This is the first volume of collected papers to be devoted to the work of Philostratus, the great essayist, biographer and historian of Greek culture in the Roman world, and the most scintillating writer of Greek prose in the third century AD. The contributions cover his remarkable range, from hagiographic fiction to historical dialogue, from pictorial description to love letters, and from prescriptions for gymnastics to the lives of the sophists. The quality of his writing and the concerns within his purview – religion, aesthetics, athletics and education – make Philostratus’ writings among the most important documents for understanding Greek culture in the Roman world, and guide us in exploring the maturity of Hellenic cultural identity in the context of the rise of Christianity. Few studies have been devoted to this neglected figure, and this collection will therefore be of great value to scholars and students of imperial Greek literature and art.

Ewen Bowie was E. P. Warren Praelector in Classics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 1965–2007, and has written extensively on the Greek culture of the Roman empire.

Jas Elsner is Humfrey Payne Senior Research Fellow in Classical Art and Archaeology at Corpus Christi College, Oxford and Visiting Professor of Art History and Classics at the University of Chicago.
The Greek culture of the Roman Empire offers a rich field of study. Extraordinary insights can be gained into processes of multicultural contact and exchange, political and ideological conflict, and the creativity of a changing, polyglot empire. During this period, many fundamental elements of Western society were being set in place: from the rise of Christianity, to an influential system of education, to long-lived artistic canons. This series is the first to focus on the response of Greek culture to its Roman imperial setting as a significant phenomenon in its own right. To this end, it will publish original and innovative research in the art, archaeology, epigraphy, history, philosophy, religion, and literature of the empire, with an emphasis on Greek material.
PHILOSTRATUS

EDITED BY
EWEN BOWIE AND JAŚ ELSNER

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Notes on the contributors

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Preface

Philostratus needs no apology. There is now widespread agreement on the outstanding nature of the Philostratean corpus, as both exemplary literary masterpieces in a range of genres, in their own right, and as throwing fundamental light on a series of key historical and cultural themes in the imperial experience of Greeks in the Roman world. Yet no volume of this kind exists; indeed there are still only two monographs that treat the author and his corpus of writings as a whole.¹ The project was born in the fertile and welcoming environment of the Corpus Christi College Centre for the Study of Greek and Roman Antiquity, for whose Wednesday Classical seminar and programme of one-day Saturday conferences many of the contributions collected here were first commissioned. The editors would like to thank warmly all those involved: our Corpus colleagues, who have included – in the time between the birth of this project and its completion – Ursula Coope, Philip Hardie, Stephen Harrison, James Howard-Johnston, Ted Kaizer, John Ma, Neil McLynn, Robin Osborne, Christopher Taylor, Tim Whitmarsh and Michael Winterbottom; all our vocal audiences; and all our contributors. We are grateful, too, to the team at Cambridge University Press, led by Michael Sharp, for producing the book and to the Press’ anonymous readers for their comments. Particular thanks are due to Bert Smith for his help in finding photographs.

Ewen Bowie
Jaš Elsner

¹ Anderson (1986) and Billault (2000).