

PREFACE

This volume is about the workings of the imperial image in the Antonine period, seen through a detailed examination of the portraits of Commodus. It has the following aims and structure: to publish an important new Commodus portrait, currently on loan to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Ch. 1); to examine imperial portrait practice in general terms and in its chronological evolution (Ch. 2); to consider the life of Commodus as represented in the posthumous literary sources and their contrast with contemporary public media and his portrait image (Ch. 3); and to assess the workings of the successive designs or types for Commodus' portraits and how imperial portrait models and their surviving versions came into being (Chs. 4 and 5). The late Antonine period was in many ways the apogee of Roman marble portrait carving, and the new Commodus is one of its very best examples.

Readers should note that 'Marcus' not further qualified always refers to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, father of Commodus. For ease of consultation, Commodus' sur-

viving portraits studied here are numbered in a single sequence in a bold type-face, **1–93**, by which their details and discussion can be readily located in the text of Chapters 4 and 5. They are also illustrated (and numbered) in the plates in this sequence, where captions resume the portrait type after which they were modelled. It should also be noted that coins and medallions are not reproduced to scale.

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