Introduction: Contexts and Models

As recently observed by Greg Woolf, it is particularly challenging to study the migration of women and children in the Roman world, due to the lack of explicit sources.\textsuperscript{1} It is assumed that in the Roman world women can be expected to have migrated mainly when accompanying their husbands or when living in slavery, either on their way to a slave market or when following their owner. Yet it is important to remember that the participation of women depends on what kind of migration we are envisaging. In this, comparative evidence can provide useful insights. Human migration represents a major phenomenon in the history of the last several centuries and it has consequently received an enormous amount of attention in modern historical research; theories and methods for studying migration have been developed and continue to be refined.\textsuperscript{2}

It may, for instance, come as a surprise that a detailed study of migration within the United Kingdom in 1885, based on a nationwide census, concluded that “females are more migratory than males”,\textsuperscript{3} while in more recent times worldwide migration by women has been approaching that of men in numbers, and in countries such as the USA it is occasionally more numerous.\textsuperscript{4} In general, the participation of women (and, as a consequence, of children) depends on the type of migration. Historically, the gender balance in migration flows from rural to urban areas has been largely determined by the structure of the urban labour market.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1} I am most grateful to the editors for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. Thanks are also due to Alexander Kirby, MA, for stylistic improvements; remaining errors are my own.

\textsuperscript{2} Woolf 2013a; I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy.

\textsuperscript{3} The vast general literature on migration research can obviously only briefly be touched upon here; cf., for instance, the contributions in Lucassen and Lucassen 1997a.

\textsuperscript{4} Cited by Brettell and Simon 1986: 3; for the original data, see Ravenstein 1885: 196–199.

\textsuperscript{5} Tyree and Donato 1986: 21–22. On women constituting the majority among Caribbean migrants, see Patterson 1978: 115. In general on modern female migration, see, e.g., Simon and Brettell 1986; several historical cases of strong female migration also in Hin 2013: 228–230.

\textsuperscript{5} Cf. Garnsey and De Ligt, in this volume.
of women were employed as domestic servants, female migrants tended to outnumber men. In other societies, where cities offered better employment opportunities for freeborn men than for freeborn women, men were normally predominant among voluntary migrants. An extreme example is the gender structure of the immigrant population of California in 1850, some two years into the gold rush, of which only 8% were female; but obviously this was a highly exceptional case. In other situations, when there is migration into new agricultural land, either unpopulated or inhabited by a population with inferior technology, the conditions are suitable for family migration. Often, the consequence is rapid demographic growth, followed in turn by another round of emigration involving the newcomers or their descendants, as in the Germanic migration eastwards from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries or the European conquest of North America.6

The Roman evidence is unfortunately too sketchy to allow us to make full use of the sophisticated models that students of more recent migratory movements have created. Here, one thinks in particular of the scheme presented by Charles Tilly and refined in later studies, according to which human migration can conveniently be divided in four large categories: local, circular, chain, and career migration.7

When evidence for non-locals turns up in a certain locality, Roman historians are often unable to establish whether we are dealing with a permanent or a temporary move, or whether the evidence may even refer to a simple visit. A rare and explicit example of the latter case is provided by an inscription from Beroia in Roman Macedonia. It mentions two young women, Maccusa and Victoria, also known as Valerio[l]a, aged 22 and 14, who travelled ab ultima Gallia (presumably from somewhere in modern France) all the way to Beroia in northern Greece, in order to visit their uncle, the vir perfectissimus and comes Flavius Gemellus.8 Considering the status of the uncle, one should of course not assume that they made their way alone, but regardless of how many servants accompanied them, it was no small journey, and mostly over land. Their case offers an interesting testimony of Roman female mobility, although

7 Tilly 1978: esp. 51; for a brief survey of later studies see De Ligt and Tacoma, in this volume; for applications to the Roman world, see Zerbini’s contribution.
8 bonae memoriae Maccusae Muceris ann(orum) xxii et Victoria sive Valerio[l]ae ann(orum) xiii quae ob desiderium avunculi eorum Fl(avi) Gemelli v(ir) p(erfectissimi) comitis ab ultima Gallia per diversa loca provinciarum ad provinciam Macedoniam venerunt ibidem[ue] post amplexum eius et completa cupiditate amoris in civitat(e E)dessensi fati munus complerunt. quibus memoratus vir laudabilis ut cognosceretur iussit eis memoriam fieri (CIL 3, 14406 = ILS 8454 = AE 1902, 155; fourth century CE).