**Discussion questions for week 5**

1. **Eva Hayward reworks transsexual identity through the encounter with a starfish in a song by Anthony and the Johnsons. How does the starfish’s capacity for regrowth reconfigure the experience of transsexual surgery beyond the medical trope of gender dysphoria and being born in the wrong body? Explain how the cut is generative and what Hayward means when she writes that the transsexual is ‘of’ her body?**

According to Hayward, the cutting/amputation of what? involved in transsexual M2F surgery is not a loss of an organ but a transforomation and a possibility. It is a way of slowly becoming for the trans woman. As Hayward puts it, the cut is a “materialization by which a transsexual tentatively and mutably becomes” (p 72). Therefore, the trans woman can regenerate and transform, like the starfish. For trans people the cut is an attempt “to recast the self through the transformed cut body” (p 71-72). The cut is not so much of an opening of the body or a simple absence of a former body part. It *is* her body and therefore the cut is generative. She wishes to be of her body and going through the operation is her “moving towards herself through herself” (72). I understand this as identifying affirming with her body, includign its virtual possibilties of becoming something else , feeling as if it matches her identity. This does not mean the surgery is a “cure” for gender dysphoria, as she does not switch from a “wrong” body to a different “right” body. She becomes *of* her body. The cut is a way of regrowth [scar tissue – details here and healing for the trans woman, a way of experiencing growth of new margins, for example in the growth of new tissue and sensations. Yes! In it there is physical possibility and boundaries are redrawn, ones that are closer to the trans woman’s self.

1. **Jose Munoz argues that the queer performances and movements of Fred Herko carry a utopian surplus of other ways of moving and being in the world. What are these utopian traces and what do they do?**

Jose Esteban Munoz suggests that Fred Herko’s dance movements? Carry a cultural and aesthetic surplus of queer potentiality has made him a difficult subject for some of his contemporaries. Herko’s closest friend, Diane di Prima, describes his way of being in his personal life as “off-course” (p 157). She describes him as acting not as grown up, promiscuous, his way of being disgusting and “pretty bad” (p 157). Still di Prima loves Herko’s “queer way of being in the world” (p 159). This queerness is summarized in how his movements were always disruptive of their environment. He moved in a non-heteronormative non normative way both in his personal life and in his performances.

Herko’s performances are described as denaturalizing movement and in doing so the world itself is denaturalized “in favor of a utopian performativity” (p 151). Munoz claims that herko did not conform with “the aesthetic codes” (p 150) that dominated the artistic movements of which he was part. Herko was flamboyant, eccentric and excessive, so much so that even among artists thinking outside the box he was still “too much” within the society in which he moved. Within The Judson Memorial Church’s performances which emphasized minimalism, he showed up in elaborate costumes and performed campily. Herko even resisted Andy Warhol’s protocols and transformed simple screen tests into a choreographed performance.

Because of this Herko was scrutinized and could be perceived as childish, useless, disgusting and nonsensical but perhaps that is only because of his way of refusingto conform to the Western capitalist way of being. In this way, his perfromances could be said to embody a utopian surplus of other ways of moving and being in the world (make clear this is a qupoation. In Andy Warhol’s movie, Thirteen Beautiful Boys, Munoz finds cultural surplus embodied, moving in ways that tell us that this time and place is not enough… a dissatisfaction with the here and now.” (p 161).

Good answers