

PERSONIFICATION AND THE FEMININE  
IN ROMAN PHILOSOPHY

While the central ideal of Roman philosophy exemplified by Lucretius, Cicero, and Seneca appears to be the masculine values of self-sufficiency and domination, this book argues, through close attention to metaphor and figures, that the Romans also recognized, as constitutive parts of human experience, what for them were feminine concepts such as embodiment, vulnerability, and dependency. Expressed especially in the personification of grammatically feminine nouns such as Nature and Philosophy “herself,” the Roman’s recognition of this private “feminine” part of himself presents a contrast with his acknowledged, public self and challenges the common philosophical narrative of the emergence of subjectivity and individuality with modernity. To meet this challenge, Alex Dressler offers both theoretical exposition and case studies, developing robust typologies of personification and personhood that will be useable for a variety of subjects beyond classics, including rhetoric, comparative literature, gender studies, political theory, and the history of ideas.

ALEX DRESSLER is Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He has published articles in journals such as *Helios*, *Ramus*, and *Classical Antiquity* ranging in subject matter from feminism and the ancient novel to exemplarity and ancient rhetoric, and from deconstruction and the sociology of literature to aesthetic theory and psychoanalysis.

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ALEX DRESSLER



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*To my friend and colleague, Patricia Rosenmeyer*

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Madison, Wisconsin – Fall 2014  
 Poughkeepsie, New York – Fall 2015



# Abbreviations

When they are clear and intuitive, I use the abbreviations developed in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 2003, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev., hereafter *OCD*). Otherwise, I use the first syllable or first three or four letters of the ancient author and the first syllable or three or four letters of the first or main words of the title of the relevant work, excluding the common prepositional beginnings (e.g., the *ad* in Seneca’s *Ad Helviam*, which becomes simply *Helv.*). In some instances, where the work is obscure or the *OCD* lacks an abbreviation or the abbreviation proves impractical, I use the full name of the author and the full title of the work in Greek, in Latin, or in English translation. With luck, the reader will be able to clarify any remaining uncertainties by comparing the citation *in situ* with the *index locorum*.

Of important works of reference, standard editions, or seminal contributions to other, relevant fields, the abbreviations that it will help the reader to know are these:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| AT              | Adam and Tannery’s edition of the works of Descartes, included in the bibliography, and cited by volume and page like the works of Plato.                                       |
| CSM             | the English edition of the works of Descartes, edited and translated by Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch, cited in the same way as AT, and also included in the bibliography. |
| CPJ             | Kant’s <i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> , cited by chapter and section.   |
| Lewis and Short | <i>A Latin Dictionary</i> , edited by C.T. Lewis and C. Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879).  |
| LS              | Long and Sedley’s edition of <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , included in the bibliography and also cited by fragment, testimonium, or excerpt.                            |

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|-----|--|
| LSJ | <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , edited by H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H.S. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).                     |
| OED | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).  |
| OLD | <i>The Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).  |
| SE  | <i>The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud</i> , cited by volume and page, and included in the bibliography. |
| SVF | von Albrecht's <i>Fragments of the Old Stoics</i> , cited by volume and fragment, and included in the bibliography.                            |
| TLL | <i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1900–).   |

Wherever I thought it would be helpful or convey something of the way I accessed the work, or its position in classical scholarship, I have included all forms of reference to *SVF* and *LS*.