Muňoz, José Esteban (2007) A jeté out of the window: Fred Herko’s incandescent illumination’, In *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity*, pp. 147-167, New York: New York University Press.

Hayward, Eva (2008) ‘More lessons from a starfish: Prefixial flesh and transspeciated selves’, *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 36 (3/4): 64-85.

**How do you understand the notion of trans-speciation? What does Hayward mean when referring to the starfish as being “more than a metaphor”? How does she understand metaphor differently from merely a figure of speech?**

Note: Upon reading the texts, the topics in question were not too clear in my mind and only became more elaborate in the process of writing. Thus, please, excuse me for troubling you with the clumsy wording of the following answer.
Eva Hayward defines metaphor as a “displacement” where one word i.e., a “nominative term” is “displaced from its everyday context and placed elsewhere to illuminate some other context through its *reconfiguration*” (p. 74 italics added). That is to say, the metaphor is by its very nature qualitatively different from the object(s) it represents in their strict sense. The metaphor instead moves between ideas as to connect them in a sense different than the literal. Thus, the author ponders on the lyrical image of the starfish and suggests that it – the starfish – could be interpreted as “more than a metaphor” or more otherwise as something that exceeds the semantic, human-made properties of the metaphor – “because starfish is only ever partially digested, defined, explained, used by language.” (p. 75). Hayward instead proposes, after Lippit, the notion of “*animetaphor*” (antimetaphor + animal metaphor). An animetaphor is a stand-in for the understanding that “the lived being [e.g., the starfish, a sea snail] always already inhabits language, grammar, syntax, and metaphor” (p. 78). By “inhabiting language” Haywards means that, though “[a]nimals are in and of language and representation […] their lived bodies are always restoring words to beings” (p. 79). Although frequently used as to fill in linguistic gaps true, embodied, living, eating, procreating animals could not be contained by speech nor its metaphor, for the significance of the living being, their corporality is too sensorily dense to be readily nor adequately compartmentalized, objectified or rendered a signifier. “Animetaphor [applies] a figurative sense [i.e., “the *meaning* that *means*”] as a literal one [i.e. a “*matter* that *means”*], while yet retaining the look or feel of figurality” (p. 82). Thus, animetaphor is more closely related to metonymy – where the latter is to be understood as the name for this which “brings together two objects, each of which constitutes a separate whole” (p. 75) - so does an animetaphor bring together the fleshiness of the organism, alongside its sense meaning. Put more simply, for Hayward “The Cripple and the Starfish” “foregrounds the intracorporeally of *sensible matter* and *sensual meaning*” (p. 82) as to reveal the possibility to attend to the song trough both figural and literal apprehension.

Trans-speciationis what becomes possible through the realization of this two-fold apprehension. *Trans* here stands for the “elsewhere” or potentially for the “trans-formation” inherent to the “trans”-sexual/gender as prefixal entities. Thus, Hayward looks at the literal starfish and the symbolic “starfish” as to understand what it means to joyfully “cut off [one’s own] finger” (perhaps a penis?) so “it grows back like a starfish”. Here, the echinoderm that the author of the song speaks of becomes visible as a linguistic symbol of the potential for ultimate regeneration of the self (“*it* grows back”). Yet, more important is perhaps the ‘metamorphosing’ (in and trough animetaphor) into a sea star – a hermaphrodite with the option of asexual reproduction. I do believe that it is the thesis of this text aptly named “More Lessons from a Starfish” to open the possibility of extended *re*-definition, *re*-imagination, *re*-habilitation and *re*-living of the sensible matter and a sensual meaning bearing the name of ‘human’.

**Explain how Munoz refigures failure and heroism in queer performance. How does Herko’s suicide performance ‘move beyond death as finitude’? If Warhol knew about Herko’s suicide, why would he ask him for permission to film it? And considering the final page, what is missing in interpreting the suicide as utopian performance?**

In Herko’s suicide, Muñoz reads a reconfiguration of the meaning of death. Death in the ‘western’ context of the heteronormative time, only exists in the antiutopian imagination for it signifies the end (fin) of potentiality. Instead, “Herko’s final queer act helps us look at queer life and cultural labour as resonating *beyond traditional notions of finitude”* (p.149, italics added). Failure is incorporated - not excluded – from the queer dancer’s final performance act. The politics of failure “perform collisions between the pitiful and the stoic, the majestic and the wretched, the horrific and the laughable” (p. 154). These paradoxes now synthesize – in the act of failing - a new opportunity to manifest, to live, to mark as to trail (in a queer future which is now) the possibility of something else that is latent in and *exceeds* the *correct* way, something that is more than what society deems as successful. The power of this “stutter”-like failure is the interruption of what Muñoz (to quote Halberstam) calls “straight time”. What follows is the generation (and reverberation) of another realizable future of possibilities. In regard to Herko Muñoz frequently utilizes the adjective of “flamboyancy” and “ornamentation” – thus Herko’s “ornamental[ity] surpassed the merely aesthetic… functional form is aligned with a *normalized spatial and temporal mapping* of the world, whereas the expressive exuberance of the ornament *promises* something else— another time and place that is not hamstrung by the present” (p150 italics added). In an era of modernist minimalism Herko’s flamboyant, self-conscious, fairytale-like, erratic, drug-infused domineer, movement and costumes flow away from the codex of aesthetics norm to promise something else entirely. Thus, Herko “denaturalize[s] the way we move in the world [as] to denaturalize the world itself in favour of a utopian performativity.” (p. 151).

Muñoz perceives the tragedy of Herko’s last dance as a performance signifying with its last “perfect jetée” out the window an overcoming of the limits imposed on queer potentiality. From this perspective, Andy Warhol`s wish to capture this last act speaks less of the alleged coldness of spirit on his part but of a desire to make a permanent imprint of the transformative Avant-guard power of this dance ending in suicide. The inevitable pain of the failure to prevent the death of their loved one – in friends, companions, kin – undoubtedly reverberates too strongly to be able to allow the traces of the utopian potentiality of the act to be welcomed and realized for what they are. For the sense of him who is no longer (conscious) come to haunt the cavities of the present and render amiss the (utopian) performance.