

## Choreography

### Creation of the subject

In *Urban Bush Women: Twenty Years of African American Dance Theater, Community Engagement, and Working it Out*, Nadine George-Graves (2010) presents many years of physical participation to acquire tools for analysis and understanding of the performance artists in Urban Bush Women. George-Graves studies how Jawole Willa Jo Zollar worked in a performative context to deconstruct the stigmatized images surrounding the black female body. She shows how choreographic work can turn perspectives and change the image. George-Graves provides examples of deconstruction, dances that deal with different parts of the black body, that can renegotiate power structures: hair in *Hair Stories*, the buttocks in *Batty Moves* and the hand in *Hand Singing Song* (George-Graves 2010, 38). George-Graves shows how Zollar deconstructs the body to take power over each part to finally construct it again. The study uses theories about how subject is created in discourse. With reference to Foucault she describes the interest in “how human beings become subjects through the exercise of power in discursive modes” (George-Graves 2010, 38). With reference to Rabinow, George Graves uses three related states; *dividing practice*, where the subject is separated from others and/or from her/himself, *scientific classification*, ideas about inquiry that take on the status of science, both of which classify, label and create categories (such as madness, health, sexuality) in the name of science and knowledge.

The third mode of objectification, “subjectification”, is the most important in relation to Zollar's work. It concerns the way a human being turns her/himself into a subject. The difference between this mode and the others lies in the power of agency. The first two are processes of domination of the individual from the outside. The third implies agency for the individual [...] and is in itself a negotiation of power. Rather than passively being divided and labeled, a person is an active participant in creating and understanding him/herself.

(George-Graves 2010, 38)

George-Graves (2010) gives perspectives to show how these processes are used in practice. I find George-Grave's analysis meaningful in my work due to its connection to choreographic practice that works to problematize norms of corporeality in discourse. The body is at the center of these processes, negotiations of power, that take place in various arenas, societal contexts.

It is from the body that studies and experiments base their conclusions, and it is on the body that treatment, remedies and beliefs about normality are instilled.

(George-Graves 2010, 39)

George-Graves, Nadine. 2010. *Urban Bush Women: Twenty Years of African American Dance Theater, Community Engagement, and Working it Out*. Madison. Wis: University of Wisconsin Press.