

Cycladic Figurines

by P.Y. Forsyth

The Bronze Age in the Aegean lasted from approximately 3000-1100 B.C., and was marked by the emergence of three cultures: Minoan, on the island of Crete; Mycenaean, on mainland Greece; and Cycladic, on those islands in the Aegean still known as the Cyclades today. Chronologically, the Cycladic culture emerged first, with the so-called Early Cycladic period of 3000-1800 B.C., a period which seems to have evolved out of the Late Neolithic period which began around 5000 B.C., when immigrants from the Greek mainland first settled on the islands.

The Early Cycladic period brought a new prosperity to the islanders. Settlements increased in number, pottery improved in quality, and marble objects began to be made in great quantities. Of these marble objects, none have so intrigued the modern world as the "Cycladic figurines" found mainly in graves of the period. These small pieces of sculpture fall into two categories: 1) the schematic, and 2) the naturalistic.

The schematic figurines (see figure 1) were the first to be made (and continued to be made even after the naturalistic type gained prominence), and depicted the human form in a highly abstract fashion. A narrow prong served to represent the head and neck, arms were indicated only by stumps, and legs were not depicted at all. It is no wonder that some of these pieces are known as "violin figures" today!

These stylised versions of the human form were eventually overshadowed by naturalistic figurines which depicted a more recognizable human form. These sculptures (a few of which are as large as 1.5 meters) showed a clearly defined human head, either ovoid or triangular in shape, with a prominent nose. (Other facial features were indicated by paint, most traces of which are no longer visible.) Legs were also clearly depicted, and arms were usually

shown folded across the stomach (see figure 2). While some male figurines have been found, the majority of these naturalistic sculptures were nude females.

Art historians and archaeologists now believe they know how these figurines were made, but disagree on why they were made. Each community probably had one or two specialist artisans in charge of the production of these pieces. The overall design of the figurine was first sketched on a small block of marble (a resource in which the Cyclades were rich). The marble would then be cut down and shaped according to the sketch by striking it with pieces of hard

visibly overwhelmed with grief, to ensure the jurors' sympathy.) Young Marcus must have been a promising schoolboy and his father ambitious on his behalf, because in the mid 60's, when Cicero and Crassus were two of the leading men in Rome, Caelius was entrusted to their care. He was only just into his toga virilis, and about sixteen or so when he entered a period of apprenticeship called the tirocinium, to become a lawyer and a man of public affairs. Cicero remarks that for the next two or three years, Caelius was never out of sight of Crassus, himself or his own father, Caelius senior, and that the young man's great expertise as an already well-known lawyer is evidence enough of how hard he worked as a student.

Then when Caelius was likely still scarcely out of his teens, he apparently made the foolish move of associating with Catiline the traitor. Cicero excuses him for this error in judgment, arguing that many good citizens were taken in by Catiline's plausible charm and power, "even", he says, "I was -- almost!". A young and inexperienced Caelius cannot be blamed for having been temporarily taken in.

After Catiline's demise and the complete collapse of the conspiracy, Caelius went to Africa for eighteen months or so on the staff of the governor and proconsul, Q. Pompeius Rufus. On his return to Rome in 60 B.C., he moved away from his father's home to a rented house on the Palatine Hill, where Augustus would later establish his imperial residence or "palace" (palatium). This house belonged to the brother of a most notorious lady, to use that term lightly, Clodia. (The brother was P. Clodius Pulcher, an ingeniously clever and unscrupulous hanger-on of Julius Caesar. Clodia also had a house on the Palatine, and was constantly on the watch for young men to ensnare as lovers -- or so Cicero suggests.

Clodia can be identified, we think, with some certainty as Catullus' mistress Lesbia, whom you may already have met elsewhere. Her affair with Catullus began some time after he came to Rome in 62, but his passionate happiness soon turned to grief, resentment and cynicism as he realized how little she really cared about him. She was widowed in 59 (Cicero hints that it was she who poisoned her husband, Q. Metellus Celer) and sometime in the early fifties took Caelius into her circle of intimates, though she was probably about twelve years his senior.

Early in 56 B.C. Caelius, now a man of 26 or so and a successful young lawyer, brought charges against one L. Calpurnius Bestia, accusing him of illegal electioneering practices. Cicero defended Bestia, and despite his old pupil Caelius' skill, defended him successfully. Caelius promptly brought Bestia to court a second

time, but before the trial could proceed, was himself prosecuted by Bestia's son, Atratinus. The charge, as we have already seen, was one of vis, and the prosecution was conducted by the seventeen year old Atratinus, supported by two other speakers, L. Herennius Balbus and a P. Clodius who is generally assumed to be not the well-known Clodius, but more likely another member of the family.

Cicero begins his speech for the defence by commiserating with the jurors for having to work while everyone else is on holiday, and by at once identifying the real authors of the case against Caelius, Clodia and her friends. One modern commentator suggests that Atratinus is in fact Clodia's latest young conquest, and that may be a second motive, as well as his concern to protect his father, Bestia. Apparently the prosecutors have already done everything they can to blacken Caelius' reputation, so Cicero turns quickly to the various assertions made about his client. Caelius, they say, has a father who is only an eques and one who does not maintain an appropriately dignified lifestyle even for that less than impressive rank. Alternatively, Caelius has mistreated his old father. Cicero rebuts these accusations by citing the presence in court of Caelius senior, not to mention a deputation of his fellow-townsmen as character witnesses.

Now Cicero tackles the question of Caelius' involvement with the vicious and decadent Catiline, of his immoral behaviour in general, and of his debts and extravagant lifestyle. The support of Catiline Cicero dismisses as understandable, as we have seen, particularly in an inexperienced youngster. As for any participation in the conspiracy, "when was Caelius' name ever even mentioned in such a suspicion?" he asks (Chapter 7).

As for the debts and extravagances, Cicero declares that Caelius' high rent is all fiction: Clodius has his rented property up for sale and has lied about the high rents to make a quicker sale. And how can Caelius produce his account books? He is still in potestate to his pater, so he has no financial independence.

But the immorality charge is a rather tougher nut to crack, and Cicero's approach is twofold. He first makes what must surely be one of the most persuasive and classic defences of young men's habit of sowing wild oats. He points out how many upright, even famous Romans led rather wild younger lives, but turned into responsible and respected citizens in their maturity. He also urges the jurors not to make Caelius the scapegoat for his contemporaries, who, as their elders all agree, are a rowdy and licentious lot: "I merely ask that if you sympathise with the general distaste today for young men's debts, dissipation and bad tempered behaviour -- and I can see you certainly do -- that you shouldn't allow his young con-

temporaries' faults and misbehaviour to be the cause of your doing Caelius harm" (Chapter 12).

Cicero's second line of argument is to involve Clodia directly. He brings in all kinds of charges against her which add up to a portrait of a decadent seducer whose victims are young men led astray, corrupted, used for her own perverted ends and finally discarded. Against this far too experienced and cunning "older woman", how could Caelius have been expected to hold out, to sustain the austerity of his hardworking student days? In the end, after some extraordinary details about the way in which Caelius and his friends are supposed by the prosecution to have been acting, and some equally extraordinary and amusing details produced by Cicero in describing Clodia's habits, Caelius is acquitted.

The young man remained a friend and correspondent of Cicero, as you can see by looking at an index to Cicero's Letters. In the end, his support of Caesar turned sour, and Caelius then came to a violent end at the hands of some of Caesar's own soldiers, in 48 B.C. when he was still a comparatively young man in his mid-thirties. (For more details about Cicero's defence of Caelius, I'll take a look in the next issue of Labyrinth at Cicero's portrait of Clodia.)