

Frames, Framings and Beyond Afterthoughts and Other Discoursal ‘Add-Ons’ in Greek Private Letter Writing

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Abstract In this chapter, we review the function of ‘postscripts’ in Roman-period private letter writing. We argue that postscripts did not merely serve to complete information omitted from the main message (so-called ‘afterthoughts’), but also fulfilled other roles, such as managing shared knowledge between initiator and recipient or addressing individuals mentioned in the letter’s salutations. The various types of postscripts we identify are differentiated based on their integration within the letter’s overall discourse structure, their relationship to the writer’s (lack of) discourse planning, and their typical linguistic characteristics. In the final part of the chapter, we examine the use of postscripts in the corpus of women’s letters, where postscripts appear conspicuously frequently.

Keywords Epistolography. Postscript. Women. Afterthought. Discoursal ‘add-on’. Apollonios strategos archive.

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1 Introduction: The Epistolary Frame

In a study exploring Dutch letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke van der Wal,¹ drawing on earlier research by Alison Wray,² propose that epistolary formulae have three main functions in their corpus: some have a *text-constitutive* function, in the sense that they help to establish the text type or the inside structure of the text. Others have an *intersubjective* function, being concerned as they are with elements such as health, greetings, wishes for contact, Christian ritual, etc.; and yet others have a *processing* function, in the sense that prefabricated language helps to reduce the writing effort for less experienced letter writers.

These three functions also seem relevant for other epistolary corpora, such as Ancient Greek letters, which form the topic of this contribution. We intend to focus in particular on the so-called ‘epistolary frame’, that is, letter openings and closings, which are predominantly formulaic, infused as they are with intersubjective formulae such as the greeting, the salutation, the health wish, and the *proskynema*.³ Why such intersubjective formulae should cluster together at the opening and closing of letters can be understood when we make reference to *frame theory* – the concept of ‘frame’ referring to the context in which a communication takes place – and the way in which participants are positioned vis-à-vis each other. While processes of contextualisation take place moment-by-moment in interaction, openings and closings constitute a privileged place for such processes to occur, arguably even more so with written communication: Erving Goffman speaks about ‘boundary markers’ or ‘brackets’ that occur before and after the activity in question;⁴ more recent scholarship that focuses on textual artefacts has proposed the term ‘framing borders’ instead.⁵

It is self-evident that not every letter features equally intricate framing borders: why framing should be less elaborate in one letter

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1 Rutten and van der Wal 2012.

2 E.g. Wray 2002.

3 See Bentein 2023, 427 for quantitative data.

4 Goffman 1974, 251-2.

5 E.g. Wolf 2006. Another relevant concept is Gérard Genette’s notion of ‘paratext’ (1997), which we will not go further into here.

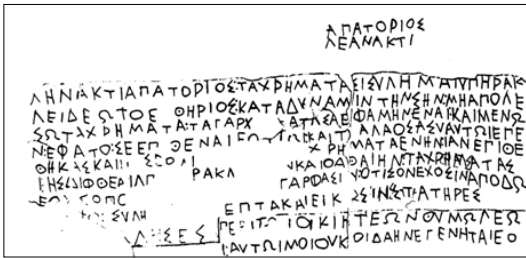


Figure 1
Lead letter from Apatorios to Leanax
(15.8 × 8.5 cm) (from Dana 2004, 5)

than the other can only be understood by making reference to the situational context in which the interaction takes place, including the initiator's communicative goals, the shared background of the initiator and receiver, etc.⁶ Another aspect that is worth highlighting concerns the fact that openings and especially closings are not always *fully* formulaic: especially in the case of closings, writers seem to have had the freedom (or to have taken the liberty) to include non-formulaic material, too. In modern-day written communication,⁷ where the same can be observed, such non-formulaic material is commonly referred to with the notion of 'postscript', a concept that is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a paragraph or passage written at the end of a letter, after the signature, containing an afterthought or additional matter'.

When it comes to Ancient Greek epistolary writing, even at a very early time, when the formulaic frame had not entirely formed,⁸ we have evidence for the inclusion of material that is off-topic in the form of a postscript; one can refer, for example, to SEG XLVIII 1012 (ca. 500 BC, Olbia) [fig. 1], a lead letter in which Apatorios asks Leanax for help with goods that have been stolen, but which also includes two lines with off-topic material (about some house-slaves) that have been visually separated through a boundary line that was scratched in the lead substrate. Madalina Dana notes that postscripts in fact occur quite frequently in early letters, and relates their occurrence to the cognitive process of writing: "*des postscripta* apparaissent souvent dans les lettres, phénomène qui met en évidence les aléas de la mémoire et la trace écrite du processus cognitif".⁹ In the lead letter that is displayed here, for example, Dana suggests that Apatorios might

⁶ See Bentein 2023a, 438-9 for discussion of some concrete examples.

⁷ In modern-day spoken conversation, too, conversations may be re-opened, even after a 'final' goodbye (Schegloff, Sacks 1973, 324). Schegloff, Sacks 1973, 322 describe closing sections as 'porous' – the same seems to apply to antiquity.

⁸ For a brief discussion of the formation of the epistolary frame, see Sarri 2018, 40-2.

⁹ Dana 2016, 123.

have scratched a line into the lead intending to use it as a guide for cutting. However, upon recalling a separate subject that he needed to address, he then wrote about it below the intended cut line.¹⁰

Publications on ancient papyri and inscriptions also make frequent reference to the notion of ‘postscript’, but seldomly problematise the application of this term. The present contribution, which focuses on postscripts in Greek letters from the Roman period (I-III AD), has three main goals: first of all, we would like to discuss/problematise the definition of ancient postscripts, which is of some importance to projects with a database annotation component such as the Everyday Writing project (§ 2); second, we want to explore the communicative functions of postscripts, taking as a point of reference the suggestions made by Jeffrey Weima in his discussion of the closing conventions of ancient Hellenistic letters (§ 3).¹¹ In the third and final part of our contribution, we turn to the communicative context in which postscripts occur, and discuss which role these communicative functions play in women’s letters, a corpus which is smaller in size than men’s letters but in which postscripts nevertheless appear noticeably frequently. We discuss, among others, some of the female letters in the second-century archive of Apollonios the *strategos* (§ 4).

2 Identifying and Defining Postscripts

Let us start with the identification and definition of postscripts. Raffaele Luiselli, in his discussion of Greek letter writing, observes the following:

The writer might also wish to add extra messages after appending the farewell formula. In papyrus sheets such postscripts may run down the left-hand margin, and may be carried further on the back if necessary. In either case, they may close with another farewell formula. The postscript may also be entered in the blank space below the closing formula; and if the writer had more to say, then he could add the extra message in the left margin, along the greater dimension.¹²

A similar observation, though with less focus on the visual dimension, is made by Jeffrey Weima, who observes that “although Greco-Roman letters normally end with a farewell wish and date (if one was given), there occasionally appears also a ‘postscript’ following these closing conventions”.¹³

¹⁰ Dana 2004, 13.

¹¹ Weima 1994, 52-5.

¹² Luiselli 2008, 708-9.

¹³ Weima 1994, 52.

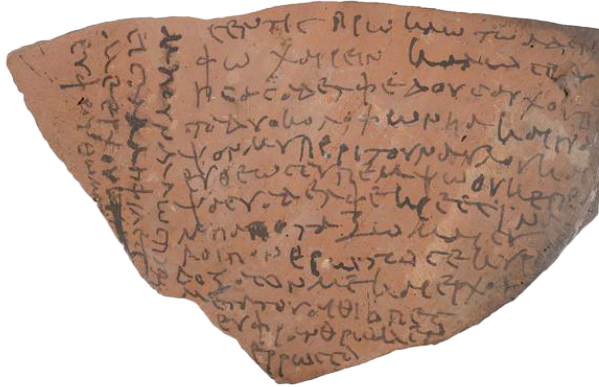


Figure 2 *O.Florida 17* (175-199 AD) = TM 74511
(© Florida State University Digital Repository)

Synthesising the foregoing, it seems that postscripts constitute non-formulaic material that occurs after the farewell greeting (and by extension the date), and that are (often) visually distinct in the sense that they occur in the margin, the verso, or are separated by a blank space from the farewell. An illustration from our corpus is *P.Brem.* 63 (116 AD) = TM 19648,¹⁴ a letter from Eudaimonis to Aline about various matters, which closes with the short farewell greeting (ἔρωσο) and the date (Ἐπεὶ κβ); in the left margin, a message has been added that is otherwise unrelated to the body of the text: ἡ γυνὴ Εὐδήμου ἀκείνητός (l. ἀκίνητός) μου ἐστὶν καὶ χάριν ἔχω αὐτῇ (l. 32) “the wife of Eudemos has stuck by me and I am grateful to her for that” (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The same practice can be observed in *O.Florida 17* (175-199 AD) = TM 74511 [fig. 2], a much shorter letter on ostracon from Sentis to Proklos, again about various matters, including a request to come, which closes with a farewell greeting (εὐφρανθῶμεν. ἔρωσο [ll. 12-13] ‘Let us rejoice. Farewell’); in the left margin, we find an admonition not to neglect the request to come: μὴ οὖν ἄλλως πνή|σις (l. ποιήσεις) ἀλλὰ ἡ (l. εἰ) φιλεῖς | με ἔρχου [...] (ll. 14-16) “do not do otherwise, then, but if you love me come” (transl. Bagnall), followed by a repetition of the unusual εὐφρανθῶμεν “let us rejoice”.

¹⁴ TM refers to Trismegistos (accessible at <https://www.trismegistos.org/>), a portal that assigns each papyrus a distinct identifier.

Exhaustive corpus research of all Roman-period private¹⁵ letters shows, however, that not all letters correspond to this prototype, and that some additional considerations need to be made:

2.1 Position Vis-à-vis the Closing Greeting

Non-formulaic material in the closing section also occurs before the farewell greeting. For example, in *P.Flor.* III 365 (III AD) = TM 31148, a letter from Dioskourides to Patermouthios, the initiator starts his closing with a salutation, then makes a request to send a goat (l. 17, otherwise unrelated to the main body of the text), and only then concludes by the long farewell greeting, probably in Dioskourides' own hand.¹⁶ Sometimes, letters contain two postscripts, one positioned before the farewell greeting, and a second one following it.

When letter writers include a postscript after the farewell greeting, they may feel the need to 're-frame', by including a second farewell greeting.¹⁷ For example, in *SB XII* 11021 (I-II AD) = TM 25066, a letter from Stephanos to Theon about the sending and receiving of goods, the relatively short body is followed by a first farewell greeting, the truncated ἐρρῶσθαί σε. We then find in the left margin a postscript, which is followed by a second, truncated farewell greeting, this time ἐρρῶ(σθαί).

In some cases, the addition of such a second farewell greeting seems to have occasioned the addition of yet another postscript: this is the case in *P.Mich.* VIII 496 (ca. 100-147 AD) = TM 27106, a letter from Apollonios to Apollinarios about certain goods that were sent and (not) received. Apollonios closes the letter, presumably in his own hand, in l. 14, with a long farewell greeting, adding a postscript of five lines. The scribe then closes with another farewell and the date in l. 20, after which Apollonios adds a second postscript, again in his own hand.¹⁸

2.2 Postscripts and Formulaic Phrases

Whereas standardly the farewell greeting is followed only by the date and the address on the verso, in some cases, typical formulaic

¹⁵ We intend 'private letters' here in a broad sense, also including subtypes such as business letters, recommendation letters, invitation letters, etc.

¹⁶ Compare *BGU VII* 1680 (III AD) = TM 30955.

¹⁷ For further discussion of this practice, see Luiselli 2008, 708; Bentein 2023c, 187-90.

¹⁸ Compare *P.Mich.* VIII 496 (II AD) = TM 27106.

phrases are displaced, so that e.g. the health wish or the salutation occurs *after* the farewell.¹⁹ For example, in *P.Oxy.* XLIX 3504 (I-II AD) = TM 24966, a letter which is unfortunately only partially preserved, the closing section starts with the short farewell greeting ἔρρωσο, and is then followed by the salutation, a politeness phrase, yet another salutation, and the date. In theory one could consider the formulaic phrases that come after the farewell greeting as ‘postscripts’,²⁰ particularly in cases where a formulaic component is repeated: in *P.Oxy.* III 530 (II AD) = TM 28370, for example, the closing section starts with a (long) salutation (l. 23), followed by the short farewell greeting and the date. We then find in the margin a request to send word about what has been sent, and a second salutation.²¹

ἀσπάζεται σε | Θεωνᾶς. ἀσπάζου τὰ παιδία Ἀπίωνα καὶ | ἀδελφὸν
Ἑρματοῖν, Διονυτᾶν, τοὺς περὶ | Ν[ί]κην καὶ Θαισοῦν τὴν
μικρὰν, τ[ο]ὺς περὶ [...] | τὰ πάντα, Ἡρᾶν καὶ τοὺς αὐτοῦ,
Λεοντᾶν τὸν | ὑπερήφανον καὶ τοὺς αὐτοῦ, τοὺς περὶ Τααμοῖν, |
[Θερ]μουθάριον. ἔρρω(σο). μη(νὸς) Καισαρείου κ’.
r,ms

περὶ τούτων οὗν μοι εὐθέως μετὰ τὴν ἑορτὴν πέμψεις φάσιν εἰ τὸν
χαλ|κὸν | ἐκομίσω καὶ εἰ ἀπέλαβες τὰ ἱμάτια. ἄσπασαι Διονυτᾶν καὶ
Θέωνα.

(*P.Oxy.* III 530, ll. 23-31 [II AD] = TM 28370)

Theonas salutes you. Salute the boys Apion and his brother Hermatois, Dionutas, those with Nice and the little Thaisous, all those with..., Heras and his household, Leontas the proud and his household, those with Taamois, and Thermoutharion. Good-bye. The 20th of the month Caesareus. (P.S.) Send me word about this immediately after the festival, whether you received the money and whether you recovered my clothes. Salute Dionutas and Theon. (transl. Grenfell, Hunt)

Particularly when postscripts follow salutations, there seems to be an intimate connection between formulaic and non-formulaic material. As we will further explore in the next section on the function of postscripts (§ 3), postscripts often seem to be triggered by elements that are included in the closing section: for example, in *P.Mich.* III 203 (114-116 AD) =

¹⁹ See Bentein 2023a, 451-4 on these and other ‘displacements’.

²⁰ As Weima 1994, 53 in fact seems to do: “in terms of content, postscriptive remarks are typically brief and often consist of one of the formal conventions belonging to the letter closing, such as a greeting or a health wish” (emphasis added).

²¹ Compare *P.Heid.* II 214 (III AD) = TM 31107.

TM 21342, a letter from the soldier Satornilus to his mother Aphrodous, the initiator commences the extensive salutations on l. 29, and then adds on l. 32 (presumably about his 'sister' Tabenka) καὶ εἰ τέκνον ἔσχηκεν γράψον μοι "and write to me if she has had a child" (transl. Winter).

2.3 Postscript and Letter Body

At times, letter writers insert closing formulas relatively early in their letters, only to follow them with considerable additional content. This results in the paradoxical situation that the postscript can, in fact, be longer than the body of the text preceding the closing: an example is *P.Oxy.* LIX 3992 (142-199 AD) = TM 27848, a letter from Aelius Theon to his future father-in-law Herminos, which is mainly concerned with maintaining interpersonal contact (Aelius Theon excuses himself for not having sent special delicacies, τραγημάτια, to Herminos' daughter Dionysia). Interestingly enough, after the *proskynema*, farewell greeting and date, we find twelve (!) more lines concerning business matters. These twelve lines are divided into two blocks, with a large horizontal space on l. 28, which seems to indicate that we are not dealing with one, thematically coherent, postscript, but rather with two unrelated postscripts.

2.4 The Visual Appearance of Postscripts

There are several examples of letters where writers make use of the upper margin to write a postscript, which means that, at least from a visual (rather than logical/chronological) point of view, postscripts can also occur at the beginning of a text. For example, *O.Claud.* II 226 (125-175 AD) = TM 29649 [fig. 3], a business letter from Dioskoros to multiple addressees about the sending and receiving of goods, starts with the request phrase γράψον μοι τὴν τιμὴν τοῦ ?] σοῦ ὀξειδίου ('write to me the price of your vinegar'), which is written in smaller letters above the opening of the letter.

As Margit Homann has discussed in an article on marginal writing (*versiculi transversi*), postscripts are often written in the (left) margin; there is, however, no one-to-one correspondence between the two phenomena.²² In some cases, we find information in the margin that is thematically distinct from the rest of the letter, but that still precedes the farewell greeting: should one speak of postscripts in such cases? For example, in *P.Oxy.* LXVI 4544 (III AD) = TM 78613, a letter from Eudaimon to Hegoumenos about, among others, jars

²² See Homann 2012, 74-80 for an overview list.

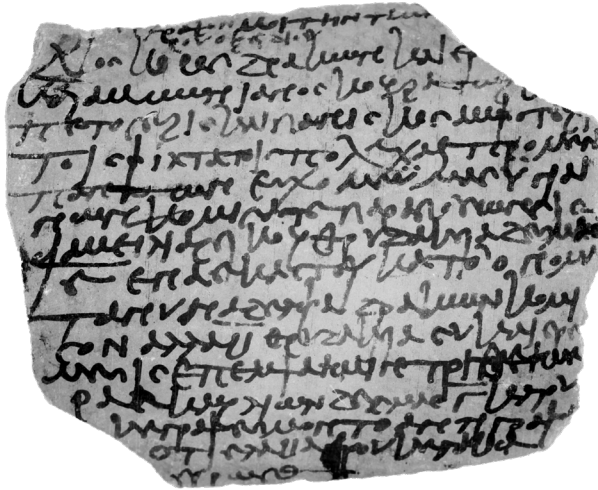


Figure 3 O.Claud. II 226 (125-175 AD) = TM 29649. © Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale

of olives, the writer includes in the margin a meta-textual comment not to pay anything to the person bringing the olives. That message precedes, rather than follows, the closing greeting, however. In other cases, there may be visual segmentation, but without an explicit farewell greeting being present.²³

As suggested by Madalina Dana, whose work we referenced in the introduction to this contribution, attempts to comprehend these – to the contemporary perspective – unconventional writing practices, must take into account cognitive aspects of writing in pre-modern society, in which orality played a much greater role than is nowadays the case. An important notion in this regard is ‘discourse flow’, a concept developed by the cognitive linguist Wallace Chafe that refers to how thoughts are expressed in discourse.²⁴ Chafe outlines a number of concepts that are central to the analysis of discourse flow, such as intonation structure/information structure at the level of the clause, but is also attentive to larger thematic patterns in discourse,

²³ Bentein 2023b, 100-1 discusses the omission of closing greetings in women’s letters that have a low degree of what he calls ‘discourse planning’. For formulaic omissions more generally, see Bentein 2023a, 455-8.

²⁴ See e.g. Chafe 2005 for a useful overview, and for more detail Chafe 1994; 2018.

which he analyses in terms of ‘discourse topics’. A discourse topic²⁵ can be defined as “a coherent aggregate of thoughts introduced by some participant in a conversation, developed either by that participant or another or by several participants jointly, and then either explicitly closed or allowed to peter out”.²⁶

Chafe connects information structure and discourse structure to the medium of communication by noting that oral texts are characterised by a lack of ‘integration’, due to a lesser amount of discourse planning.²⁷ Afterthoughts – both at a local (clausal) and more global (discoursal) level – can then be related to a lack of integration and discourse planning,²⁸ constituting as they do additions that follow a temporary closure of a topic or an idea, providing further information or clarification. For Greek and other languages, such afterthoughts have mostly been studied at the local level, for example in Herodotus’ prose, aspects of whose ‘oral’ style have been elucidated by Simon Slings and Rutger Allan among others. These scholars have noted the presence of information-structural ‘tails’²⁹ in the *Histories*, defined as “a standalone constituent that follows the clause, and that provides additional information about the preceding clause”.³⁰ For example, in a sentence such as οὐτε γὰρ Περσικὰ ἦν οὔτε Λύδια τὰ ποιούμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός (Hdt. 5.12.3), one could interpret τὰ ποιούμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός as the subject of ἦν, interpreting the sentence as ‘for the things done by the woman were neither Persian nor Lydian’. Alternatively, and perhaps preferably, one could interpret this constituent as an explanatory addition to a non-expressed subject with τὰ ποιούμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός functioning as a tail specifying the subject of ἦν to the listener or reader; this makes the sentence read as “for they were neither Persian nor Lydian, the things that were done by the woman”.³¹

Such afterthoughts illustrate the dynamic nature of thought flow in conversation, where the completion of one idea can lead to the addition of new, related ideas that the speaker initially might not have planned to articulate. It is important to stress, nevertheless, that

²⁵ Chafe 2005, 674 distinguishes regular, or ‘basic-level’ topics from ‘subtopics’ and ‘supertopics’.

²⁶ Chafe 2005, 674. Interestingly, Chafe notes that sensitivity to topic structure varies from one individual to the other, people being constrained to varying degrees to develop a topic fully before the conversation moves to another topic.

²⁷ Besides fragmentation/integration, Chafe recognises a second major dimension that sets apart spoken language from written language, namely involvement/detachment. See e.g. Chafe 1985.

²⁸ For discourse planning in female letters, see Bentein 2023b.

²⁹ Other terms that are used in the literature include ‘repair’ and ‘right-dislocation’.

³⁰ Allan 2006, 25, originally in Dutch.

³¹ Allan 2006, 29.

afterthoughts are not necessarily purely unplanned: Chafe underlines the fact that in oral language information units should not be too complex for them to be understood by the listener, a principle that he formulates as the ‘One New Idea Constraint’.³² By splitting up information, the speaker/writer can therefore achieve better understandability, as well as put maximum focus on the different components of his/her message. In our epistolary corpus, too, not all postscripts appear equally unmotivated: as we will show in the ensuing discussion, there are quite a few instances where the employment of a postscript seems to represent a conscious choice. In such cases, instead of an afterthought one could speak of a ‘discoursal add-on’,³³ for lack of a better term.

3 The Functions of Postscripts

In its definition of the modern-day postscript as “a paragraph or passage written at the end of a letter, after the signature, containing an afterthought or additional matter”, the Oxford English Dictionary places the concept of ‘afterthought’ quite central, as does Madalina Dana in her discussion of Archaic postscripts. Whether the function of postscripts in our corpus can be considered from the same perspective, remains to be seen. In fact, discussing postscripts in Greco-Roman letters, Jeffrey Weima distinguishes between as many as four different functions:³⁴

1. giving new information that has come to light immediately following the writing of the letter;
2. giving a final comment or command that has apparently come to the mind of the writer after the letter was finished;
3. reinforcing a command previously given in a letter (echoing and reinforcing an appeal given earlier in the letter body); and
4. giving a summary of the main details contained in the body of the letter (recapitulating the letter).

Weima considers the last of the proposed functions particularly important for his argument about the function of the Pauline letter closings,³⁵ but unfortunately there does not seem to be much ground for this function: Weima cites *P.Oxy.* II 264 (54 AD) = TM 20535 as an example of a ‘business letter’ with such a function, but we are in fact dealing with a contract of sale, in which a short recapitulation

³² Chafe 1994, 108-19. See also Bentein 2023c, 198-200.

³³ Compare Biber, Johansson, Leech 1999, 1078-9 for the concept of ‘add-on strategy’.

³⁴ Weima 1994, 52-5.

³⁵ Weima 1994, 54-5.

in the initiator's own hand was indeed not uncommon (the so-called *hypographê*).³⁶

For Weima's other three functions, on the other hand, ample evidence can be found in our corpus of Roman-period letters. The first function, giving information that has come to light after the writing of the letter, is arguably the least common of the three.³⁷ an example also cited by Weima is *P.Mich.* VIII 490 (II AD) = TM 27100, a letter from Apollinarios to his mother Thaesion, where after the salutation and the combined farewell greeting/ health wish, we find a first postscript stating that Apollinarios has arrived in Portus on Pachon 25, presumably after the main text was written. In a second postscript, perhaps in his own hand,³⁸ Apollinarios discloses that he has been assigned to Misenum, also adding the phrase ὅστερον γὰρ ἐπέγνων 'for I learned it later', seemingly a justification why this information was not placed in the main text.³⁹

Some of the letters from the archive of the estate manager Heroninos⁴⁰ also contain postscripts relating to events that happened after the main text was written: for example, in *P.Flor.* II 193 (258 AD) = TM 11060, Eirenaios acknowledges receipt of eight *monochora* of wine on Tybi 18, but then after the farewell and date adds that he has received four more *monochora* on Tybi 19. In another letter from the same archive, *P.Flor.* II 141 (264 AD) = TM 10998, Alypios gives Heroninos the order to give twelve *dichora* of wine to Palas, and to get a note of receipt from Palas; below Alypios' signature, we find a note in a third hand, perhaps Palas' own hand, that he has, indeed, received the *dichora*.⁴¹

Weima's second function, disclosing something that came to mind only after the letter was finished, comes closest to what we have called an 'afterthought' above, that is, an addition made due to a lack of discourse planning. In numerous letters, the postscript gives the impression of being a continuation of the body, as is signaled by

³⁶ Weima makes reference to Bahr 1968, 27-9 for his argument, who properly distinguishes between 'letters' and 'records'.

³⁷ For this function, compare Terry 2014, 40 on eighteenth-century English letters; Terry relates the inclusion of postscripts to the unpredictability of letter deliveries necessitating revision or updating of the letter that was being written.

³⁸ See also Arzt-Grabner 2023, 50.

³⁹ Other examples include *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2192 (175-199 AD) = TM 29029; *P.Oxy.* LV 3807 (ca. 26-28 AD) = TM 22529. Compare *P.Mich.* VIII 477, ll. 32-3 (100-125 AD) = TM 27090 for an information added after the main part of the letter was written but not included in a postscript.

⁴⁰ For more information about this archive, see the Trismegistos portal at https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/detail.php?arch_id=103.

⁴¹ Compare *P.Flor.* II 254, ll. 20-1 (259 AD) = TM 11140; *P.Flor.* II 234, ll. 13-14 (264 AD) = TM 11114.

certain linguistic cues: in *P.Haun.* II 17 (II AD) = TM 26599, for example, Horion asks an unknown addressee to buy the materials necessary for a person's mummification (καλῶς ποιήσεις ἀ[γ]οράσας ... ἀγόρασον 'you will do well to buy ... buy'); the letter ends with a salutation and farewell greeting (ll. 24-6), after which the topic of buying things is taken up again in a verb-less clause which is visually separated from the closing through a horizontal space (καὶ ἡμινοῦν σπερμάτ(ων) κνήκου εἰς βάψαι λίνα [ll. 28-9] "and a half pound of safflower seeds for dyeing the linen" [transl. Rowlandson]), which explicitly suggests continuity with the body.⁴²

In another letter, *P.Oslo* II 47 (1 AD) = TM 21524, Dionysios informs his friend Theon of the purchase of fish and beans, also noting that he gave someone a basket (καὶ σφυρίδαν αὐτῷ δέδωκα [ll. 7-8] 'I also gave him a basket'). The same basket appears in the postscript, after a health wish, salutation, farewell greeting and date, where Dionysios asks Theon to return the basket through Androus (καὶ τὴν σφυρίδαν ἀπόστειλόν μῃ (l. μοι) διὰ Ἀνδρ[ο]ῦν [ll. 18-19] 'and the basket, send it to me with Androus'), the link with the body being explicitly signalled through the discourse particle καὶ 'and'.⁴³

In other cases, the postscript continues along the same lines of the body, though developing a new discourse topic.⁴⁴ For example, in *P.Ryl.* II 236 (256 AD) = TM 12980, the administrator Syros asks Heroninos to send some donkeys, outlining the tasks of the donkeys (ll. 3-18). After the long farewell greeting and the date, Syros gives another command to Heroninos, which is unrelated to the donkeys: two beams are to be cut for oil-presses (ll. 22-8). In this letter, the discourse particle δέ is used to introduce the new discourse topic, as well as each of the subtopics in the body of the letter (ll. 10, 13).⁴⁵

Weima's third function, reinforcing a command given in the body of the text,⁴⁶ is another important and frequently attested function of postscripts in our corpus.⁴⁷ Writers had a number of standard

⁴² Compare *P.Flor.* II 212, l. 21 (250-261 AD) = TM 11083, where in the margin a subordinate clause is added that supports the request made in the body, before the farewell.

⁴³ See also Koroli 2016, 223. Compare *P.Flor.* II 244, ll. 13-16 (252 AD) = TM 11126: καὶ δεῖξαι παρ' αὐ[τοῦ] γρά(μματα) τῆς παρα[λή]ψεως | ὧν λόγ(ο)ν δώσει (l. -σει) 'and receive from him a letter of receipt, for which account will be given'.

⁴⁴ Because of the continuity in terms of speech act and larger referential context, one could speak of a 'supertopic' along the lines of Chafe (see fn. 25).

⁴⁵ For another such example, see *P.Oxy.* XLI 2985 (II-III AD) = TM 26865.

⁴⁶ In their contribution to the present volume, Fokelien Kootstra and Klaas Bentein refer to such reinforcements in terms of 'admonitions'.

⁴⁷ For a classification of postscripts in private papyrus letters with regard to the requests included, see also Koroli 2016, 219-25 who suggests the division of postscripts in three categories: postscripts a) with directive content; b) with non-directive content; c) containing both directive and non-directive content. As regards to directives contained in postscripts, Koroli distinguishes the following sub-categories: a. postscript

phrases at their disposal to remind the receiver of the importance of the request in the body of the text, such as μή οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσης ‘so do not act otherwise’, ὅρα μή ἄλλως ποιήσης ‘see to it that you do not act otherwise’, ὅρα μή ἀμελήσης ‘see to it that you do not neglect’, etc.⁴⁸ Such phrases could be placed either at the end of the body,⁴⁹ or after the closing, in the form of a postscript,⁵⁰ sometimes visually separated and/or with a change of hand to further underline the importance of the request. In *SB* VI 9025 (II AD) = TM 27270, we even find two such admonition phrases: the body of the text is concerned with the sending and receiving of goods, with the marginal postscript continuing along the same lines: on l. 33 we then read μή ἀμελῆς περὶ πάντων, followed by another request on ll. 33-4 (κόμισαι), and yet another admonition on l. 34 ὅρα οὖν μή ἀμελῆς αὐτοῦ, which appears to concern the basket or the letter sent through Phatres.⁵¹

Writers could also personalise this admonition, or adopt a non-formulaic strategy: for example, in *O.Florida* 17 (175-199 AD) = TM 74511, a text which we already mentioned in § 2, Sentis asks Proklos to come, and highlights the importance of the request in the left margin through an admonition phrase combined with a repetition of the request, further intensified through a conditional phrase:⁵² μή οὖν ἄλλως πνησις (l. ποιήσεις) ἀλλὰ ἢ (l. εἰ) φιλεῖς | με ἔρχου (ll. 14-16) ‘do not do otherwise, then, but if you love me come’.

The use of repetition can also be seen in other letters,⁵³ such as *SB* XX 14278 (75-99 AD) = TM 25942, where Longus asks his father to write about some obscure ‘thirty items’, starting his letter with μή ἀμελήσης δι’ οὗ ἂν εὔρης γράψαι τί σοι δοκεῖ περὶ τῶν τριάκοντα (ll. 3-5) ‘please do not neglect to write me, through anyone

directives increasing the perlocutionary effect of one or more directives submitted in the main part of the letter through several forms of repetition (*verbatim* or rephrasing repetition with or without the addition of an intensifier, or repetition through stereotypical requests, such as ὅρα μή ἀμελήσης); b. postscript directives the preparation of which is contained in the main part of the letter; c. directives that are thematically irrelevant to the main part of the letter and are contained in the postscript along with their framing.

⁴⁸ See Koroli 2016, 109-10, 221-2.

⁴⁹ As in *P.Ross.Georg.* III 3, ll. 19-20 (III AD) = TM 30783; *P.Oxy.* IX 1223, ll. 33-5 (ca. 370 AD) = TM 21597.

⁵⁰ See e.g. *P.Fay.* 110, l. 34 (94 AD) = TM 10775; *P.Flor.* II 150, ll. 13-14 (266 AD) = TM 11007.

⁵¹ In some cases, writers try to be more specific than μή οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσης and specify through περὶ with the genitive what the addressee needs to be careful about. See e.g. *O.Claud.* II 279, ll. 17-20 (II AD) = TM 29696; *P.Berl.Zill.* 11, ll. 21-2 (III AD) = TM 30580. Compare *BGU* II 417, ll. 31-2 (I AD) = TM 28136 for a non-formulaic strategy.

⁵² A point of interest is that Sentis also puts emotional pressure on the receiver through the postscript since his arrival will be a proof of his love.

⁵³ On repetitions in the epistolary frame, see further Bentein 2023c.

you may find, what you decide about the thirty items', a request which is almost identically repeated in the postscript, which is placed between the salutation and the farewell greeting (καὶ [με]λέτω μοι πε[ρ]ὶ τῶν τριάκοντά μοι γράφ[ει]ν, ll. 23-4 'and please be sure to write me about the thirty items').⁵⁴ Repetitions also play an important role in the earlier-mentioned Heroninos archive, where there are many instances, particularly in Alypius' letters, where the body contains a request that is followed by a signature in Alypius' own hand, with afterwards a repetition of the request (presumably a form of authentication). For example, in *P.Flor.* II 136 (262 AD) = TM 10990, Alypius orders Heroninos to hand over to Horion one hundred *monochora* of wine (παράδος Ὁρειῶνι (l. Ὁρειῶνι) | φρ(οντιστῇ) Εὐημερείας | εἰς τὰ παρ' αὐτῷ ἀναλ(ώματα) | ὥν λόγον δώσει οἴνου | μονόχω(ρα) ἑκατὸν [ll. 2-6] 'hand over to Horion, the steward of Euhemeria, for the expenses he has incurred, for which he will give an account, one hundred *monochora* of wine'), an order which is almost identically repeated after the signature in Alypius' own hand (σέση(μείωμα) καὶ παράδος | τὰ τοῦ οἴνου μονόχω(ρα) | ἑκατὸν ὡς πρόκειται [ll. 11-13]).⁵⁵

There is some evidence that Weima's third function is not necessarily limited to requests, and that postscripts more generally could serve as a reflective commentary on the contents of a document.⁵⁶ an illuminating example is *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3313 (II AD) = TM 26646, a letter in which Apollonios and Sarapias write to Dionysia, presumably the mother or mother-in-law of a soon-to-be-wedded man, saying that they were only able to collect one thousand roses for the wedding, and not the actual number of roses that was requested. In the postscript, it is then stated that Sarapas, who brought them the roses, will testify that they, or at least one of them, really did everything possible to find the roses (μαρτυρήσει σοι Σαραπᾶς περὶ τῶν ῥόδων ὅτι πάντα πεποίηκα εἰς τὸ | ὅσα ἤθελες πέμψαι σοι, ἀλλὰ οὐχ εὔρομεν [ll. 25-7] 'Sarapas will testify concerning the roses that I have done everything to send to you what you wanted, but we did not find them'). Similarly, in *P.Oxy.* LXXIII 4959 (II AD) = TM 118649, Ammonios writes to his father and mother, saying that his brother Theon is no longer ill, and swearing to the gods that this is true (ll. 10-12). The

⁵⁴ Compare *P.Oxy.* LXXVI 5100, ll. 17-18 (136 AD) = TM 140172; *P.Oxy.* XII 1481, l. 12 (100-125 AD) = TM 28993. See also Koroli 2016, 220.

⁵⁵ For similar examples, see *P.Fuad.I.Univ.Appl.* 25 (262 AD) = TM 11210; *P.Flor.* II 135 (262 AD) = TM 10989; *P.Flor.* II 137 (263 AD) = TM 10991; *P.Flor.* II 139 (264 AD) = TM 10994; *P.Flor.* II 141 (264 AD) = TM 10998; *P.Flor.* II 143 (264 AD) = 11000; *P.Flor.* II 144 (264 AD) = TM 11001; *P.Flor.* II 146 (264 AD) = TM 11003; *P.Flor.* II 147 (265 AD) = TM 11004; *P.Flor.* II 168 (249-268 AD) = TM 11022; *P.Flor.* II 202 (264 AD) = TM 11071; *P.Flor.* II 234 (264 AD) = TM 11114; *P.Flor.* II 235 (265 AD) = TM 11115.

⁵⁶ Compare Terry 2014, 51, who refers to the 'meta-textual' role of postscripts.

same oath is repeated in the postscript, written in his own hand,⁵⁷ which follows the salutation and farewell (ἐπρόμνυμαι ὅτι καλῶς πᾶν ἔχει <ὁ> ἀδελφὸς Θέων καὶ τὰ συνήθη πράσσει [Il. 22-4] ‘I swear that my bother Theon is very well and doing his usual activities’).

Moving forward, our intention is to present a case arguing that postscripts served purposes extending beyond those proposed by Weima. One such function relates to what we call ‘common ground management’,⁵⁸ concerning as it does matters that constitute shared information for the initiator and receiver, but that are not explicitly part of the letter’s main content as expressed in the body of the text: for example, in *PSI XII 1247v* (200-265 AD) = TM 30631, Ammonios writes to Apollonianos and Spartiates that ‘the soldier’ is again bothering her, without mentioning anything about a soldier in the body of her letter (πάλαι ὁ στρατιώτης ἡμῖν ἐνοχλῇ (l. ἐνοχλεῖ) ὥς | χάριν.γο...ου αὐτῷ ἐνετίλω (l. ἐνετείλω) [Il. 16-17] ‘the soldier bothered us earlier because of... you instructed him’ [transl. Bagnall, Cribiore]).⁵⁹ Similarly, in *SB III 6262* (III AD) = TM 31055, Thonis includes a postscript asking the addressee to remember his pigeons (μνημονεύσατε τῶν περιστε|ριδίων ἡμῶν [Il. 27-8] ‘please remember our young pigeons’). Nothing of this sort has been previously mentioned in the letter body, but it may have been the topic of a previous communication, making this easily retrievable information for the receiver.

In the examples that we have just discussed, one can detect some overlap with what we have referred to as ‘afterthoughts’ earlier, though afterthoughts tend to adhere more closely to the main topic.⁶⁰ Perhaps clearer are those cases where what we call ‘common ground management’ is related to the writing process itself, and where the postscript includes expected, ‘meta-communicative’ information.⁶¹ so, for example, writers use the postscript to (i) mention that they are coming or going to a place,⁶² or ask the receiver to write where s/he is located;⁶³ (ii) comment on the lack of communication between the

⁵⁷ On Ammonios’ hand and his corrections to the initial letter dictated see the comments of the editor and Arzt-Grabner 2023, 47.

⁵⁸ For common ground as information shared between two people, see e.g. Clark 2020. For the use of particles in Ancient Greek dialogue to engage in common ground management, see e.g. Allan 2021.

⁵⁹ One can note the presence of the definite article pointing to mutual knowledge.

⁶⁰ Or at least supertopic, on which see fn. 25.

⁶¹ Compare Terry 2014, 51 on eighteenth-century English letters: “it is assumed that the postscript provides the most fitting place for issues to do with the general management of correspondences”.

⁶² E.g. *O.Did.* 369 (88-92 AD) = TM 144930; *P.Lips.* I 106 (99 AD) = TM 11617; *BGU III* 884 (76 AD) = TM 9397; *P.Mich.* III 213 (III AD) = TM 31546; *P.Oxy.* III 529 (II AD) = TM 28369.

⁶³ E.g. *O.Did.* 319 (77-92 AD) = TM 144882; *PSI IX* 843 (II AD) = TM 27224.

initiator and receiver;⁶⁴ (ii) make reference to the person delivering the letter;⁶⁵ (iv) note that they have not been able to send something along with the letter;⁶⁶ (v) ask not to share the letter with others, or even to destroy the letter once it has been received;⁶⁷ (vi) explain why they have not been able to write;⁶⁸ (vii) authenticate their message by giving a sign that they are who they claim to be;⁶⁹ (viii) observe that they have written in haste;⁷⁰ etc. Arguably, this type of post-script comes closest to Goffman's notion of 'out-of-frame activity',⁷¹ referring to activities that do not fit within the current frame being applied, potentially encompassing behaviours, communications, or events that are irrelevant, disruptive, or (in our case) tangential to the main activity or focus.

Another important function that is not mentioned by Weima relates to what Goffman calls the 'participation framework', that is, the different production and reception roles involved in the communication.⁷² The initiator and receiver are of course central participants to epistolary communication, but particularly in the case of private letters, the initiator's and receiver's social networks, as attested through the salutations integrated in the opening and closing, play a vital role, too.⁷³ Very often, the salutation of or by a person triggers an additional comment that specifically relates to this person: for example, in *O.Claud.* II 271 (125-175 AD) = TM 29688, the initiator, Patrem-pabathes, includes salutations for the receiver, Apollinarios, from a certain Didymos, together with a request to send him (Didymos) 'the pig' (ἀσπάζεται | σε Δίδυμος. σπούδασον | πέμψαι (l. πέμψαι) ἐκίνο (l. ἐκείνῳ) τῷ (l. τῷ) χοιρίδι'ν' [ll. 11-13] 'Didymos greets you. Make haste to send him the pig').⁷⁴

⁶⁴ E.g. *P.Cair.Isid.* 332 (267-299 AD) = TM 30621.

⁶⁵ E.g. *P.Laur.* I 20 (200-250 AD) = TM 31506.

⁶⁶ E.g. *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2788 (III AD) = TM 30387.

⁶⁷ E.g. *SB* VI 9610 (II AD) = TM 27823; *P.Oxy.* VII 1063 (II-III AD) = TM 28332.

⁶⁸ E.g. *P.Oxy.Hels.* 46 (I-II AD) = TM 24976.

⁶⁹ E.g. *P.Prag.Varcl.NS.* 38 (249-268 AD) = TM 14194.

⁷⁰ E.g. *P.Ryl.* II 231 (40 AD) = TM 12979.

⁷¹ See Goffman 1974, 466: "it seems generally true that much social activity is episoded by brackets, and that there will be a kind of backstage period before the activity begins and after it is over. Individuals are not merely out of role at these times, but they are unguarded in ways they won't be as soon as the activity proper begins".

⁷² See Goffman 1981. For the participant structure of ancient Greek letter writing, compare Bentein 2023c, 197-8.

⁷³ See Bentein 2023c, 197-8, referring to earlier research by Verhoogt 2009.

⁷⁴ This sort of information may not have been deemed important enough to be included in the actual letter body. Compare Terry 2014, 42 on eighteenth-century English letters: "the use of postscripts in everyday correspondence was not merely unexceptional in itself, but also allowed for the inclusion of material, such as expressing compliments

In our last example, the request still comes from Apollinarios, but in some cases requests can come directly from one of the people sending along their salutations: in *O.Did.* 402 (ca. 100-115 AD) = TM 144963, for example, Demetria sends her salutations in the closing of Veturius' letter, after which we read, ἐρωτᾷ σε ἐλθεῖν (l. ἐλθεῖν) ὅτε (l. ὥδε) | καὶ μὴ σὺ διὰ Κα<ι>νῆς | ἀναβῆς (ll. 18-20) 'she asks you to come here and do not go through Kaine', with a shift of perspective, from a third-person request to a direct request in the imperative mood.⁷⁵ Another such example is *P.Oxy.* VII 1067 (III AD) = TM 31314, where one of the saluters, the receiver's father, sends salutations in the first person,⁷⁶ and makes a request in the imperative: καγὼ (l. καὶ ἐγὼ) Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ πα[τρὶς] τῶν ὑμῶν ἀσπάζομαι | ὑμᾶς πολλά. ἀγόρασόν | μοι ὀψαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς | θαλάσσης κτλ. (ll. 25-9) 'I also, your father Alexander, send you many salutations. Buy me a little fish from the sea etc.'

Similarly, the initiator can use the postscript to directly address one of the salutes, as in *P.Oxy.* XIV 1679 (200-299 AD) = TM 31787, where Apia salutes here 'brother' Loukammon, asking him to write: Λουκάμμωνα τὸν ἀδελφὸν πολλὰ ἀσπάζομαι, οὗ δέομαι γράψαι | ἡμεῖν (l. ἡμῖν) ἢ (l. εἰ) ἐκομίσατο τὸν χιτῶνα αὐτοῦ παρὰ τοῦ Λεύκου, ἐπεὶ | Βηρύλλος ἐπελάθετο αὐτὸν ἄραι (ll. 21-6) "I send many salutations to my brother Lucammon, whom I beg to write to us whether he received his tunic from Leucus, since Beryllus forgot to take it" (transl. Grenfell, Hunt). Although salutations are frequently accompanied by this type of postscript, the use of postscripts certainly extends beyond this specific context: for example, in *P.Oxy.* XLII 3061 (I AD) = TM 25081, a letter from Heraklas to his son Archelaos, there are no salutations, but a third party has used the margin to add a message for the addressee (ll. 19-20): ἔγραψε Ἀπολλώνιος Πτολ(εμαίου) περὶ τοῦ ἐγλογιστοῦ (l. ἐκλογιστοῦ) ἐὰν τι | ἦν (l. ᾗ) δῆλωσόν [μ]οι "Apollonius son of Ptolemaeus has written 'About the accountant, let me know if anything turns up'". (transl. Parsons).⁷⁷ This is indicative of the everyday difficulties in communication through letters which made people take advantage of every opportunity to write their requests and comments even as a postscript in others' letters.⁷⁸

to a third party or acknowledging a gift, often considered too banal or formulaic for inclusion in the main body of the letter".

⁷⁵ For deictic shifting in another corpus, Greek contractual writing, see Bentein 2020.

⁷⁶ Nachtergaele 2015, 95-7 discusses instances of salutations from third persons in the first person perspective.

⁷⁷ Compare *P.Oxy.* XLII 3062 (I AD) = TM 25082 and *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3917 (100-125 AD) = TM 27301, in which another person takes over (ll. 9-12), but does so before the farewell.

⁷⁸ See Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 37.

Furthermore, we would like to suggest that postscripts might have been employed to communicate information that did not necessarily build upon the main text, but rather was somewhat detached from its central theme. Writers might have opted to utilise postscripts for such information to maintain the primary content's thematic cohesion and clarity.

There is some potential here for overlap with what we called above 'afterthoughts' and 'common ground management', as will also become apparent from our discussion of postscripts in women's letters in § 3. Information about the writing process, too, can be considered thematically detached from the letter's central theme, for example. Our main motivation for making this distinction here is that what is disclosed in the postscript constitutes new information, which is not shared with the receiver because it has just been mentioned in the letter, as with afterthoughts, or because it is an expected or immediately retrievable ('hot') topic, as with our common ground management. This is reflected in the fact that there is observable effort on the part of the initiator to present a new topic within the postscript, as we will see in the next two examples.

In *SB V 7600* (16 AD) = *TM 17990*, the body of the text is mostly concerned with a request to take good care of a horse, and, if possible, to send it to the initiator. After the salutation at the end of the letter, the initiator uses the disclosure formula (θέλω [l. θέλω] σε | [γινώσκειν], ll. 25-6 'I want you to know'), which is normally found at the beginning of the body, to introduce an otherwise unrelated piece of information, namely that he has become *curator turmae*. Another such example is *P.Mich. III 212* (II-III AD) = *TM 28801*, a philophronetic letter with an elaborate opening and closing frame, the body of which contains a request from Dorion to his son Serenus to write about his health, and to write what he needs besides the things that have already been sent. In the postscript (ll. 17-19), an entirely different topic is addressed through the use of περί with the genitive (περὶ τοῦ παλαιοῦ πύργου 'in regard to the old farm-building'), about which a short statement is then given.⁷⁹

A question that one could ask is to what extent the use of this type of postscript might have been rhetorically, rather than textually driven, that is, whether writers might have deferred information to the closing to make strategic use of its position outside of the main body of the text. This suggestion was already made by the sixteenth/early seventeenth-century philosopher and writer Francis Bacon, who observed in his essay "Of Cunning" that "I knew one that, when he wrote a letter, he would put that, which was most material, in the

⁷⁹ Other potential examples include *P.Oxy. VII 1069* (III AD) = *TM 31316*; *P.Mich. VIII 496* (100-147 AD) = *TM 27106*.

postscript, as if it had been a by-matter”.⁸⁰ The dramatic effect of the use of postscripts in English literature has been further explored by Richard Terry in an important 2014 article.⁸¹ When it comes to our corpus, such strategic motivations are somewhat more difficult to uncover, though under § 4.2, we will discuss an example from a later letter, BGU III 948 (IV-V AD) = TM 33251, where a request seems to be strategically placed in the postscript so as to come across as more modest, while in fact being of central importance to the initiator.

Finally, we briefly want to note the use of postscript to share information in the form of a list,⁸² a usage which is also found in official documents such as petitions.⁸³ The relations between such lists and the body of the text are various: in a few cases, the list is explicitly anticipated in the body of the text: in *P.Mil.Vogl.* I 11 (100-150 AD) = TM 78532, for example, Theon, the initiator, stresses the importance of reading books, and notes that he is sending books through a certain Achilles, which are listed below the salutation, farewell and date in the form of a postscript.⁸⁴ The only subject of the letter is the value of reading books. Thus, the postscript is part of the letter’s discourse topic. In *P.Oxy.* XLII 3058 (II AD) = TM 26810, on the other hand, reference is also made to the appending of a list, but this is only done in the postscript itself, after the farewell greeting. Moreover, the list does not seem immediately connected to the body of the text since the writer is interested in various business matters.⁸⁵ Lists were not necessarily limited to the postscript: one text, *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 61 (108-176 AD) = TM 28833, includes two lists, one before the closing frame (ll. 22-8), and another after (ll. 31-5).

We conclude our discussion with an overview that summarises our findings. Table 1 lists the different types of postscripts that we distinguish,⁸⁶ elucidating how these types are integrated in the letter’s overall discourse structure, how they relate to the writer’s (lack of) discourse planning and their communicative motivations, and what some of their typical linguistic characteristics are.

⁸⁰ The quote is taken from the online edition at <https://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-23.html>.

⁸¹ Terry 2014.

⁸² For lists in antiquity, see among others Clarysse 2020; Ghignoli 2022.

⁸³ See e.g. *P.Cair.Isid.* 64, ll. 18-22 (298 AD) = TM 10394; *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2182, ll. 38-57 (165 AD) = TM 12608.

⁸⁴ Compare *P.Lond.* II 190 (II AD) = TM 28020.

⁸⁵ Compare *P.Oxf.* 18 (II-III AD) = TM 27140.

⁸⁶ Many of the functions that we list here also seem to be relevant to postscripts in other historical corpora. Compare the functions listed by Terry 2014, 38 for eighteenth-century English letters.

Table 1 Summary of functions of postscripts in Roman-period private letters

Type	Discourse structure ⁱ	Discourse planning	Linguistic characteristics
Disclosing new information	Establishing a new discourse topic	Unplanned, informational	(Justifying elements)
Afterthought	Elaborating a (semi-) active discourse topic/ supertopic (Elaborating a retrievable discourse topic)	Unplanned, clarifying (informational)	Use of καί, ellipsis (suggestive of continuation)
Reinforcing information	Repeating a semi-active discourse topic	Planned, interpersonal	Use of verbal intensifiers ('do not neglect to' etc.)
Common ground management	Elaborating a retrievable discourse topic	Planned, interpersonal	Use of the definite article, absence of explicit topic introducers
Participation framework	Embedded in a new discourse topic	Planned, organisational	Use of καί
Disjointed content	Establishing a new discourse topic	Planned, organisational	Use of explicit topic introducers such as prepositions and disclosure formulae
List	Elaborating a semi-active discourse topic	Planned, clarifying	Nominal appearance

ⁱ We make a distinction here between 'semi-active' and 'retrievable' discourse topics. Semi-active discourse topics are discourse topics that form part of the letter body and which occur before the closing; retrievable discourse topics, on the other hand, are not mentioned in the letter body, but can easily be inferred by the receiver.

Table 1 illustrates a point that we made earlier, namely that while it is crucial to consider the cognitive operations involved in the writing process within a culture where orality held much greater prominence than it does in modern-day society (both in terms of the production and reception of written documents), far from all postscripts are due to the initiator 'forgetting' to include information in his/her letter body [tab. 1].

The table also nicely illustrates some of the affinities and overlaps between the different types of postscripts, which we turn to in the next section, discussing the corpus of women's letters.

A question that one could ask is what – if anything – brings together these different functions, and what gave the postscript its

distinctive tone with respect to the letter body (if any). Tentatively, we argue that the postscript's positioning inside or following the interpersonally oriented closing frame, its greater temporal immediacy with respect to the body of the text (being written last by the initiator, and therefore containing the most recent information), and its disruption of the more regular discourse flow (that is, *opening frame - body - closing frame*), all contributed to an increased sense of interpersonal 'involvement',⁸⁷ which, somewhat paradoxically, could be appropriated both for more mundane, often meta-textual information that is considered to fall outside of the body's main communicative content, as well as for more emotionally loaded information.⁸⁸

4 Postscripts in Context: The Corpus of Women's Letters

Now that we have provided an outline of the different functions that postscripts could have, we turn to their actual use in discourse, by focusing on women's letters, an epistolary sub-corpus that has received a significant amount of attention for the rich information it provides about women's everyday experiences, emotions and social attitudes.⁸⁹ These letters represent an interesting corpus for our present purposes, too, since they are more limited in number than men's letters,⁹⁰ though being thematically diverse: Bagnall and Cribiore guide their reader through the corpus of women's letters on the basis of diverse themes such as 'family matters and health', 'business matters', 'legal matters', 'work', 'journeys', 'religion', etc.⁹¹ Thoma categorises the women's letters according to their correspondents (men/women, family/friends/colleagues etc.) and their communicative goals (requests, complaints, keeping contact, expression of emotions etc.).⁹²

⁸⁷ See Bentein 2023c for more elaborate discussion of the concept of involvement and its application to Greek papyri.

⁸⁸ One can compare Terry 2014, 51, who discusses eighteenth-century English letters, on this point: "the postscript here allows such narrowly logistical details to be kept separate from the more general exchange of sentiments, but it also reflects the common understanding of postscripts as a textual space in which to stow the more secretive elements of a correspondence, even where the letter and postscript will inevitably be received and read together".

⁸⁹ See among others Bagnall, Cribiore 2006; 2008; Thoma 2020; Bentein 2023b.

⁹⁰ Most women's letters date to the Roman period, a period for which Bentein 2023b, 90 mentions "about 170 letters". On the basis of the overview list provided by Bagnall, Cribiore 2006 and the 2008 online edition of this book, one can estimate the total number of women's letters at little over 220. Thoma 2020 contains an updated list of 250 women's letters written in Greek, 189 of which are dated between the first and the third centuries AD.

⁹¹ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006.

⁹² Thoma 2020.

We start by looking at women's letters dealing with business matters (§ 4.1) and personal affairs (§ 4.2),⁹³ which gives us the opportunity to further explore the connection between letters' contents/communicative goal and the inclusion of postscripts, as well to discuss some of the difficulties that one experiences in categorising postscripts. We conclude this section by turning to one specific archive that has become quite famous for its female writers (and their use of postscripts), the archive of Apollonios the *strategos* (§ 4.3).

The corpus of women's letters is also interesting in its own right, as it has been hypothesised by Roger Bagnall and Raffaele Cribiore, on the basis of the quasi-exclusive use of postscripts in female (rather than male) letters from the archive of Apollonios the *strategos* that postscripts 'were a typical feature of letters dictated⁹⁴ by women',⁹⁵ though the same authors are quick to add that only an accurate survey of men's letters could confirm the validity of their hypothesis. Bagnall and Cribiore's claim is difficult to evaluate, as we do not have any quantitative data of the specific number of dictated letters (male or female) – a number that would be difficult to establish anyway; however, we can (very roughly) calculate for Roman-period private letters that approximately 27% (n = 45/166) of all female letters, whether or not autographs, has a postscript, whereas only 12.8% (n = 274/2,143) of all male⁹⁶ letters has a postscript.⁹⁷ Though we need to take into account the fact that men participated in a much larger set of informal epistolary subgenres than women, this difference seems significant, though perhaps not so significant as to suggest that the postscript indexed a uniquely 'female' frame of writing.

For reasons of space, we cannot fully engage with this last topic here, though we briefly want to explore it by making a comparison between the male and female letters in the archive of Apollonios the *strategos*, to see whether these postscripts had a similar, or rather different function (§ 4.3).

⁹³ A distinction that is not entirely straightforward, given that some letters deal with both private and business affairs.

⁹⁴ Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) seem to put particular focus on the fact that women frequently made use of dictation to produce their letters, and that, as a result, they more often included afterthoughts.

⁹⁵ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 63.

⁹⁶ Or rather, non-female letters; 2,143 is the total number of informal letters that cannot be securely attributed to a female initiator.

⁹⁷ These rough counts are based on the data provided by Bentein 2023b.

4.1 Business Affairs

Women in Roman Egypt had a prominent role in the economy of the country as they owned a large amount of the private land and practised various professions, mainly in the field of services and crafts and trades.⁹⁸ First, we will discuss how women employed postscripts in their business correspondence. At this point, we would like to clarify that women's business correspondence should be considered in a rather broad sense including letters focusing both on matters related to their running of a business (i.e. agriculture works, weaving activities etc.) and very small-scale business such as the exchange of various goods.

In *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 76 (138-147 AD) = TM 15188, the landowner Diogenis writes to her manager (*phrontistes*) Kronion about various business matters.⁹⁹ The two hands recognised on the papyrus indicate that Diogenis probably dictated the body of the letter, adding the salutation with her own hand. Then, she dictated a postscript including an order to Kronion about an economic issue, which is followed by the date of the letter (ἐὰν Διδυμᾶς ἀντιλέγῃ τῇ | ἀποδόσει Λουρίῳ, προένευ|κον τὴν κίστην μου καὶ σφρα|γίσας αὐτοῦ τὰ γραμματεῖα πέμψ[ον]. | Ἐπειφ κ [ll. 16-20] 'If Didymas opposes the payment to Lourios, produce my box, and send his documents under seal. Epeiph 20', transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). After the date, another instruction is then introduced concerning the payment of the tax *artabia* (ἐὰν δὲ καὶ χρεῖαν αὐτοῦ ἔχῃς | εἰς ἀρταβίαν ἢ ἄλλ[λ]ο τι, | πορεύου πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ | πάντα ποιήσον [ll. 21-4] "but if you also have need of him for the *artabia* or something else, go to him and he will do everything", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). Both postscripts should be considered as Diogenis' afterthoughts and reveal that she was in a hurry and stressed about the management of her property. As a result, the final commands have apparently come to her mind after the letter was finished. In *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 77 (138-147 AD) = TM 28842, Diogenis communicates again with Kronion about various matters and gives him some orders in a more threatening tone.¹⁰⁰ The final greetings and the date are followed by an afterthought about some matters that should be settled by Kronion upon Diogenis' arrival at his place and with which he appears to be acquainted ("... but the keys... I arrive; it will be your concern that I arrive", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). In this case, the postscript should be understood as common ground management which also puts pressure on the receiver.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Thoma 2018; 2025 with further bibliography.

⁹⁹ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 184; Thoma 2020, 92-3.

¹⁰⁰ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 184; Thoma 2020, 93, 191.

In addition, *P.Oxy.* VI 932 (175-199 AD) = TM 28343 preserves a business letter sent by Thais to Tigrios.¹⁰¹ The abbreviations and omissions attested in the body of the letter indicate the writer's hurry. Embedded between the salutation and the closing greeting, Thais adds a command about some pigs (τὰ | χοιρίδια χωρίς μου μὴ πῶλι (l. πῶλει) [ll. 9-10] "don't sell the piglets without me", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). It is likely that Thais puts her last command in a postscript to emphasise it. The brief reference to the pigs should be considered as shared information between the correspondents, and thus common ground management.

An afterthought is met in *P.Oxy.* XXXI 2593 (II AD) = TM 26937, a business letter addressed by Apollonia to her business partners Philetos and Herakleides about woolen materials.¹⁰² After the final wishes and greetings, the writer adds as a postscript an information about the warp, which has probably come to her mind after finishing the letter but which fits thematically with the rest of the letter (ὁ δὲ στήμων παρ' ἐμοὶ βέβρεκται [l. 26] "the warp has been soaked here at my place", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).

Business matters often play a prominent place in letters exchanged between family members. *BGU* III 822 (105 AD) = TM 28093 is a private letter written by Thermouthas to her brother Apollinarios on a variety of business matters related to grain taxes, rents etc.¹⁰³ After the final greetings and health wishes, the writer adds an afterthought on the verso of the sheet, requesting to send papyrus so that she can write a letter; some information is also included that may be characterised as common ground for the initiator and receiver (ll. 28-30: Καὶ [ἐὰν] σοι φανῇ, πέμψον μοι ἄγραφον χάρτην, ἵνα | εὐρο[με]ν (l. εὐρωμεν) ἐπιστολ[ήν] | γράψαι. ἐνέγκι (l. ἐνέγκει) σοι Ἑρμίας τη[.....] ν περὶ Κάστορος | περὶ τῶν [ἐτέρων(?)] | καὶ [...] τοῦ "And if you think it proper, send me blank papyrus, so that we may be able to write a letter. Hermias is bringing you the... about Kastor, about the..." [transl. Bagnall, Cribiore]). After completing the letter, Thermouthas may have noticed that the papyrus as writing material had just finished, leading her to request some sheets. She is also mentioning Hermias who will bring something to the receiver concerning a certain Kastor. Both men are not mentioned before by the writer, but the way Thermouthas refers to them in the postscript indicates that they were familiar to her receiver.

Another illustrative example is *SB* XXII 15453 (BIFAO 94 (1994) 32-3, no. II [*O.Max.inv.* 279 + 467]) (II AD) = TM 79035, in which Sarapias writes to a man whom she addresses as 'father', although he

¹⁰¹ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 297-8; Thoma 2020, 98-9.

¹⁰² Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 353-4; Thoma 2020, 98.

¹⁰³ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 191; Thoma 2020, 28.

appears not to be her actual father.¹⁰⁴ In the main body of the letter, Sarapias mentions various items sent and received, and in her postscript she adds a request, which appears to be already known to the recipient: to send a scalpel (*msup* πέμψον μοι τὸ ξυραφιν μὴ ἀμελήῃς. *minf* κόμισαι | κεράμιν α [ll. 14-15] ‘Don’t forget to send me the scalpel. Receive 1 jar’). A point of interest is that the postscript is written in the upper margin of the ostrakon, while a second postscript concerning the sending of a jar with the request to receive a reply from her correspondent appears at the end of the letter in the left margin. The request for a scalpel is considered as common ground management since it may have been mentioned in a previous letter, but the recipient had not yet sent it to Sarapias. She highlights the importance of her request by intensifying it through the phrase: μὴ ἀμελήῃς.¹⁰⁵ One could also suppose that Sarapias put the first postscript at the upper margin of the papyrus intentionally to keep her receiver’s attention on this and guide the interpretation of the letter to the point she desired (the receiving of goods).

In *P.Tebt.* II 414 (II AD) = TM 28427, Thenpetsokis writes to her sister Thenapynchis about the exchange of goods, also giving her various instructions.¹⁰⁶ She appears to be interested in the sending of dried figs to her addressee, since she explains in the body of the letter that she would have sent them before if she were not sick. In a postscript placed at the upper side of the papyrus, reminiscent of Sarapias’ postscript mentioned above, she repeats this information to remind her sister to take the figs by a certain Tephersais (κόμισαι παρὰ Τεφερσαίτου ἰσχάδες ν [ll. 1-2] “receive 50 dried figs from Tephersais”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).¹⁰⁷ It is noteworthy that at the last part of the letter the greetings are interrupted twice by two different postscripts adding new thoughts and requests involving various persons who are not mentioned before. Both postscripts are afterthoughts given by the writer for informational purposes which may have come to the writer’s mind just before ending the letter.

In *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2680 (II-III AD) = TM 26930, Arsinoe writes to her sister Sarapias on various matters focusing on the collection of some rents belonging to Sarapias.¹⁰⁸ After the final greetings, she encourages her sister to ask her for anything she may need and explains that she has not sent her a jar of pickle because it had sunk (τὸ κεράμιον | τῶν ταρειχίων (l. ταριχίων) διὰ τὸ συμπεπτωκέναι | ἐπέπλησα. τὰ δὲ ὑποκάτω κρειττό|να ἐστὶν τῶν ἐπάνω [ll. 22-5] “I topped up the jar

¹⁰⁴ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 165; Thoma 2020, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Thoma 2020, 191. Cf. Koroli 2016, 109, 221.

¹⁰⁶ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 337-8; Thoma 2020, 126.

¹⁰⁷ On the postscript, see Thoma 2020, 191.

¹⁰⁸ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 300; Thoma 2020, 136.

of pickle because it had sunk. The bottom layers are better than the top ones”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). This information may have been placed there because it does not fit in thematically with the body of the letter,¹⁰⁹ though perhaps it is more likely that Arsinoe just remembered the jar after she had finished the letter.

In addition, in *P.Köln* I 56 (I AD) = TM 24929, Diodora writes to her husband Valerius Maximus about her arrival in a nome capital to deal with some business matters.¹¹⁰ After the greetings to various persons and before the date and the closing greeting to her addressee, Diodora asks her husband to write about a matter and informs him that she will return immediately after taking care of her business (καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς (l. γράψεις) μοι | [..]] ὡς καὶ ἡν (l. ἐάν) περὶ [ῥαιώσ]ω τὸ μετῆρο (l. μετέωρον) καὶ ὅμαι (l. ὥμαι) | [ἀπρόσ]κοπος, ταχὺ καταπλεύσω [ll. 12-16] “And please write to me... and if I (complete) what is incumbent and I am free from harm I will sail down quickly”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The postscript functions as a continuation of the body of the letter since both parts focus on Diodora’s trip and return to home.¹¹¹ The writer may have added this information as common ground management to reassure her husband that if she would finish the business he knew, she would come back home.

In *P.Oxy.* LIX 3991 (II-III AD) = TM 27847, Sarapias writes to her husband Ischyron about his visit to their family and the sending of various goods.¹¹² After the greetings, she highlights her anxiety about his long silence in a postscript which functions as an afterthought to the whole letter also expressing her inner feelings (ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἔγχετο οὐ μικρῶν (l. μικρῶν), | πολλῶν χρόνων | μὴ κομισθέντων σου γραμμάτων [ll. 24-9] “we had been in no small anxiety because no letter of yours had been received for a long time”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).

In *P.Oxy.* XII 1581 (II AD) = TM 29006, Apia addresses her brother Zoilos about the sending of some items also asking him to take care of her son.¹¹³ In the final greetings, she mentions a certain Modestas also reminding Zoilos to give him some of the bread sent ([παρ]αδώσεις | δὲ καὶ τῷ Μοδεστῷ [ἄφ’] ὧν ἐάν | κ[ο]μισθῇ σοι [ll. 11-12] “you will hand some over also to Modestas should be interpreted in the context of participation framework since the salutation of Modestas triggers an additional comment related to him. Before continuing with the greetings, Apia also repeats her request

¹⁰⁹ Cf., for example, *O.Claud.* II 278 (mid-II AD) = TM 29695.

¹¹⁰ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 368-9; Thoma 2020, 107.

¹¹¹ See Bentein 2023b, 99.

¹¹² Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 355; Thoma 2020, 105-6.

¹¹³ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 362; Thoma 2020, 36-7.

that Zoilos takes care of her son in order to put more emphasis on this (διὰ π[αντ]ὸς ἔχε | τ[ὸ]ν Σαραπίωνα ἐπ[ιμ]ελλῶς [ll. 13-14] “Always keep an eye on Sarapion”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). This last thought could also be considered as reinforcing the information provided in the letter and summarising its communicative goal.

In addition, in *P.Oxy.* 2599 (III-IV AD) = TM 30439, Tauris sends two letters to her father and her brother about getting and sending various goods, mainly things connected with the making of fabric, clothing, and footwear.¹¹⁴ A point of interest is that postscripts are included in both letters. After the greetings of the first letter, Tauris addresses Kyra, to whom she sends some towels, also requesting some others to be sent to her in return (ll. 23-6: καθὼς εἶρηκες (l. εἶρηκας) οὖν, | Κύρα, ὅτι πέμπω συ (l. σοι) σαβα|κάτεια (l. σαβακάθια), πέμψον, καὶ πέμ(πω) | συ τὰ τῶν ἐγυπθείων (l. Αἰγυπτίων) “As you said, lady, ‘I’m sending you some towels’, send (them), and I’m sending you the Egyptian ones”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The postscript belongs to the category of participation framework. At the end of her second letter, Tauris sends various greetings and then adds her request to her brother to come back home soon (l. 36: ταχὺ ἔρχη εἶνα (l. ἴνα) εἶδομεν (l. ἴδωμεν) συ (l. σε) “Come quickly so we may see you”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). Although the main part of the letter concerns the exchange of goods, Tauris expresses her desire to see her brother in a postscript which functions as common ground management.

In *P.Oxy.* XIV 1765 (200-275 AD) = TM 31807, Kousenna complains to the *tarsikarios* (weaver of fabrics from Tarsos) Apammon for not having answered to her letters about the shipment of some items.¹¹⁵ The greetings to various persons, including a certain Silvanos, trigger the request to have Silvanos sent to her (participation framework). What is more, in the verso of the papyrus Kousenna adds a second postscript with additional information: she has sent fava beans and papyrus sheets for Apammon and a priestess who has been already mentioned in the greetings (κόμισσον (l. κόμισον) | μετὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς κυ|άμους ἑξήκοντα καὶ χαρτάρια | εἰς Κεφαλὴν καὶ ἐπιμερίζεσθαι | σὺ καὶ ἡ ἱέρεια [ll. 25-8] “receive with the letter sixty fava beans and 4 pieces of papyrus probably for anointing the head, and you and the priestess apportion (them)”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 400-1; Thoma 2020, 23.

¹¹⁵ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 298-9; Thoma 2020, 20-1.

¹¹⁶ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 299.

4.2 Private Affairs

Summarising the set of business-related female letters that we outlined under § 4.1, we can say that afterthoughts and common ground management seem to play a particularly important role, also revealing the writers' intention to deal with everyday matters as best as they could. Letters that are centred more around private affairs, on the other hand, more often include postscripts that relate to what we called the participation framework, mainly including requests from other parties (relatives or friends). Such letters demonstrate women's care for matters concerning the whole household. In addition, it seems that postscripts in private letters are very often used intentionally to reinforce information (and requests); they are not written in such a hurry as business letters, which sometimes sound very urgent.

In *P.Mich.* VIII 514 (III AD) = TM 30514, Isidora writes to her daughter Sarapias about various everyday and family matters.¹¹⁷ Among her various problems, she also mentions a dispute between Sarapias and her husband about a matter related to Sarapias' father. The final salutations are interrupted by a postscript addressed to a certain Onnophris, probably Sarapias' husband, since he is the one to whom the letter will be delivered (cf. l. 39). In her postscript, the writer comes back to the quarrel between the couple by trying to manipulate Onnophris putting the blame on him about Sarapias' dissatisfaction (μη ἀναγκάσης μέ σε μέμψα[σ]θαί σοι (l. σε) Ὀννώφρειν (l. Ὀννώφριν) ἐπὶ . . . ἀηδία | αὐτῆς [ll. 35-7] "Do not force me to reproach you, Onnophris, for her unpleasantness", transl. Winter, Youtie). It appears that the salutation of the family members and specifically Onnophris has triggered this additional comment of the writer which is related to him, but also to the main topic of the letter. So, Isidora decided to address him through the postscript. Her words to Onnophris are placed as a postscript for emphatic purposes to reinforce her argument that he is the one to be blamed for the family disharmony.

In *PSI* IX 1080 (III AD) = TM 30667, Diogenis writes to her brother Alexandros about various everyday matters with focus on the family's movement to a new house.¹¹⁸ She sends greetings to a little boy named Theon and then adds as a postscript that some toys bought by a woman are sent to him along with the letter. Diogenis' postscript should be interpreted in the context of participation framework since the comment is triggered by the reference to Theon, while it is also common ground management because both initiator and receiver know who the woman mentioned is (ἡνέχθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὑπὸ | [τῆς] γυναικός, ἥς μοι ἐδήλωσας ἀσπάσασθαι, | [παί]γνια ὅκτω καὶ ταῦτα

¹¹⁷ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 269-70; Thoma 2020, 134-5.

¹¹⁸ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 301; Thoma 2020, 73.

σοι διεπεμφάμην [ll. 12-14] “eight toys have been brought for him by the woman whom you told me to greet, and I have forwarded these to you...”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).

In *PSI XII* 1247 (200-265 AD) = TM 30631, which we already mentioned under § 3, Ammonous sends her greetings and wishes to her father and brother. Since the letter’s communicative goal is keeping contact with her family, it does not include any other information.¹¹⁹ However, the writer mentions a more serious matter (probably of economic or legal character) as a postscript written by her own hand: a certain soldier is bothering her and Diogenes will explain to the receiver the situation (πάλαι ὁ στρατιώτης ἡμῖν ἐνοχλεῖ (l. ἐνοχλεῖ) ὥς | χάριν. γο...ου αὐτῷ ἐνετίλω (l. ἐνετείλω). ἐρῖ (l. ἐρεῖ) | οὖν σοι τὸ πρᾶγμα Διογένης [ll. 16-18]).¹²⁰ Ammonous’ postscript should be understood in the context of common ground management since both the initiator and the receiver know about the soldier and Diogenes, although there is no mention of these people in the body of the letter. This addition made by her own hand indicates the severity of the matter and Ammonous’ wish to keep some privacy.

In *P.Hamb.* II 192 (III AD) = TM 30461, Demetria writes to her sister Apia that despite some initial setbacks she has managed to send her expensive oil, also promising to send her the upper garment for the festival.¹²¹ After some greetings and before the closing wish, the writer establishes a new discourse topic in her postscript by requesting the purple fabric (καὶ σὺ δὲ μνήσθητι τοῦ | πορφυρίου [ll. 29-30] “and you remember the purple”, transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). It appears that Demetria’s request is consciously motivated since it is based on the mutual care between the two correspondents: the writer sent oil and now awaits something in return. A point of interest is that she prefers to mention the goods sent to her sister in the main body of the letter and her personal request in the postscript. Probably one could consider the writer’s choice as part of her rhetorical strategy depicting also her modesty and politeness.

Another letter that offers an illustrative example of how a postscript could be part of a woman’s rhetorical strategy is BGU III 948 (IV-V AD) = TM 33251, a text that falls outside the chronological scope of this contribution strictly speaking, but which is nevertheless worth mentioning here.¹²² Kophaena writes a letter full of complaints and requests to her son Theodoulos who appears to have

¹¹⁹ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 393; Thoma 2020, 55-6.

¹²⁰ Sarri 2018, 360; Thoma 2020, 192.

¹²¹ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 330; Thoma 2020, 124-5.

¹²² On rhetorical strategies and patterns of expression in women’s letters, see Thoma 2020, 186-203.

neglected her.¹²³ In the main body of the letter, among other things, she requests wool to prepare Theodoulos' clothes. The final greetings are followed by a postscript in which Kophaena reinforces her request of wool, but this time in order to make a cloak for herself (ll. 18-20: θέλησον [ο]ῦν υἱέ μου Θεόδουλε ἀγοράσιν (l. ἀγοράσειν) | μοι 5 λί(τρας) ἐριδίου μέλα[νο]ς, ἥνα (l. ἵνα) ποιήσω ματῆ (l. ἐμαντῆ) μαφόριον καὶ ἀποστελῶ [σο]ι τὸ κέρμα ὅσου αὐτὰ ἀγορᾶ [ll. 18-20] "Please then, my son Theodoulos, buy for me 6 pounds of black wool, so that I may make a hooded cloak for myself, and I will send you the money for the money you spend on it", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). As Bagnall and Cribiore remark,¹²⁴ the writer takes advantage of the guilts she has provoked to Theodoulos for his indifference towards his mother so that her requests be accomplished. It is characteristic that she makes a differentiation between the request of wool for making clothes for Theodoulos and for herself. By adding her personal request as a postscript, she tries to implicitly reinforce it and highlight her modesty and real interest first for Theodoulos' well-being and then for her own. She even suggests to pay the money that Theodoulos would spend on the wool in order to make him feel more guilty and respond immediately to her requests.

4.3 The Archive of Apollonios *strategos*

To conclude our discussion, we would like to turn to the well-known archive of the *strategos* Apollonios of the second century AD, which includes twenty-five letters written by women who were somehow related to Apollonios. These letters, which mix business and private affairs, come from an upper-class context revealing the literacy and social status of their female writers. Although the male writers of the archive mostly do not include postscripts in their letters - with the exception of three letters, to which we return at the end of this section¹²⁵ - women's correspondence offers us valuable evidence of the different functions of postscripts.

Eudaimonis, Apollonios' mother, had a dominant role in the family and the household, as indicated by the eleven letters of hers that have been preserved.¹²⁶ In *P.Flor.* III 332 (113-120 AD) = TM 19372, Eudaimonis writes to Apollonios about experiencing family troubles with her brother Diskas who has threatened both Eudaimonis and

¹²³ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 224-5; Thoma 2020, 61, 173.

¹²⁴ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 225.

¹²⁵ *P.Giss.Apoll.* 18 (117 AD) = TM 19472; *P.Giss.Apoll.* 28 (117-120 AD) = TM 19465; *P.Brem.* 50 (117-120 AD) = TM 19634.

¹²⁶ On Eudaimonis' letters, see Cribiore 2002, 151-5; Hübner 2018, 172-4.

Apollonios with a lawsuit, probably due to a property dispute.¹²⁷ Her frustration because of Diskas' misbehavior is the main theme of the letter which closes with the typical greetings and date probably written by Eudaimonis' hand.¹²⁸ Then, Eudaimonis adds five more lines as a postscript in which she brings up Diskas once again, but for a different reason: she reminds Apollonios of his moral duty to send a gift to Diskas for his son's wedding because his family had also offered one hundred drachmas to Apollonios when he got married (τοῖς γάμοις σου ἡ γυνὴ Δισκάτος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ μου ἤνεγκέ μοι (δραχμὰς) ρ· ἐπεὶ δὲ νῦν Νίλος ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς γαμεῖν μέλλει, δίκαιόν ἐστι καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀνταποδοῦναι, καὶ | εἰ ζ[η]τημάτιά ἐστι πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐν μέσῳ [ll. 22-6] "At your wedding the wife of my brother Diskas brought me 100 drachmas. Since now her son Nilos is going to get married, it is right that we make a return gift, even if little disputes are between us", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). In her postscript, Eudaimonis appears to mitigate the seriousness of the dispute with her brother and highlight the family's sense of decorum. One could recognise more than one of the functions outlined above in Eudaimonis' postscript.¹²⁹ Her comment about the wedding gift is placed in the postscript because it does not fit in thematically with the body of the letter which is full of complaints against Diskas. In the main body of the text, Eudaimonis sounds annoyed with her brother's behaviour, while in the postscript she remembers that, despite the disputes, Diskas and his son Neilos are her close relatives. In addition, the information about Neilos' marriage could be considered as common ground management since it appears to be something already known to both the initiator and receiver. The letter depicts how Eudaimonis' mental and emotional state gradually change in the process of writing and emphasises her dynamic personality which is also reflected in all her letters.

In *P.Giss.Apoll.* 5 (*P.Giss.* I 23) (113-120 AD) = TM 19425, Eudaimonis writes, probably with her own hand,¹³⁰ to her daughter-in-law Aline. The body of the letter refers to Eudaimonis' prayers to the gods for Apollonios' and Aline's well-being.¹³¹ A postscript, placed at the last line and part of the left margin, mentions the sending of certain items, also for her granddaughter Heraïdous who appears at the final greetings of the letter (ἀποστείλασά μοι αὐτὰς [- -] | θεσιν Ἑραιδοῦτι [ll. 31-2], cf. ll. 27-9: ἀσπ[άζον]||[ταί σε] Σουερούς [καὶ] [Ἑραιδοῦς]). The function of Eudaimonis' postscript is related to the participation framework, with the involvement of different actors

¹²⁷ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 147; Thoma 2020, 32-3.

¹²⁸ Cribiore 2002, 154.

¹²⁹ Thoma 2020, 191.

¹³⁰ Cribiore 2002, 153.

¹³¹ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 156-7; Thoma 2020, 146.

in the communication: after mentioning Heraidous in the salutation, Eudaimonis adds a postscript with a matter concerning the girl. The postscript indicates the writer's care for all the people of the family as a head of the household during Apollonios' absence.

P.Brem. 63 (SB I 4515 = CPJ II 442) (116 AD) = TM 19648, already mentioned under § 2, preserves an additional letter sent by Eudaimonis to her daughter-in-law Aline about various matters including some difficulties in the family's weaving enterprise.¹³² In her postscript, which is added in the left margin of the papyrus, Eudaimonis mentions that the wife of a certain Eudemos has stayed close to her to offer her assistance. One could suppose that this last comment of Eudaimonis came to her mind after the letter was finished and it was related to the general situation at the household during Aline's absence. After describing to Aline the various difficulties with which she dealt running the household, she may have thought to reassure her that she is not completely alone. It appears that Aline has left the house to give birth to her baby, probably close to her mother. Thus, the postscript could be considered as a continuation of the letter and may demonstrate Eudaimonis' intention to give Aline a more optimistic picture of the family life despite the difficulties described. In addition, the reference to Eudemos' wife constitutes shared information for the correspondents and belongs to common ground management. Eudemos and his wife are not mentioned in the body of the letter but they are already known to the correspondents.

Besides Eudaimonis, there are a few other women in Apollonios' archive who use postscripts in their correspondence. In *P.Giss. Apoll.* 11 (= *P.Giss.* I 20) (113-120 AD) = TM 19422, Aline writes to her husband Apollonios about the building of a shrine and other house works.¹³³ After the final greetings and wishes, Aline asks Apollonios to send something for (his uncle) Diskas: πάντα ἅ | ἔχεις Δισκάτος πέμψον [- -] (ll. 26-7) 'Send what you have of Diskas...' (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The writer establishes a new discourse topic in her postscript functioning as a disjointed content to the rest of the letter in order to remind Apollonios of his obligation to send something to Diskas. However, the fragmentary state of the final part of the letter does not reveal the exact function of Aline's postscript.

In addition, the writer of *P.Brem.* 61 (113-120 AD) = TM 19646, probably a sister of Apollonios, describes her trouble with a thief and then focuses on Apollonios' health problems, expressing her worries about him.¹³⁴ A postscript follows which concerns a matter involving a person pestering her - probably her husband - while

¹³² Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 143-4; Thoma 2020, 130.

¹³³ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 152-3; Thoma 2020, 103.

¹³⁴ Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 142-3; Thoma 2020, 78.

she also refers to two other people: (m. 1) οὐκ ἄγνοεῖς, πῶς πάλιν ὁ μωρὸς | διανοχλεῖ μοι χάριν τῆς μητρὸς | αὐτοῦ μωραίνων καὶ οὐκ ἔχων σε | τὸν ἐκτινάξοντα αὐτοῦ τὴν μωρίαν. | μελησάτω σοι δέ, πῶς ἔὰν πέμψω σοι | τὰ παιδία Πausαῖν καὶ Κοττέρωτα | περὶ ἐκείνου τοῦ πράγματος νουθε|τήσης καὶ ἐπὶ πέρας ἄξης (ll. 35-2) “You are not unaware that the fool is bothering me again and is such a fool because of his mother and because you are not here to shake out his foolishness. Take care, when I send you the children, Pausas and Kotteros, to advise them regarding that matter and to bring it to an end” (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The function of the postscript in this letter is related to common ground management, since the fact that a man is annoying the writer is shared information for both the initiator and receiver, but it is not explicitly mentioned in the body of the letter. At the same time, the vocabulary used in the postscript (μωραίνων, μωρίαν) reveals the emotional state of the female writer, who appears to be angry with the aforementioned man.¹³⁵ In addition, in the second part of the postscript the woman adds a request to Apollonios: she asks him to take care of two young people, Pausas and Kotteros, and give them advice for a matter which is not mentioned but could also be common ground management. The matter appears to be something familiar to both the correspondents. Thus, it is placed in the postscript since it functions as disjointed content and establishes a new topic, which the writer prefers to discuss separately without offering many details. The continuous change of discourse topics in the above letter may also be related to the writer’s emotional and mental state.

To conclude, we would like to briefly discuss the function of postscripts in the three male letters of the archive of Apollonios mentioned above. In *P.Giss.Apoll.* 18 (117 AD) = TM 19472, Hermaios sends his brother Apollonios greetings and wishes also mentioning the greetings of some other people such as the young Heraidous. In the postscript added after the greetings and before the closing wish, the writer requests Apollonios’ mediation so that he receives a school book for Heraidous by the steward, π[α]ρα[κ]αλῶ δέ σε [...] εἰν ἱ[δ]ῶ | ἐπιτρόπῳ. ἵνα μοι παρὰ[δ]ίξῃ τὰ ἐπι|τήδεια τῇ σχολῇ{ς}, οἷον βυβλίον [εἰ]ς ἀν[α]γινώσκειν Ἡραῖδοῦτι (ll. 12-15 with BL III 68) “I beg you to ... the administrator, so that he may furnish me things suitable for school, such as a book for Heraidous to read” (transl. Rowlandson). The writer’s postscript relates to the participation framework since his final request is triggered by the reference to Heraidous’ greetings to Apollonios. The young girl was probably with Hermaios at the moment of the composition of the letter. In addition, in *P.Giss. Apoll.* 28 (117-120 AD) = TM 19465 a certain Lysimachos (?) writes to

¹³⁵ Thoma 2020, 189-90.

Apollonios about the sending of some garments. After the greetings, he repeats something about the aforementioned clothes (ἱματίων σου καὶ, l. 9) but unfortunately the papyrus is broken at this point. The writer's postscript seems to be written for emphatic purposes. Finally, in *P.Brem.* 50 (117-120 AD) = TM 19634 Aelius Phantias sends a brief letter to Aelius Apollonios concerning two other letters sent to him. After the greetings of a young girl (probably the writer's daughter), Phantias explains that he is about to travel to Alexandria, and then he adds his final health wishes: ταῦτα δέ σοι [γρ]άφω αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ μέλλων κατὰ πλεῖν εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν (ll. 7-8) 'I am writing you these, as I am about to go down to Alexandria the same day'. Phantias' postscript should be considered as meta-communicative information, since he describes the circumstances under which he wrote the letter.

Although the evidence of the male postscripts in Apollonios' archive is very scarce, there do not appear to be significant functional differences with female postscripts. The correspondence of female letter-writers from the Apollonios archive depicts their sincere interest to run the household and settle all the family matters, while in their letters and postscripts their socio-economic status, emotions and attitudes are well represented.

5 Concluding Remarks

To conclude, this study on the function and use of postscripts in ancient letters has revealed that these epistolary elements served multiple communicative and discursive functions beyond mere afterthoughts.¹³⁶ They range from providing new information that emerged post-writing, reinforcing previous commands or messages, to managing common ground between correspondents. Our analysis has underscored the complexity and strategic use of postscripts in enhancing communication, emphasising their role in the cognitive process of writing, and highlighting the interpersonal dynamics of ancient epistolary practices.

Despite the different levels of discourse planning that are involved, postscripts seem to be connected with informal, familiar writing.¹³⁷ Though noting the significant frequency with which postscripts appear in the corpus of women's letters, we have not been able to

¹³⁶ Postscripts are also recorded in ancient Greek literary letters. See, for example, the discussion in Rosenmeyer 2001, 20, 56, 70, 83.

¹³⁷ Compare Terry 2014, 38-9 for the informal overtone that postscripts carried in English eighteenth-century epistolary culture, which was also commented upon in epistolary manuals.

engage in a full-blown comparative investigation of male and female postscripts. In the future, it would be worth analysing in greater depth whether some of the functions that we have listed predominantly occur in female letters. Going even further, it would be beneficial to further explore the link between women's propensity for postscripts, the types of epistolary communications they are involved in, and their socio-cultural roles. Women's postscripts, mainly in their private correspondence, are often driven by their emotions, the need to emphasise a request, or to share additional personal information. In some of women's letters, these personal points often find their place in afterthoughts or postscripts unlike what is shared in the body of the letter, where the focus generally remains on issues related to the family and household. This hints at a level of self-awareness in women about their societal roles, depicting a strong sense of care towards their family members, all while downplaying their personal matters. Furthermore, these postscripts – serving as personal afterthoughts – are often sparked by the final greetings to friends and relatives. This revealingly maps out the women's familial and social networks in their everyday life, showcases their crucial role within the household, and offers invaluable glimpses into their world.

While the foregoing is in need of further study, the fact that in other epistolary cultures and corpora, too, connections have been made between female letter writing and postscripts, is suggestive.¹³⁸ Women's social roles and disabilities in ancient and modern societies are also revealed in the way they express themselves. In instances where a male scribe is also involved, postscripts written by women can serve as a conduit for the revelation of their personal thoughts and feelings.

Future studies would also benefit from a deeper exploration of the linguistic and visual characteristics of postscripts. By 'visual', we mean not only the postscript's positioning on the papyrus but also its layout and the distinctive qualities of the handwriting. The positioning of the postscript, for example, may reveal the extent to which the postscript was planned by the writer: if the postscript is written at the bottom of the papyrus or on the verso, it may originate from a conscious intention of the writer to add an afterthought or a comment after the main body of the letter. On the other hand, if the postscript is written in the left margin of the papyrus or even in the top margin, it could be related to a communicative goal and thought created after the composition of the letter. In addition, if the postscript is

¹³⁸ See Terry 2014, 45 for postscripts as a "female epistolary device" in eighteenth-century English culture. Interestingly, the same author makes a connection with dictation, similarly to what we noted for Bagnall, Criboire (Terry 2014, 44). Compare Daybell 2006.

written by a different hand, it could mean that the writer of the letter or even a third person needed to add a more personal message which should not be dictated. However, most of the examples discussed, and particularly those of women's letters, demonstrate that postscripts were not written by a second hand. From a linguistic point of view, it would be worth analysing the textual integration of postscripts to a greater extent, for example, by looking more closely at the types of discourse particles that are used in postscripts, and what they signal about the extent to which the postscript was considered an integral part of the body of the text (contrasting, for example, the use of *καί* vs. *δέ* vs. *asyndeton*).

Throughout this contribution, we have made some suggestions as to the overall connotation that the inclusion of a postscript might have carried (or, to put it differently, the framing effect that a postscript had). To better understand this complex matter, it would be worth making a more explicit linguistic comparison between the postscript and the letter body, on several levels. In terms of overall discourse structure, for example, we have noted that some of the functions that we listed are not exclusive to the postscript: the act of reminding the receiver about the significance of the main request can be performed just before the closing section, too, which raises questions in terms of writer motivation. When it comes to interpersonal involvement, a feature which we consider to underly most of our proposed functions, it would be worth analysing whether there are any linguistic reflexes of this, the postscript being stylistically marked in terms of 'involved' language compared to the letter body.¹³⁹ Finally, when it comes to information structuring, it would be worth relating more explicitly the occurrence of afterthoughts at a local (clausal or sentential) level, and a more global, textual level. It seems conceivable that inadequate discourse planning could lead to an upsurge in both types of afterthoughts, but this remains to be seen.¹⁴⁰

139 Compare Terry 2014, 49 on the linguistic characteristics of the English postscript: "it is not just written after the main letter but written in a different style, one consciously drawing attention to its own urgency as well as its higher level of immediacy".

140 We owe this suggestion to Mark Janse.

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