters (late 16th-century Argyll) with those obtained by Montgomery in his study of 18th-century South Argyll,[67] and establish a connection between both corpora, since both study letters from the same area, Argyll, an area having Gaelic as its first language.

The near-categorical operation of the NSR in the Breadalbane Collection (cf. 2.5) may account for the 'strong' survival of this syntactic constraint in 18th and even 19th-century letters written by Highland Scots emigrants from Argyll to North Carolina, as shown by Montgomery. Many Scots emigrated from South Argyll to southeastern North Carolina from the 1730s onwards, and he argues that the fact that at the beginning the Highlanders were the only Scots in that area 'buttressed attachments to family and tradition and meant that their communities, though dispersed, could solidify cultural and linguistic habits better than in most other places in the American colonies'.[68]

The first language of these emigrants was Gaelic (as was the case with the correspondents of the Breadalbane Collection, cf. 1.1 above), and the letters present evidence concerning the second language used by these colonists from Argyll. The earliest set of letters analysed by Montgomery comprises ten written between 1757 and 1786 by the Islay emigrant Alexander McAllister. They illustrate a type of 'English/Scots' (following Montgomery's label) which, in pronunciation and verbal concord, appears closer to Scots than to English.[69]

The following examples, taken from McAllister's letters, illustrate the operation of the NSR in third-person plural contexts: (32)-(34) illustrate the Type of Subject Constraint with different types of verbs, and (35) the Proximity to Subject Constraint:

(32) the arren people **comes** no further.

(33) all frinds heare **is** well.

(34) all Governors **hase** positve orders.

(35) they mad all plenty of corn for themselves and familie and **seems** to be very well satisfied.[70]

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[67] Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape'.

[68] Ibid., 185.

[69] Ibid., 198, 200.
Besides the NSR, uninflected genitives are also attested in McAllister's letters. This morphosyntactic feature, characteristic of Scots and northern English, can be traced back to late Northumbrian and still survives in modern varieties (cf. Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Uninflected genitive'). Montgomery lists some examples of zero possessive, but he considers them as forms reflecting language acquisition rather than characteristic of Scots:
    (i) m^r Campbel is married to one of this cuntry0 widdos
    (ii) your uncle0 son who stays
    (iii) I became purchaser payd the money & got the Shirriff0 deed for the same
    (Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape', 199).

[70] Ibid., 201.
The NSR is also found to be 'a solid feature' in 18th-century Ulster, as shown by Myklestad in her analysis of subject-verb concord in CORIECOR 1741-1800 (Myklestad, 'Subject-verb concord', 98). The following examples illustrate the operation of this syntactic constraint in her corpus with first-person singular and third-person plural pronouns:

The results found are summarized in Table 6 (adapted from Montgomery):[71]

Table 6: Verbal –s on third-person plural verbs (McAllister, 10 letters, 1757-87)

	NP		*they*		Existential		Non-proximate[72]	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Be	18/19	95	0/4	0	5/5	100	--	--
have	1/3	33	--	--	0/1	0	--	--
other verbs	7/10	70	0/6	0	--	--	1/1	100
All	26/32	81	0/10	0	5/6	83	1/1	100

Montgomery accounts for the influence of Scots on McAllister's language by explaining that 'Islay was closer to Kintyre and other Scots-speaking areas such as the southwest Lowlands than were most other Hebrides'.[73] 'In the mid-seventeenth century Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyll, planted parts of Kintyre with Scots-speaking Lowlanders from Ayrshire and Renfrewshire … and McAllister possibly had association with them'.[74]

Examples of the operation of the NSR in third-person plural contexts are also attested in a set of nineteen letters written in the 19th century by two brothers descended from Argyll colonists: Burgess and Archibald Jackson of Moore County, North Carolina. Examples (36)-(38) illustrate the Type of Subject Constraint with both lexical and auxiliary verbs, and (39) the Proximity to Subject Constraint:

(36) my back an legs **panes** me mity sum times. (Burgess Jackson, 16 September 1862)

(37) till times **gets** more setled about Fredrekburg. (Archibald Jackson, 13 December 1862)

(38) thoes who **has** sufered do much for your well fare. (Archibald Jackson, 5 April 1864)

(39) they went yestur day and **expects** to remane sum 5 dase. (Burgess Jackson, 25 April 1863)[75]

The results found are summarized in Table 7 (adapted from Montgomery):[76]

(i) I **intend** to return to the North this Week & **hopes** to meet with thee (John Morton, 14 April 1767)
(ii) none can tell the Loss of a dear husband but they that **has** suffered it (Hannah Dodd, 24 November 1788)
(Examples taken from Myklestad, 'Subject-verb concord', 71)

[71] Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape', 201.

[72] This refers to contexts with a subject pronoun not adjacent to the verb (Proximity to Subject Constraint).

[73] Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape', 195

[74] Ibid., 202.

[75] Examples taken from Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape', 204.

Table 7: Verbal –*s* on third-person plural verbs (Jackson Brothers, 19, 1861-64)

	NP		*they*		Existential		Non-proximate	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
be	8/38	21	0/5	0	3/8	38	7/8	88
have	7/8	88	0/6	0	1/1	100	--	--
other verbs	3/3	100	0/5	0	1/1	100	--	--
All	18/49	37	0/16	0	5/10	50	7/8	88

The analysis of these letters shows that 'a defining feature of Lowland Scots grammar had penetrated to South Argyll, from there to be taken to North Carolina',[77] and reveals the resilience of this grammatical constraint, which is still found in letters written in the second half of the 19th century. This contrasts with Dossena's statement that dialect was avoided in 19th-century correspondence. She argues that 'syntax (especially in relation to occurrences of the Northern Subject Rule) and orthography are normally as close to southern standards as the writer's level of education can afford them to be'.[78] It may be the case that dialectal features are better preserved in emigrant letters since, as Montgomery argues, in many cases the distance 'made them less concerned about social correctness, at a time when increasing literacy and the standardisation of language militated against speech-based writing'.[79] As he concludes, 'it will appear ironic to some that a description of the eighteenth-century English/Scots of South Argyll can best be based on texts written or found in the U.S., but the richness and crucialness of such correspondence of emigrants and their descendants can hardly be overestimated'.[80]

4. Conclusions

The study of the NSR in the Breadalbane Collection reveals a near-categorical operation of both the Type of Subject and the Proximity to Subject Constraints in the different grammatical contexts, and shows the strength of this syntactic constraint in Scots letters written in an area having Gaelic as its first language (Argyll). In this respect, the Breadalbane Collection seems to be typical of the period, since the NSR is found to operate in other 16th-century letters as well (*Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine*), and examples are even present in heavily anglicised writers such as Knox.

The strength of the NSR in the Breadalbane Collection can be seen in the fact that examples of this syntactic constraint are not restricted to formulaic expressions at the opening and closing, but are also found in the body of the letters. In this connection, a number of affirmations found in the literature need to be revised. An example is Meurman-Solin's claim that in the first-person plural the NSR occurs 'in stereotyped

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 205.

[78] Dossena, 'Scots Usage', 97. However, in one of the quotations she gives to illustrate this point, taken from the Corpus of Nineteenth-century Correspondence in preparation at the University of Bergamo, there is an example of the NSR.

[79] Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape', 193.

[80] Ibid., 206.

introductory statements',[81] or that in first-person singular subjectless clauses are used 'in epistolary formulae with the verbs *pray, commit* or *rest*'.[82] As shown in this study, the NSR in the Breadalbane Letters is not restricted to formulaic expressions or collocations with certain verbs.

With regard to the chronological dimension, the study reveals no significant differences with regard to date: the results are similar for both periods, 1548-1565 and 1570-1583. These findings are consonant with those obtained from my study of the NSR in first-person singular contexts in early Scots[83] and reveal no influence of the anglicisation process in the course of the 16th century with regard to this syntactic feature. This contrasts with the situation found in northern English, as shown by Fernández Cuesta's analysis of a corpus of wills and testaments from Yorkshire, where the NSR in first-person singular contexts declined considerably in the course of the 16th century: 34% in 1500-1549 and 19.4% in the period 1550-1600.[84]

The study also reveals that, in contrast with northern Middle English, where the Proximity to Subject Constraint has been found to be much less robust than the Type of Subject Constraint (cf. de Haas and Fernández Cuesta),[85] in the Breadalbane Letters it is near-categorical, and as strong as the Type of Subject Constraint. These findings are in line with previous studies, such as Montgomery and Rodríguez Ledesma,[86] and show that the NSR patterns differently in northern Middle English and Older Scots, the latter including areas having Gaelic as their first language.

Finally, this study has established a link between the Breadalbane Collection (late 16th-century Argyll) and Montgomery's corpus (18th-century South Argyll), and has argued that the near-categorical operation of the NSR in the Breadalbane Letters may account for the strong survival of this syntactic constraint in 18th and even 19th-century letters written by Highland Scots emigrants from Argyll to North Carolina.[87] The NSR, therefore, is revealed as a very pervasive feature of Lowland Scots grammar, penetrating to areas in which Gaelic was the first language, such as Argyll, where it strongly survives even in the 18th century.

These results seem to suggest that the core NSR area is Lowland Scotland, rather than northern England, as shown by the near-categorical operation of both constraints in Older Scots, from the earliest records of the language, 1380-1500 (cf. Rodríguez Ledesma),[88] throughout the 15th and 16th centuries (cf. Kuipers, Van Buuren, Glenn, Meurman-Solin, Montgomery, Rodríguez Ledesma).[89]

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[81] Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs', 252.

[82] Ibid., 248.

[83] Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.

[84] Fernández Cuesta, 'Northern Subject Rule', 96.

[85] De Haas, *Morphosyntactic variation*; and Fernández Cuesta, 'Northern Subject Rule'.

[86] Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord'; and Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.

[87] Montgomery, 'Linguistic Landscape'.

[88] Rodríguez Ledesma, 'Northern Subject Rule'.

[89] Kuipers, 'Kennedy's Language'; Van Buuren, 'Introduction'; Glenn, *New Edition*; Meurman-Solin, 'Morphology of verbs'; Montgomery, 'Evolution of verb concord'; and Rodríguez Ledesma, *Anglificación*.

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