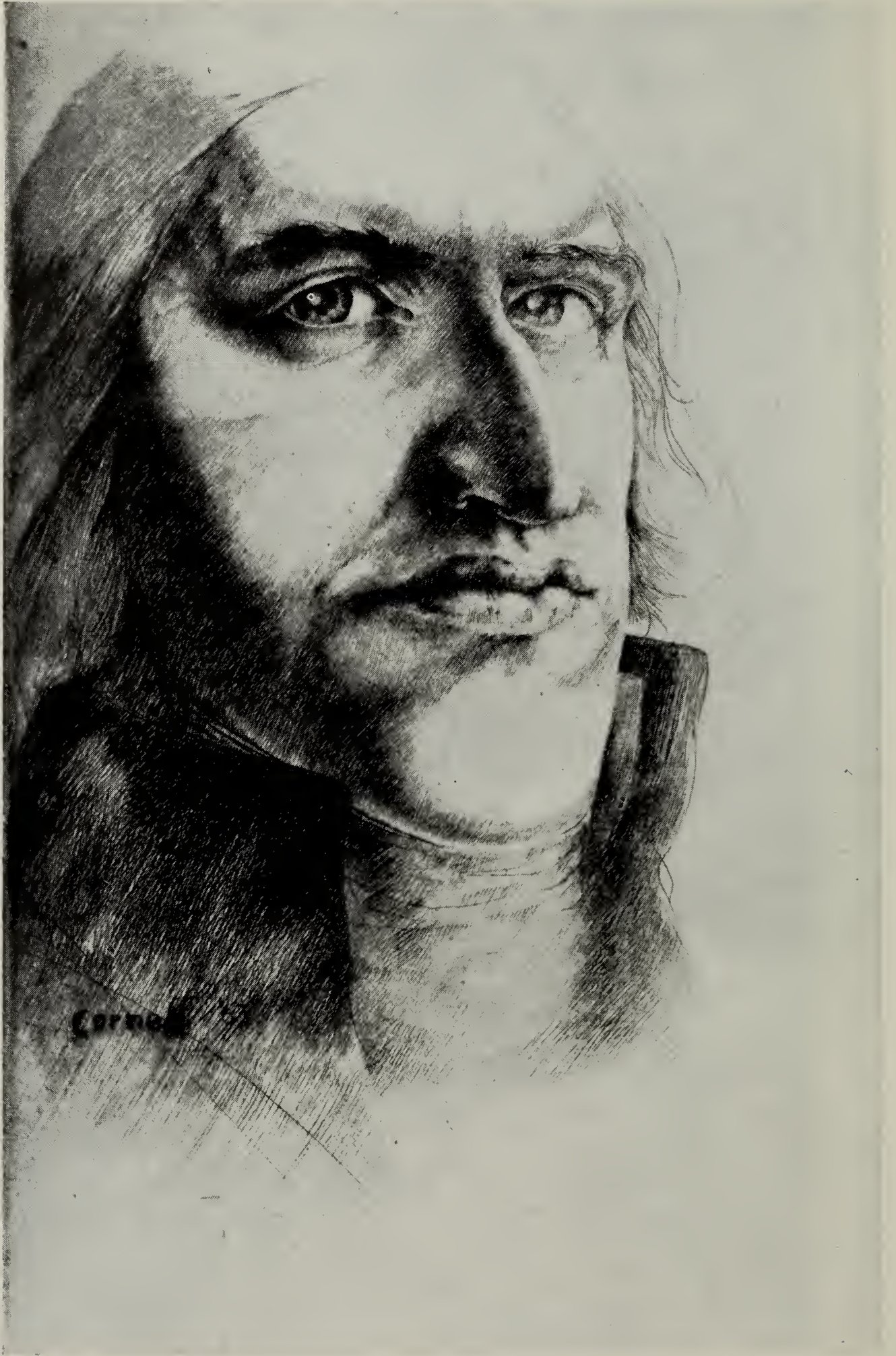


PRINTS, DRAWINGS,
PAINTINGS - THOMAS
CORNELL
BOWDOIN COLLEGE
MUSEUM OF ART



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BRUNSWICK, MAINE
1964

FRONTISPIECE: CATALOGUE NO. I GRACCHUS BABEAF I

This exhibition consists of work done by Thomas Cornell principally since he joined the faculty of Bowdoin College in the fall of 1962. From 1960-62 Cornell was an instructor at the University of California at Santa Barbara at which time he also studied with Howard Warshaw and, for a short time, with Rico Lebrun. Prior to these California years Cornell studied in 1959-60 at Yale Graduate School of Art and Architecture. Cornell's earliest studies in art took place while he was an undergraduate at Amherst College (Class of 1959) when, during the summer of 1957, returning to his home in Cleveland, he took a course in figure drawing and anatomy at the Institute of Art there. In his junior year at Amherst, Cornell studied with George Lockwood of the Amherst faculty, and in his senior year, under a special arrangement between Amherst and Smith Colleges, with Leonard Baskin.

Cornell first exhibited in a group show at the Contemporaries Gallery in New York in 1959. He has since had three one-man shows: two at the Esther Bear Gallery in Santa Barbara, California in 1961 and 1963, and one at the Rex Evans Gallery in Los Angeles in 1962. Among Cornell's many honors is the First Prize in the all-New England Drawing Exhibition at the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London, Connecticut in 1959; a Louis Comfort Tiffany Award in the Graphic Arts in 1961; and most recently, in May of this year, an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

During the first year and a half of his career at Bowdoin, Cornell was occupied almost entirely in executing portrait etchings to accompany the first English edition of *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf Before the High Court of Vendome*, which is being published this fall in a limited edition by the Gehenna Press. Babeuf, who was born in 1760, was a major figure in the French Revolution, an agitator for civil rights who advocated the overthrow of the Directory and a return to

the democratic Constitution of 1793. It was at his trial in April, 1797 that he made his three-day plea of which it has been said that "after the Apology of Socrates before the Jury of Five Hundred, (it is) perhaps the most splendid testament ever uttered on behalf of the Freedom of Man's Mind." Babeuf was found guilty and went to the guillotine on May 27, 1797.

The prints which Cornell executed to accompany the Babeuf text consist of twenty-one portrait etchings of some of the major figures of the French Revolution, as well as certain of the precursors of the Revolution. Cornell used known portraits as the basis for many of his likenesses, but several of his images are almost entirely inventions of his own imagination. In those cases where existing portraits were employed, Cornell strove to revitalize the likenesses, many of which, over the years, had become lifeless stereotypes.

The many steps often involved in Cornell's creation of a particular image may be seen in his numerous studies of Danton where known likenesses served as his point of departure. Cornell executed several sketches and watercolors which suggest various nuances of Danton's character. At the same time that Cornell was making these studies he also was reading Georg Büchner's powerful play, *Danton's Death*, which inspired him to paint a large oil of Danton where the nearly gross intensity of Danton's personality is thrust upon us with a force hardly contained by the limits of the canvas itself. Cornell's final likeness of Danton, the portrait etching, seems to be an intensification and synthesis of the many characteristics which were in the process of being evolved in the preparatory works.

The relationship between Cornell's portraits of Babeuf and previous known likenesses is rather remote. Instead of relying solely on existing portraits, Cornell attempted to make fresh contact with Babeuf by a close study of the *Defense* and

other related literature, and conjured up an image whose fierce intensity reevokes for us the powerful personality of this extraordinary figure. It is perhaps not too much to say that from now on when anyone pictures Gracchus Babeuf in his mind's eye, it will be Cornell's Babeuf that he sees.

In the case of Anacharsis Cloots there was no original prototype. Rather, Cornell familiarized himself with material which enabled him to understand the personality involved and made several life studies upon which he then superimposed his notion of Cloots. The result is a portrait (No. 8) which looks to be transfixed within a whirlpool, intense and slightly mad—a fitting likeness for a fanatic agitator and self-styled Orator of the Human Race.

But not all of the portraits represent figures embroiled within the Revolution itself. There is, for example, a study of Diderot which, though no less intense than those cited above, is somewhat classical in appearance and rather resembles the psychologically penetrating portraits of some of the later Roman Emperors.

The last portrait executed in the series was that of Robespierre, the most complex and enigmatic of all the Revolutionaries. It is more restrained than any of the others which preceded it and in many ways represents an ultimate distillation of all the forces at work in the other portraits.

After completing his series of portraits of French Revolutionary figures and before turning to his next major area of interest—Civil Rights, Cornell engaged in a number of projects among which are three oils and an etching of General William Tecumseh Sherman. In the case of these works, Cornell was much taken with photographs of Sherman showing him at various stages of his career. In his three paintings of Sherman, Cornell depicts him as a young and resolute General, unswerving in the face of duty; as an old warrior perhaps best characterized by the remark, "War is hell"; and as a ghostly

almost phantom image ravaged by time and fate, but still not bereft of great power.

It was about this time that Cornell formed his Tragos Press with the idea of publishing mainly material related to the Civil Rights movement. The first publication of this press was a broadside consisting of excerpts from a Fourth of July address delivered by Frederick Douglass in 1852, which is as relevant today as it was more than a century ago. Cornell illustrated the broadside with a wood engraving of Douglass, the first of several portraits of this Abolitionist leader he was to do. In addition to the broadside three other studies of Douglass are in the present exhibition, a watercolor drawing, a drawing with wash, and a large etching. In all these likenesses Douglass is portrayed as a leonine figure, patriarchal in his demeanor.

In terms of style, Cornell clearly has a great desire to imbue his portraits with a powerful sense of organic form, which is the result both of his profound love of anatomy and his strong affinity to the art of certain artists of the Italian Renaissance, particularly Mantegna, Pollaiuolo, and Michelangelo, as well as Antonello da Messina, that extraordinary master who succeeded in blending some of the surface realism of the Flemish primitives with the organic form of Italian 15th century painting. But these portraits are not only meaningful as convincing physical presences; because of a carefully controlled use of distortion and exaggeration they also reveal Cornell's attitude about the psychological characteristics and social significance of the personalities involved. While it is not unusual for an artist of today to have these concerns, it is rare for him to insist as well on the achievement of organic form as the only adequate vehicle for his vision. Cornell is such an artist, one who wants "not only to admonish people to be more compassionate but to give them something worthy of their compassion."

CATALOGUE

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|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | GRACCHUS BABEUF I
Drypoint and Engraving, 1963
9½ x 6 | 9 | DANTON
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 2 | GRACCHUS BABEUF II
Etching, Engraving, Mezzotint and, Aquatint, 1963
9 x 6 | 10 | DARTHE
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 3 | GRACCHUS BABEUF III
Drypoint and Engraving,
9 x 6 | 11 | DIDEROT
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 4 | BAILLY
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 | 12 | DROUET
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 5 | BUONARROTI
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 | 13 | HELVETIUS
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 6 | CARNOT
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 | 14 | MARAT
Etching and Aquatint, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 7 | ANACHARSIS CLOOTS I
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 | 15 | MARECHAL
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| 8 | ANACHARSIS CLOOTS II
Etching, Aquatint and
Drypoint, 1963
9 x 6 | 16 | MIRABEAU I
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |
| | | 17 | MIRABEAU II
Etching, 1963
9 x 6 |

- 18 ROBESPIERRE
Etching (1st state), 1963
9 x 6
- 19 ROBESPIERRE
Etching (2nd state), 1963
9 x 6
- 20 ROBESPIERRE
Etching and Aquatint (final
state), 1963
9 x 6
- 21 ROUSSEAU
Etching and Engraving, 1963
9 x 6
- 22 SAINT JUST
Etching, 1963
9 x 6
- 23 VOLTAIRE
Etching, 1963
9 x 6
- 24 ANACHARSIS CLOOTS
Drawing, Pencil, 1963
13 x 9½
- 25 DANTON I
Drawing, Pencil, 1962
24 x 19
- 26 DANTON II
Drawing, Pencil, 1962
24 x 19
- 27 DANTON
Drawing, Ink, 1962
12 x 9
- 28 DANTON
Watercolor Drawing, 1962
7¾ x 7½
- 29 DANTON
Watercolor Drawing, 1962
9 x 12
- 30 DANTON
Oil on canvas, 1963
48 x 36
- 31 MIRABEAU
Drawing, Pencil, 1962
13½ x 10
- 32 ROBESPIERRE
Drawing, Pencil, 1962
7 x 10
- 33 DEAD MAN
Etching, 1962
8¾ x 17¾
- 34 SELF-PORTRAIT
Engraving, 1962
6¾ x 5½
- 35 PORTRAIT OF B. C.
Drawing, Pencil, 1962
31½ x 23

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>36 PORTRAIT OF L. B.
Drypoint, 1963
6 x 9</p> | <p>45 MICHELANGELO
Etching, 1964
19¼ x 14¾</p> |
| <p>37 PORTRAIT OF E. B. I
Drawing, Pencil, 1963
19 x 24</p> | <p>46 W. T. S. — WAR IS HELL
Etching, 1964
9 x 6</p> |
| <p>38 PORTRAIT OF E. B. II
Drawing, Pencil, 1963
24 x 19</p> | <p>47 GENERAL WILLIAM
TECUMSEH SHERMAN I
Oil on canvas, 1964
24 x 18</p> |
| <p>39 THE BRIDAL COUPLE I
Drawing, Pencil, 1963
24 x 19</p> | <p>48 GENERAL WILLIAM
TECUMSEH SHERMAN II
Oil on canvas, 1964
24 x 18</p> |
| <p>40 THE BRIDAL COUPLE II
Drawing, Pencil, 1963
24 x 19</p> | <p>49 GENERAL WILLIAM
TECUMSEH SHERMAN III
Oil on canvas, 1964
24 x 18</p> |
| <p>41 PORTRAIT OF A
STUDENT
Drawing, Pencil, 1964
24 x 19</p> | <p>50 STUDY FOR CIVIL
WAR FIGURE
Drawing, Pencil with Wash, 1964
18 x 24</p> |
| <p>42 SELF-PORTRAIT
Oil on paper, 1964
40 x 27½</p> | <p>51 FREDERICK DOUGLASS
Watercolor Drawing, 1964
40 x 27½</p> |
| <p>43 DESCARTES
Drypoint, 1963
8¾ x 5¾</p> | <p>52 FREDERICK DOUGLASS
Wash Drawing, 1964
40 x 27½</p> |
| <p>44 WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE
Watercolor Drawing, 1964
10¼ x 7½</p> | <p>53 FREDERICK DOUGLASS
Etching, 1964
19¾ x 14½</p> |

54 THE MONKEY

13 Etchings by Thomas Cornell, with an Essay by Thomas H. Huxley; 32 leaves, 13 x 9¾, Garamond Italic Light set by Patricia Milne-Henderson, Arnold's Handmade Collotype paper, 60 copies printed at the Apiary Press, Northampton, Massachusetts, August 1959.

55 FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Broadside, Excerpts from a Fourth of July Address delivered by Frederick Douglass in 1852, with a Wood Engraving by Thomas Cornell; 18 x 6, Caslon Old Face Italic set by John Welwood, Copperplate paper, the first publication of the Tragos Press, Brunswick, Maine. First Edition, July 4, 1964, 150 copies; Second Edition, July 31, 1964, 100 copies.

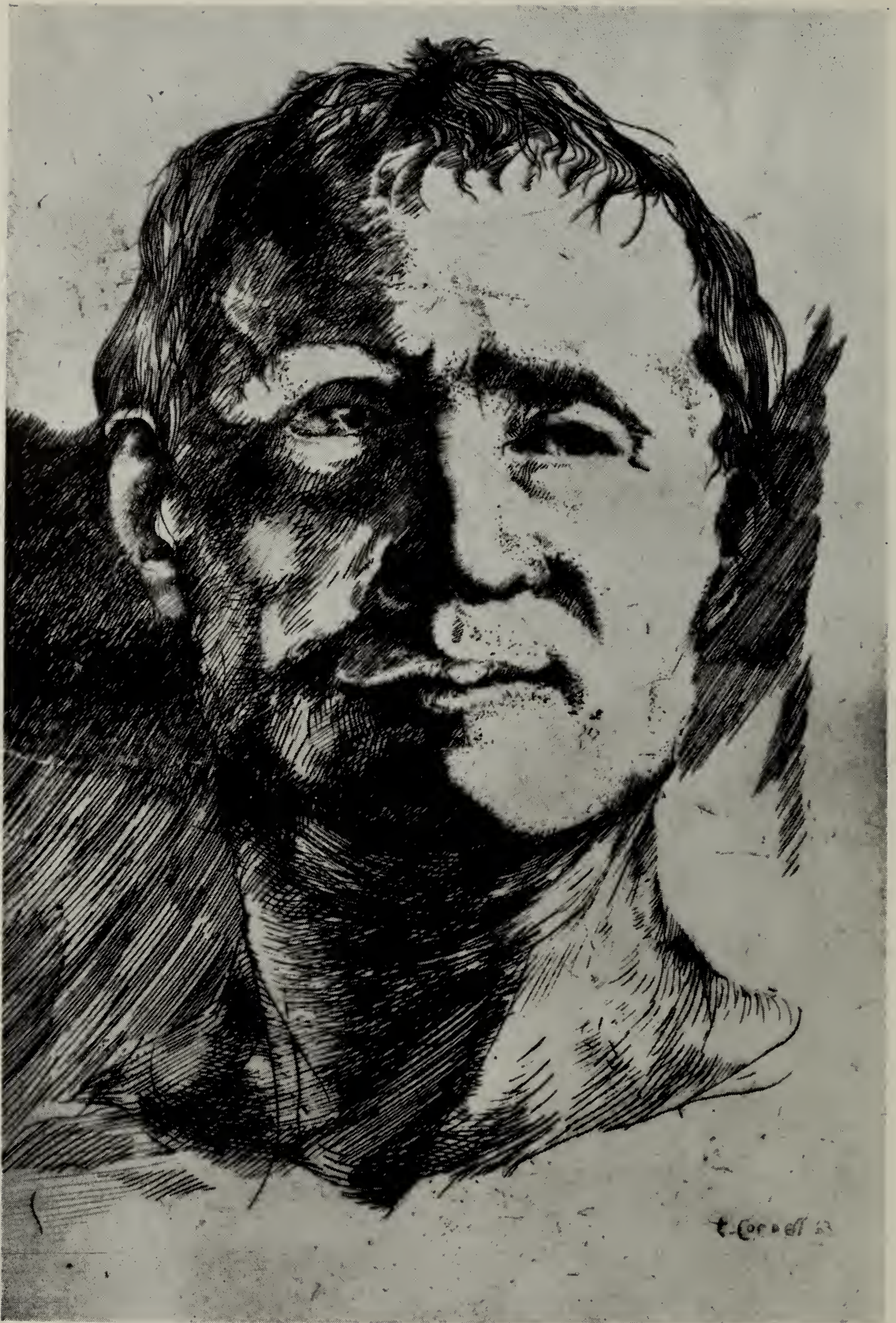
56 A LETTER TO AARON TARR

Two Wood Engravings by Thomas Cornell; 12 leaves, 5¾ x 4½, Caslon Old Face set by John Welwood, Venezia paper made in Italy, grey paper cover with printed label, the third publication of the Tragos Press, Brunswick, Maine, August 10, 1964, 100 copies.

57 THE DEFENSE OF GRACCHUS BABEUF
BEFORE THE HIGH COURT OF VENDOME

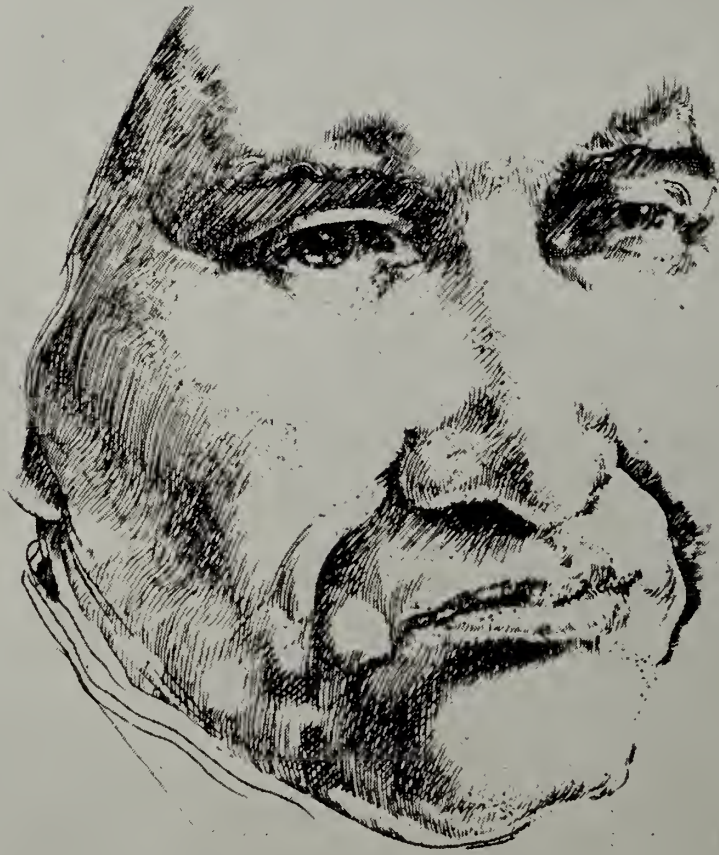
Edited and Translated with an Essay on Babeuf by John Anthony Scott, 21 Etchings by Thomas Cornell, hand-printed by Emiliano Sorini on blue Fabriano paper, 48 leaves, 12½ x 8½, Baskerville set by Harold McGrath, Nideggen paper made in Germany, 300 copies printed at the Gehenna Press, Northampton, Massachusetts, March 1964.

ILLUSTRATIONS

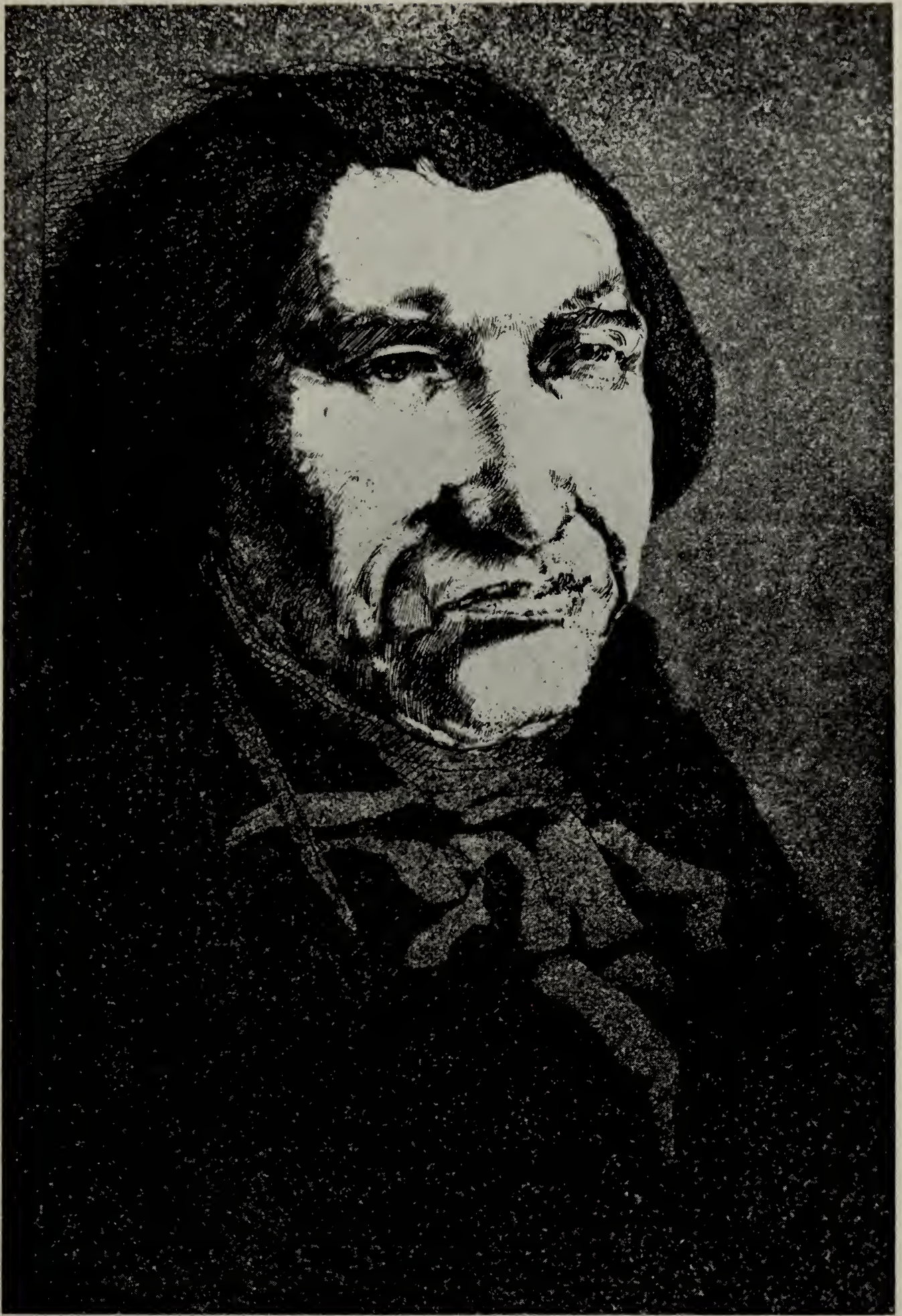


11 DIDEROT





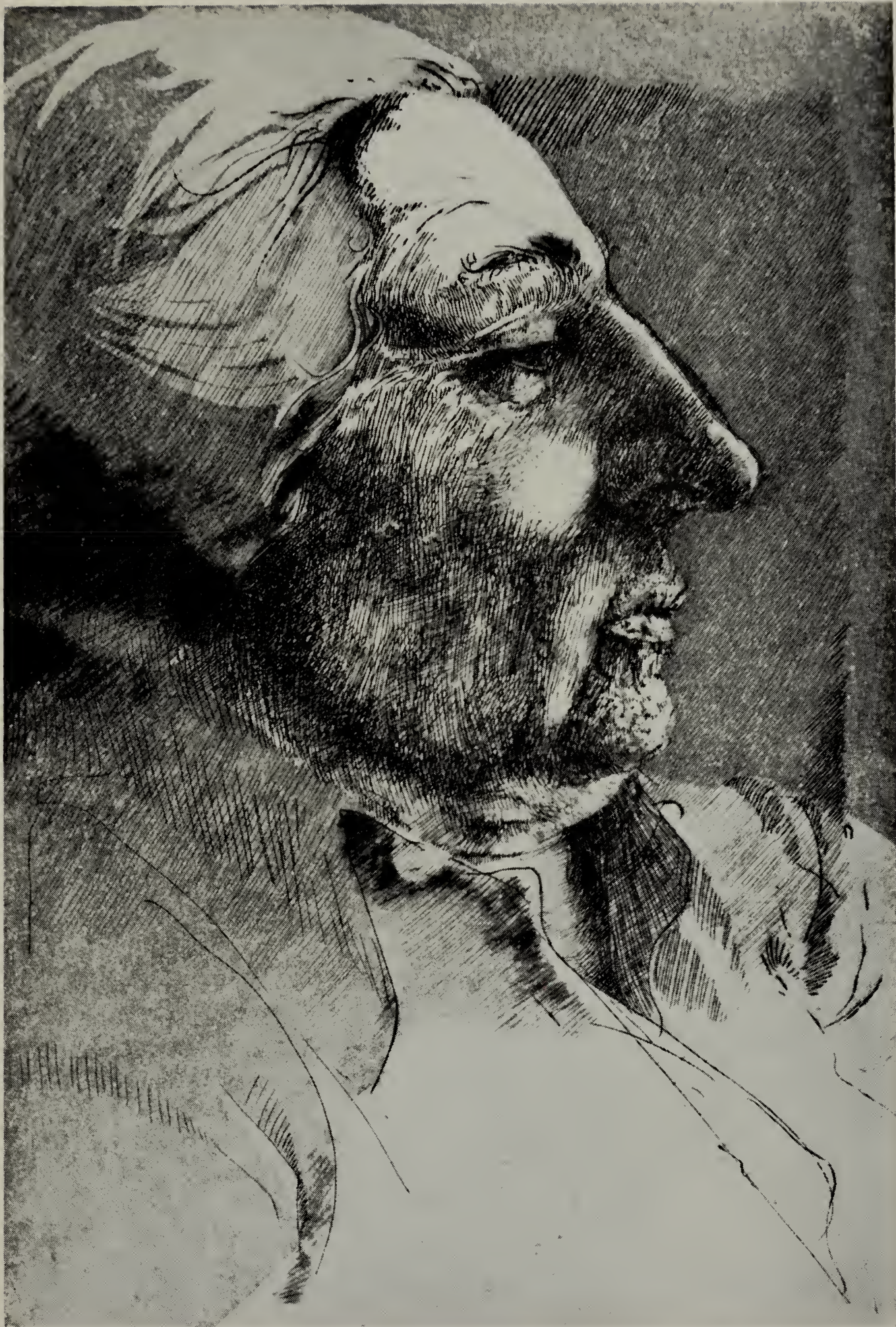
18 ROBESPIERRE (1st state)



20 ROBESPIERRE



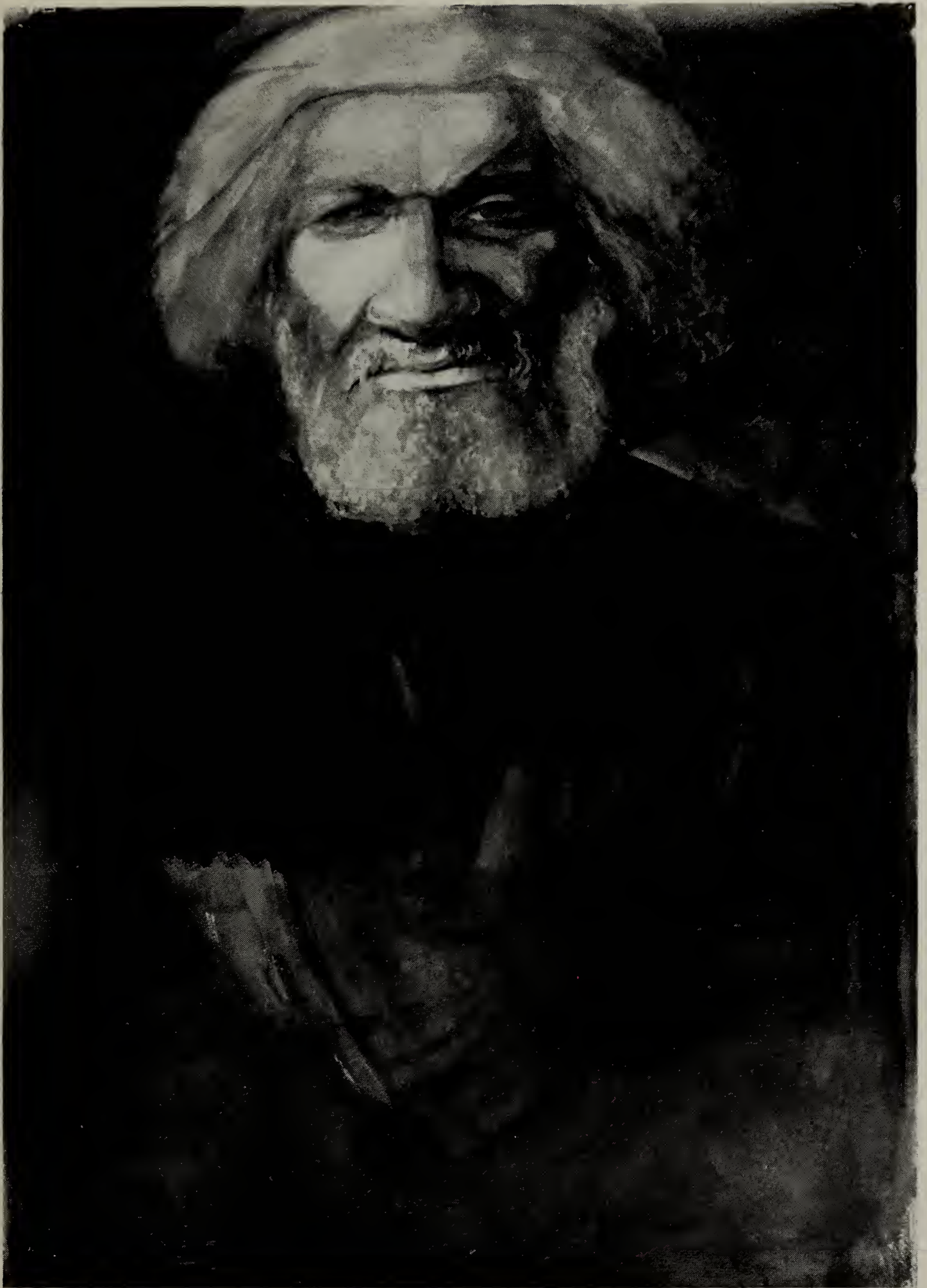
24 ANACHARSIS CLOOTS



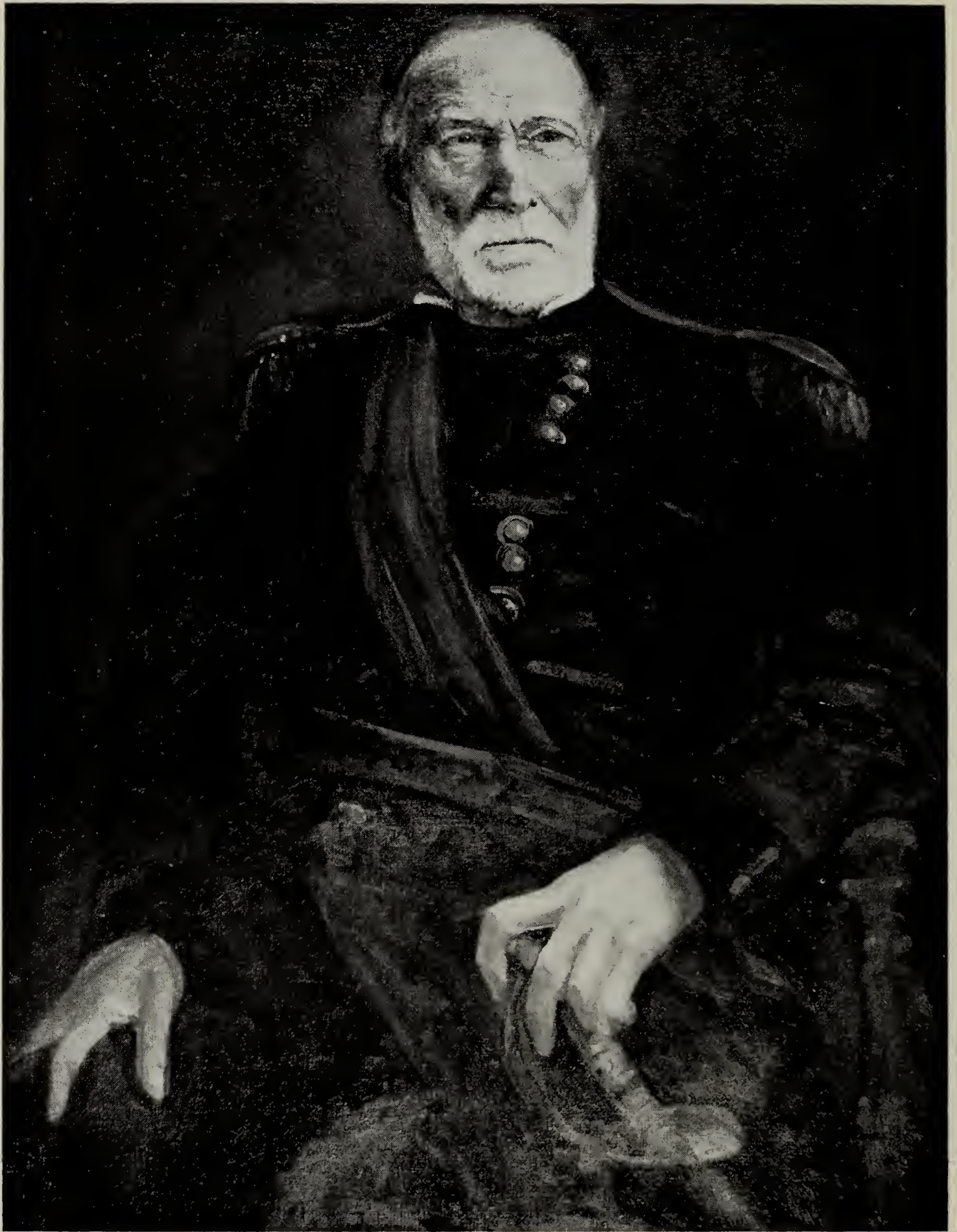




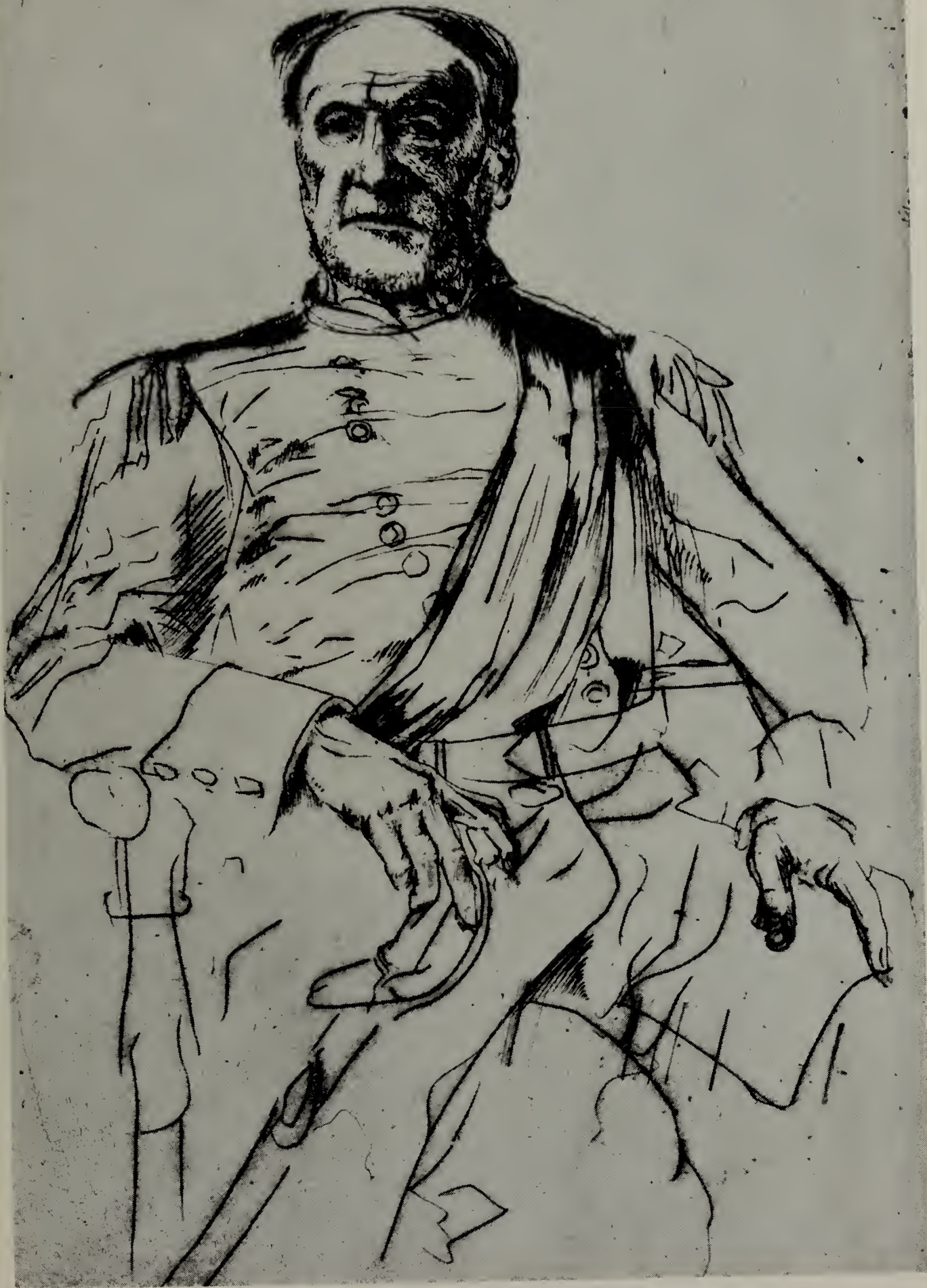




51 FREDERICK DOUGLASS



48 GENERAL WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN II





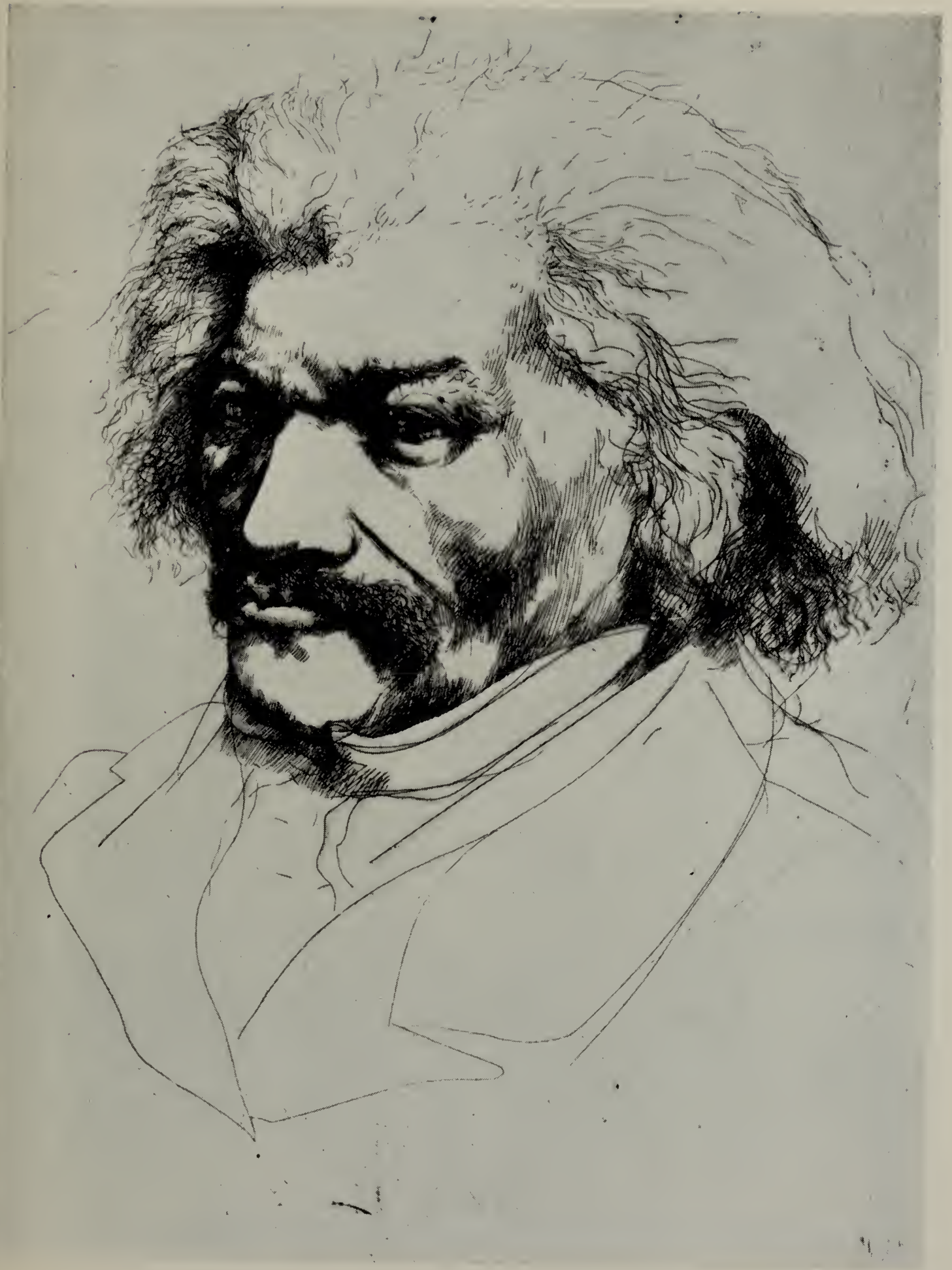
39 THE BRIDAL COUPLE I



50 STUDY FOR CIVIL WAR FIGURE



52 FREDERICK DOUGLASS



53 FREDERICK DOUGLASS



37 PORTRAIT OF E.B. I

