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**Return of the Living Dead: Elegiac and Epic Female Spectral Images**

In Propertius 4.7 and 4.11, Cynthia the elegiac mistress and Cornelia the elite Roman *matrona*, return from the dead to proclaim their final words and wishes. They appear as bodies on the funeral pyre, as ashes, and most notably as spectral images. But why are they there at all? This paper considers the role of these famous spectral images via a brief comparison with the images of female shades in epic, namely Vergil's Creusa and Dido. Alison Keith (2000) has well established that dead and dying women have a prominent place in epic, as part of a system that links the female with the body. She argues that the woman's body is the object of the reader's gaze and that it is "over her dead body" that a male hero obtains political agency and transforms the social order (Keith 2000, 117, 130). I demonstrate that similar to epic, Propertius gives dead women a prominent role in his elegies. But the result is different. No woman needs to die to create a male legacy. I argue that the ghosts of Cynthia and Cornelia instead manipulate their status as dead "objects" to transform the social order to their liking. It is "over the dead body" of the elegiac corpse that book four creates a female focused narrative and legacy.

Scholars have long explored the role of the corpses in book four. For example, Cynthia's ghost in 4.7 is said to be a farewell to elegy and Cornelia's in 4.11 a turn to more aetiological and Roman values (Lange *Latomus* 1979, 336). This paper also considers the role of the dead women, but via a different approach. It explores the visual structure of the funeral procession and the materiality of the dead bodies as tools for female agency. As ghosts, both Cynthia and Cornelia have the ability to manipulate the gaze, in stark contrast to the female shades of epic. While the bodies of Cynthia and Cornelia are on display for a public gaze in their respective funeral rites, the presence of a ghost allows the women to be active participants in the spectacle. Once their eyes have closed in death (4.7.8, 4.7.28, and 4.11.64), their ghosts become responsible for acting on their behalf and ensuring their eternal reputation. They can now gaze at others, just as others are looking upon their corpses and judging them. Cynthia's ghost even turns the judgmental gaze of the funereal spectator away from herself and onto Propertius (4.7.27-8).

In sum, the spectral images of elegiac women do not serve the function of the traditional objectified female bodies of epic. Instead of triggering a new departure in a male narrative, the elegiac images serve as a means to give each woman eternal repute in her own right and focus book four on the future of women.