

GREEK ART IN TRANSITION
TO LATE ANTIQUITY

A Portrait of the Antonine Age
and the State of Greek Sculpture
from A.D. 150 to 300

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Edward Perry Warren, collector, connoisseur and lover of things Greek, died thirty years ago, on the twenty-eighth of December 1928. Barely a month before his death he presented the portrait head published here to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The collection of Greek art, sculpture, vases, gems and coins, in Boston is one of Warren's lifelong achievements and perhaps the greatest memorial to his humanism. Publication for the first time of one of Warren's last gifts provides a fitting way to honor his memory on the thirtieth anniversary of his passing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PORTRAIT FROM
E. P. WARREN'S COLLECTION

THE HEAD is typical of the things Warren collected and kept about him (Plates 3 and 4). It is a nearly half-lifesized portrait of a young man who lived about A.D. 155, in the Antonine era of the Roman Empire.¹ The man's features, combined with the style of carving in hair and face, suggest he was a Greek, and the marble appears to be Pentelic, of the quality used for the best sculpture from the workshops of Attica. The head has been broken from a statue and is badly damaged. In fact, the way the eyes have been carefully gouged out points to a deliberate and definite *damnatio* at some time in antiquity or the Middle Ages. In spite of all this, the head is a work of compelling quality and considerable beauty. These were characteristics which Warren sought in examples of Greek art of all periods.

The head is carved in the round, and no part is less emphasized than any other. This is an important point in dealing with underlifesized heads which might otherwise come from large reliefs or sarcophagi, such as those of the Sidamara type. The quality of the portrait lies in the techniques of carving: a combination of minuteness and use of the expansive idioms of Greek or Asiatic work in the Antonine Baroque period. These techniques show in the partly carved, partly drilled hair, in the incised lines for the suggestions of sideburns, and in the deep, decisive carving of wrinkles between the eyebrows, the lines around the eyelids, and the line of the closed lips. Where remaining, the surface of the flesh has the hard polish peculiar to Antonine portraits, a surface finishing seen often in likenesses of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus and Commodus. This hard polish emphasizes the broad face, high cheekbones, and firm

¹Acc. no. 28.861; H.: 5 3/4 in. (0.145m.). Listed in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 26 (1928), 113. I wish to thank Miss Hazel Palmer for help with several points and Mr. Edward J. Moore for making the photographs reproduced here. He devoted considerable time and effort to rephotographing the Warren head.

jaw of the sitter. No other portraits of the man are known, and for the present he must remain anonymous.

STYLISTIC PARALLELS FROM THE GREEK IMPERIAL WORLD

Several other Antonine portraits confirm the suggestion that the subject came from the Greek portions of the Empire. They also show similar techniques of carving. They are:

1. Bust of a young man of Greek origin, with curly hair and a slight beard; London, British Museum, perhaps from Cyrene.²
2. Bust of a young man, very like the previous; London, Sir John Soane's Museum. The bust was brought from Athens in the mid-eighteenth century by James "Athenian" Stuart and later belonged to Robert Adam the architect. A third bust, closely related to these two, is also said to have been found in Athens and is now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen.³
3. Bust of G. Volcacius Myropnous (sic!); Ostia Museum, from the necropolis of Isola Sacra. Ostia had a large foreign colony, and a number of portraits from this region document the introduction of Greek and Graeco-Asiatic styles into the area of Rome.⁴

²Cat. no. 1910: R. Hinks, *Greek and Roman Portrait-Sculpture* (London, 1935), 30, pl. 37, as from Cyrene; A. H. Smith, *Catalogue of Sculpture*, 3 (London, 1904), 163f., with no indication of provenience.

³F. Poulsen, *Greek and Roman Portraits in English Country Houses* (Oxford, 1923), 96, no. 84; *Archaeology*, 6 (1953), 73, fig. For the bust in Copenhagen: F. Poulsen, *Catalogue of Ancient Sculpture* (Copenhagen, 1951), 331, no. 464.

⁴*Roman Portrait Busts*, The Arts Council of Great Britain (London, 30 Oct.-28 Nov. 1953), no. 47, with commentary by J.M.C. Toynbee; G. Calza, *La necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra* (Rome, 1940), 225. The name of the sitter is inscribed in Greek on a small plaque at the base of the bust; Calza terms the marble Greek. A. Hekler saw Myropnous in a bust of "Marcus Aurelius" in Boston (Acc. no. 24.419; *Archäologischer Anzeiger* [1933], col. 398; *ibid.* [1932], col. 471, fig. 7), showing how close such portraits could come to contemporary imperial fashions.

4. Bust of a man with a short beard; London, Sir John Soane's Museum. The provenience and manner of acquisition are the same as number two. He wears a chiton and a himation, wrapped in the manner of so-called philosopher statues of the Greek fourth century B.C., such as the prototype of the Lateran Sophocles.⁵

CLASSICAL GREEK ANTECEDENTS OF THE WARREN HEAD

The head presented by E. P. Warren to the Museum of Fine Arts leads us to a number of observations on the state of Greek sculpture in the century and a half from Antoninus Pius to Constantine the Great. The statue from which the head came portrayed the sitter with his head turned noticeably to his own right; the incised pupils of the eyes looked upwards and in the same direction, completing the sense of emotion which is so much a part of the Baroque qualities in Antonine sculpture. The shape of his head and the adherence of the hair in a thick mass to the cap of the skull suggest the subject might have been represented as a Greek demi-god or hero, as one of the Dioskouroi, as Meleager, as Hippolytus or the like. Figures from these mythological cycles were popular on Attic sarcophagi in the Antonine period.

The general cast of the head shows how strongly the canons of Greek athletic art affected Greek portraiture in the Roman Empire, six hundred years after the scientific masters Myron and Polykleitos. An inviting comparison emerges when we place the portrait alongside a Greek athletic head of 460 to 450 B.C. and in the style of Myron. A lifesized marble head, perhaps from a pediment, formerly

⁵ Poulsen, *op. cit.*, p. 95, no. 82. B. Ashmole long ago corrected the notion perpetuated in Poulsen's text that the Stuart busts in the Soane Museum were of Romano-British origin: see *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 44 (1924), 134. One of them has been identified as Polydeukes, the favorite of Herodes Atticus and somewhat of a later rival to Antinous in the honors which he received; all busts of Polydeukes of this type have been found in Greece, most of them in Athens itself: *American Journal of Archaeology*, 58 (1954), 255; 60 (1956), 342f. and bibliography. For Stuart and N. Revett in Athens (1751-1753), see J. Landy, *Archaeology*, 9 (1956), 252-259.

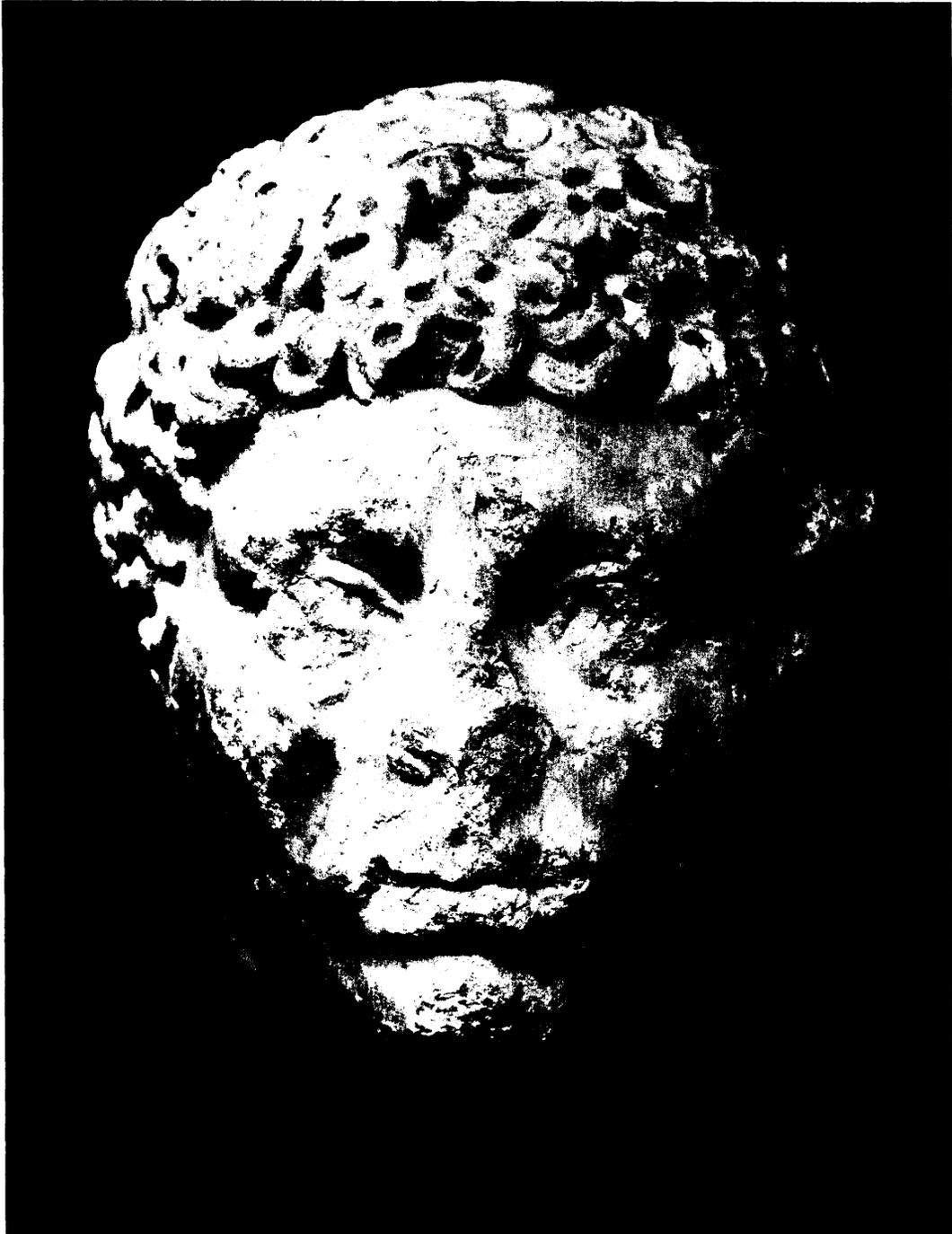
in the collection of Professor Vladimir Simkhovitch and now in Boston, provides just such a comparison⁶ (Plate 5). The sculptural technique is purer, and the directness of form is more evident in the Myronian head than in the Antonine creation, but the latter stands up well alongside its ancestor in relationship of volume to surface detail and in the decisive treatment of that detail. Like the Antonine portrait, the head from the circle of Myron has suffered much at the hands of time and human intent, the latter having provided the face with a restored nose, of which only the ugly dowelhole remains. Parallels could also be found for the classical antecedents of the portrait among the Greek fourth-century successors of Myronian and Polykleitan sculpture of the fifth century B.C. In this respect one can call to mind a head in the collection of the late Professor David M. Robinson and said to have come from the island of Rhodes. This head represents an early Hellenistic continuation of the athletic art developed in the early fourth century from mid-fifth century styles.⁷

REDUCED-SCALE COPIES OF GREEK STATUES IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

The small size of the Warren head is a rare but not unique occurrence in Greek statuary under the Roman Empire. Copies of lifesized Greek masterpieces were made on all scales down to miniature bronzes during all periods of Graeco-Roman art. A bronze Herakles attributed to Myron, for instance, is well known from three marble copies about two feet in height; the best of these, dated on account of the complexity of the support in the Hadrianic or Antonine periods, is in the Museum of Fine Arts and belonged to E. P. Warren at the time it was exhibited at the Burlington Fine

⁶Acc. no. 51.1404; H.: 11 1/8 in. (0.282m.). G. H. Chase, *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 50 (1952), 8-10; V. G. Simkhovitch, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 50 (1946), 83f., fig. 2.

⁷D. M. Robinson, *Anatolian Studies Presented to W. H. Buckler* (Manchester, 1939), 260ff. pls. VIIff., and parallels.



BOSTON. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS. PORTRAIT OF A
YOUNG MAN. ANTONINE PERIOD, C. A.D. 155

PLATE 4 VERMEULE



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE PREVIOUS

Arts Club exhibition of Greek art in 1903.⁸ Half-lifesized portrait statues become more common in the Antonine than in any earlier period of Roman art. In this age artists throughout the Empire were experimenting in new combinations of traditional forms of Greek art. Eclectic compositions in painting, relief, coin reverses, and gem designs can be documented on a wide scale.⁹ The Pergamene phase of Hellenistic art, from c. 250 to 125 B.C. and later, was particularly suited to the humanistic temper of the Empire in the years when peace seemed the firmest but when wars on the eastern and northern frontiers foreshadowed the disturbances and dark days of the third century A.D.¹⁰

The few examples cited here of Antonine portrait heads carved on copies mechanical or otherwise of Greek works of the fifth century and later give no indication of the great number of such statues preserved in the collections of Europe and America. Statues of Asklepios, of Herakles, of the Capitoline or Medici Aphrodites, of Zeus standing or seated, and even of Omphale were adapted as portraits, the mythological or funerary connotations often being obscured for the modern viewer by the evident lack of taste. Portrait groups of all sizes could show an Antonine Emperor and his consort as the fifth-century Ares Borghese and the Praxitelean Aphrodite of Capua.¹¹ In the transition from mythological to historical presentation, a half-lifesized statue found at Antalya or Adalia (ancient Attaleia near Aspendus and Side on the Pamphylian coast) and now in the Archaeological Museum at Istanbul shows an emperor in *sagum*, tunic and boots, a

⁸L. D. Caskey, *Catalogue of Greek and Roman Sculpture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1925), 133ff., no. 64; G. H. Chase, *Greek and Roman Antiquities. A Guide to the Classical Collection* (Boston, 1950), 55, fig. 65; G. Hafner, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1952), cols. 86-102, with full bibliography.

⁹*Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 77 (1957), 293-299.

¹⁰G. Kleiner, *Das Nachleben des Pergamenischen Gigantenkampfes*, 105 *Winckelmannsprogramm* (Berlin, 1949), *passim*; J. W. Salomonson, *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen*, 38 (1957), 15-44.

¹¹B. M. Felletti Maj, *Museo Nazionale Romano, I ritratti* (Rome, 1953), 119f., no. 236 and bibliography.

cuirass surmounted by a helmet as support at his left leg. The emperor has been identified by some as the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, as he appeared c. A.D. 175. If not the philosopher-Emperor, who ordered his officers to put aside the cuirass for the *sagum* whenever possible,¹² the statue is that of one of Marcus Aurelius' lieutenants, who affected the hair style and dress of his commander. Treatment of richly carved and drilled hair and beard, and polish of the smooth portions of the face, are similar to those features encountered in the Antonine head published here.¹³

The technical device of reducing a lifesized statue to half size was probably dictated by the desire to set the statue in the niche of a small nymphaeum, in a shrine in a wealthy household (in periods and areas when or where it was politic to have the imperial image about), or in the apse of a small public building. In these respects it is interesting to note that the statue from Antalya is carved out only in a summary fashion at the back. A small statue of the Phrygian Zeus Sabázios on horseback, from near Istanbul and among the antiquities bequeathed to the Museum of Fine Arts by Thomas Whittemore, is likewise carved to be seen from the front only and furthermore has a crescent-shaped plinth to echo the apsidal niche for which it was designed. The statue was carved in the period A.D. 150 to 250 and has all the characteristics of Anatolian Greek religious sculpture in the transition to the Christian era of the Empire.¹⁴

Location, then, as well as architectural dimensions dictated the types of techniques applied by copyists, portraitists and sculptural innovators in the Antonine period. The architects of the second century A.D. were probably more conscious than any of their classical predecessors of the group *setting* as well as the individual containment of ancient sculpture. The

¹²*Hist. Aug., Vita Marci* xxvii; L. M. Wilson, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 7 (1929), 169ff.; *American Journal of Archaeology*, 60 (1956), 316.

¹³G. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures*, 3 (Constantinople, 1914), 600ff., no. 1390; M. Wegner, *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1939), 176.

¹⁴Res. 53.63; *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 56 (1958), 69-76.

mentality of copyism, with its switch from gods, heroes and athletes to portraits in the nude, in armor or in civic dress, well served the designers of large-scale city gates such as those at Perge and Side, stagelike complexes such as the nymphaeum in the marketplace at Miletus, or the complex imperial and family nymphaeum put up by Herodes Atticus along the precinct at Olympia at the height of the Antonine period. We have spoken of the service of small-scale sculpture to architecture; in the light of architectural examples such as those discussed in this paragraph, we must now consider the services of heroic and colossal sculpture to colossal architecture.

LARGE-SCALE GREEK IMPERIAL SCULPTURE

It is not in the tenseness of Baroque sculpture in miniature but in the drama of Pergamene, Rhodian and Alexandrine art on a giant scale and in colossal proportions that the Antonine and Severan periods made contributions to the perpetuation and diffusion of Greek sculpture under Roman patronage. We know from such works as the Farnese Hercules signed by the Greek copyist Glykon of Athens, the Farnese Bull copying a Rhodian-Pergamene work of about 100 B.C., the Dioscuri of Monte Cavallo based ultimately on the West Pediment of the Parthenon, and the Jovian seated Constantinus Magnus of the Basilica in the Forum Romanum (to cover the period A.D. 185 to 315), that colossal sculpture thrived in response to the Herculean architectural undertakings of the Later Empire. In Rome these included the Severan Baths, the Severan Sarapeum, Aurelian's *Templum Solis*, Diocletian's Baths, and the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine. We are accustomed to say that Greek athletic art ceases with the Antonine period. The colossal Alexander Severus in Naples, a portrait of c. A.D. 235 on a Polykleitan body,¹⁵ or the Traianus Decius as Mars in the Palazzo dei Conservatori,

¹⁵B. M. Felletti Maj, *Iconografia romana imperiale, Quaderni e guide di archeologia*, 2 (Rome, 1958), 95, no. 22, pl. V, 12.

a good Greek copy of c. A.D. 250,¹⁶ provide datable examples of Greek sculptural tradition continuing almost to the Christian century of imperial Rome. The Greek sculptural tradition was certainly present in many anonymous copies of older works, which force of habit and misunderstanding of Greek artistic vitality have dated in the first rather than the second two centuries of the Empire.

CONCLUSION

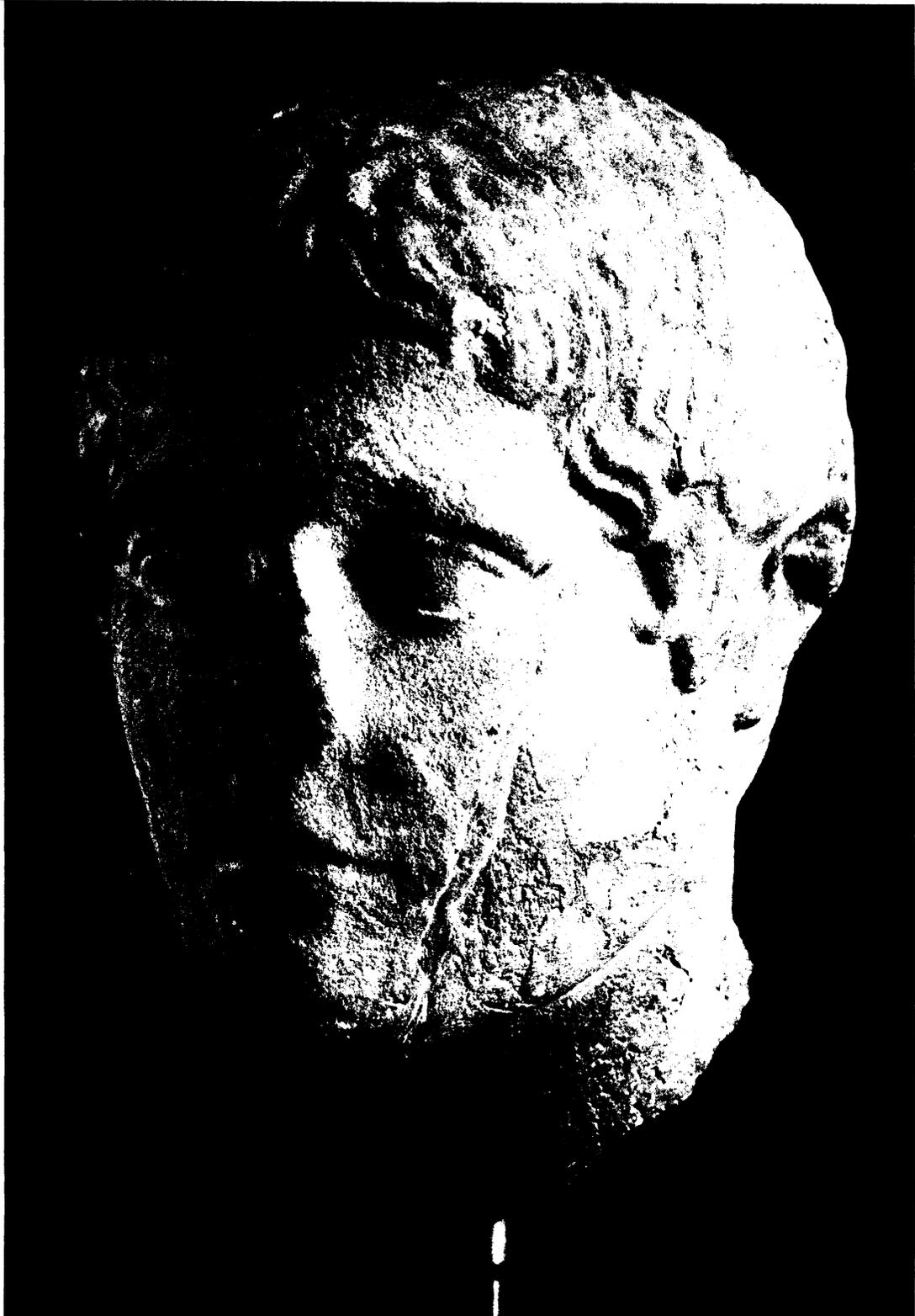
The Greek sculptural tradition lived with all its force into the fourth century in gem cutting, coin design, architectural ornament, and even in mosaic work. That the artistic vocabulary of Late Antiquity developed in Attic, Asiatic and Italian sarcophagi of the third century A.D. is an accepted principal of modern archaeological criticism. Accustomed as we are to judging Greek art under the Roman Empire by standards formulated for the period 450 to 50 B.C., we can easily overlook the continuing vitality of conservative Greek sculptural traditions in an age when sarcophagi and emotionally inspired portraits catch our literary fancies. The portrait published here has many characteristics of the Antonine period. Combined with these we find a traditional approach to the human form which can be traced as far back as the mid-fifth century B.C., when the human figure was emerging as a developed scientific factor in classical representation.

That a head so battered can retain so much beauty speaks for the abilities of the anonymous Greek artist of the Antonine period. That the head can be brought to our notice as a document of Greek art in transition to Late Antiquity is due to the discerning eye and material generosity of Edward Perry Warren, to whom ancient Greece was "a civilization which in its strong fineness and disciplined vigour he held to be the best answer yet given to the problem of life".¹⁷

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

¹⁶B. M. Felletti Maj, *op. cit.*, 188, no. 234, pl. XXX, 93-94.

¹⁷Quoted from a tribute by J. D. Beazley, *The Times* (London, 7 Jan. 1929); reprinted in *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 27 (1929), 30.



BOSTON. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS. HEAD OF A YOUTH
(PERHAPS FROM A PEDIMENT). GREEK, C. 460-450 B.C.

ATHENS AGORA

