APPENDIX 3

THE DUTIES OF THE GUNAIKONOMOI:
A REJECTED SUGGESTION

In addition to their policing of the laws traced in chapter two, Demetrius’ gunaiikonomi have been associated in some modern discussions with the arbitration of dowry disputes. The attribution of such a function is largely unconvincing; as such, it has been confined here to an appendix.

Two passages from Menander, both presenting grave difficulties, are the key. The first passage in fact comes not straight from Menander but from Plautus’ Aulularia, which contains at line 504 a reference to a moribus praefectus mulierum. Some, but not all, have seen in this a reference to the Greek office of the gunaiikonemos and have supposed that Plautus was working from an original play by Menander. Even among those who believe that Plautus found this office in his Greek original, there is disagreement about the function of the original gunaiikonemos in Menander’s play: how much of the dialogue surrounding the reference to the praefectus can be attributed also to a Greek original? Wilamowitz took Aulularia 494–533 as Menander’s material, but Kuiper, while accepting that the praefectus of 504 is from Menander, believes that Plautus has set him into a new context; Kuiper asserts, in a highly arbitrary fashion, that lines 503–504 originally came between lines 535–36.1 On Wilamowitz’ reading, the gunaiikonemos / praefectus features in a discussion of the luxuries associated with women, and in particular of the accoutrements they demand when venturing out of the house.2 Kuiper’s view, by contrast, would associate the gunaiikonemos with matters of dowry: at 474ff, the character Megadorus argues for the abolition of dowries since they allow women freedom from their husbands, and at 535–36, he returns to this point, concluding that dowerless women are under the control of their husbands.

1 Stockert 1983, 142 notes the view of Leo and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff that moribus praefectus mulierum corresponds to a Greek original. Fraenkel 1922, 137ff however, argues against any need for a model in Menander. Contrast Kuiper 1940, 7 n. 2.
2 Compare Theoph. Char. 28.4, for similar concerns.
Kuiper’s view is implicitly accepted by Gomme and Sandbach, who comment on *Aulularia* 535–36 to the effect that “the idea of fostering social concord” through limitation or regulation of dowries may have been a notion current at the time of the composition of the model for the *Aulularia*, and that such interest may indeed reflect the interests of Demetrius of Phalerum.³

Kuiper’s imaginative restructuring of *Aulularia* would add a new sphere of influence to the Phalerean officials. An involvement by Athenian *gunaikonomoi* in dowry issues was suggested also by Garland, in her doctoral thesis on these magistrates.⁴ Her argument is based upon a second passage of Menander, this time from *Epitrepontes*. The very existence of a *gunaikonomos* in this play is based, however, on highly controversial evidence, namely an infra-red examination of a papyrus fragment of the play (*P. Cairensis* 43227) made by Edmonds and published only after his death. From the infra-red photographs, Edmonds claimed to read stage directions, scholia and an interlinear paraphrase. As Garland herself notes, Edmonds’ text has been widely rejected; while accepting the need to use this material with great caution, she nonetheless suggests that Edmonds’ readings may still be used as evidence for the activities of the *gunaikonomoi*. This evidence points, on Garland’s analysis, to the *gunaikonomos* acting as an arbitrator in marital disputes, and more particularly as an arbitrator for dowry problems. These ‘dowry problems’ arise from a quintessentially Menandran plot. A tight-fisted Athenian father, Smikrines, wishes to dissolve the marriage that he had brought about between his daughter, Pamphile, and a neighbour, Charisios, for Charisios is squandering Pamphile’s dowry; Smikrines is unaware that Pamphile had been raped by Charisios at a festival before their marriage, and that she had borne and exposed the child she had conceived. In proper New Comedy style, Charisios is of course unaware of Pamphile’s identity, and for this reason spurns her when he discovers her pregnancy; Pamphile, however, refuses to be parted from her husband. In Edmonds’ reading of *Epitrepontes*, Smikrines threatens his obdurate daughter, saying “I shall bring the *gunaikonomos* to you, and he will take you from

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³ Gomme & Sandbach 1973, 184–85. They suggest that the Menandran model for *Aulularia* may have been composed close in time to the *Dyskolos*, itself produced in the first year of Demetrius’ rule.