

“He is Not Here”: Abjection, Affect, and Unmaking Bo(un)d(ar)ies in the Gospel of
Mark

Karri Whipple

Drew University

Throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus works to return the abject outcasts of society to a place of subjecthood. Yet, the abrupt ending of Mark leaves Jesus’ return from abject corpse to divine subject shrouded in ambiguity and uncertainty. This paper seeks to explore the affective responses of fear, disgust, etc. to Jesus’ missing body, both within the text itself and within the interventions of later communities as part of a larger discourse on societal perceptions of subjecthood and abjection.

The paper’s structure unfolds (and perhaps, refolds) in three parts. First, it explores the affective responses of fear and amazement that the women at the tomb experience in response to Jesus’ missing body in Mark 16:1-8. Using the work of Sara Ahmed, Sianne Ngai, and Julia Kristeva, a new reading of the text will emerge that views the women’s flight response not as one of failed discipleship, but instead as an intense affective response to the missing abject corpse of Jesus. Second, the paper will explore the attempts of later authors/communities to close the boundaries between life/death, abject/subject and the intense responses they evoke through the shorter (16:8b) and longer (16:9-19) endings added to the gospel. The aim is to explore how the addition of such endings – complete with post-resurrection encounters of Christ – prevent slippages and dissipate the stickiness of the affects caused by a missing corpse for past and present readership. Finally, the paper will return to the original ending of Mark to explore the

message(s) about subjecthood and abjection contained within the original ending. This will focus on Jesus' body as a site where the boundaries of life/death, abject/subject blur and slip. The potential political power of these slippages will be explored for their ability to trouble the privileging subjecthood within the later endings of Mark, as well as contemporary society. In doing so, spaces might (re-)open to disrupt dominant logic that oppresses others, and erases bodies that refuse socially-constructed containment and conformity.