I must admit I’m a fan of Regrette’s. After reading Plunder Magazine’s 2010 description of her as “Kathy Acker’s X-Files, or Alfred Jarry as a Cockette”, I first encountered Regrette’s pan-disciplinary, para-academic work in a high-costume and high-sex ‘Performance-Lecture’ for her project The Fauxist International. Since then, I’ve come across her doing anything and everything from labyrinthine textual exhibitions, academic panels and political workshops, to ‘subliminal’ Youtube videos, and freaky sam-club shows, and Ask A Tranny ‘blowjob booths’. Not merely trading on her subcultural freak capital – Regrette gets around daily in all neon and drag makeup and she actually showed me her stab-wound scars! – and the street-cred of a tranny sex-worker, her unabashedly iconoclastic, syncretic output evinces real conceptual depth.

Rachael Sweting: ‘Queer’ performance has become well-known as a genre in recent years. How would you characterise transgender work, and more specifically, its relationship with genre and with terms like ‘Post-drag’, or even ‘Post-gender’?

Regrette Etcetera: The vast majority of my work doesn’t explicitly engage with transgender, or gender. It’s interesting that you think that what ‘we’ do to ‘gender’ must adhere to a monolithic category, a cross-cultural legibility, and as such to genre…

R.S: Well, you critically combine genres, and move in a lot of scenes/venues not traditionally associated with trans women?

R.E: Wow. Your question is a good example. (“Tell us why or how you are exceptional or noteworthy for transcending the cultural ghettos we construct for trans women?”… “Well I never thought I’d see an Aboriginal ice skater! Explain yourself!”) How do you think the ‘autobiographical impulse’ is preferred or required by the art world? How ‘Drones becomes my gender’ here is a good example of how uniformly my work is read back to ‘the trans body’, even while I read away from or against it. The ‘cock-piercing show’, Monsterpussy (2010) is actually about trans and queer inclusion in the colonial-imperial project via histories of sexualised colonial violence, and looks at the linkages between the excessive, intimate violence of trans and racialised killing, and the fetishising, surveillant liberal gaze. Maybe you could also see a link there to drones, right? Is that Post-Drag? For me, any link to drag is increasingly attenuated.

R.S: But isn’t your anger precisely what we want to hear? Isn’t that the titillation you mention?

R.E: Certainly. It’s a cute trap. “Regrette, how exactly are you positioned as hysterical for refusing to answer our questions?” I’m very aware of the multivalence of asking “How many trans women artists have ever been in this art journal?” “Well I never thought I’d see an Aboriginal ice skater! Explain yourself!” or “Tell us why or how you are exceptional or noteworthy for transcending the cultural ghettos we construct for trans women?”

WERQ The runway darling!

or what drones taught me about being a better tranny

An interview with Regrette Etcetera by Rachael Sweting

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not to really interrogate its maintenance of both a quasi-anthropological, fetishing gaze and its material complicity in gentrification, for example, which affects "such populations."

"We're waiting for tranny art to come of age."

R.S: What of your other work then that reads away from the body?

R.E: We're getting warmer! I'd say 'most of it!' Though in terms of trans stuff, I've made work and written elsewhere on Tranquider's 'Object-Iconic' status in broader queer politics, and how it functions as part of a homonationalist and 'Pinkwashing' discourse, or as an exemplary neo-liberal subjectivity... Otherwise I've also engaged a lot with colonialism, critical science, sacrificial economies, excess, Utopias, psychology, and especially monumentality... like genocide museums, abject monuments and archives. Anyway, this is getting boring. So, to bring 'your interview' back to drones, I'll give you a handy segue...

R.S: Ok. I'd suspected I might have to throw away my notes...

R.E: Well as part of the trans-nationalism work I mentioned, we (the Fauxist International) recently conducted an exclusive interview with the world's first transsexual drone pilot in the USA!

R.S: Sounds like it was made for the Fauxists! USA!

Interview with the world's first transsexual drone pilot in the USA recently conducted an exclusive interview with the world's first transsexual drone pilot in the USA.

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R.E: And you thought transgender police were new! Well, that's not actually true, I just wanted to tease you a minute. Really, the segue is our piece that's not actually true, I just wanted to tease you a minute. R.E: And you thought transgender police were new! Well, that's not actually true, I just wanted to tease you a minute. Really, the segue is our piece that's not actually true, I just wanted to tease you a minute. Really, the segue is our piece that's not actually true, I just wanted to tease you a minute.Really, the segue is our piece that's not actually true, I just wanted to tease you a minute.

"We're waiting for tranny art to come of age."

What's really interesting is that UAS surveillance missions currently amass something like 16,000 hours or 2 years worth of video each month in AFG/PK – that collapsed sovereignty – alone. Because the military surprisingly can’t get enough people to watch it all, it necessitates automated video-algorithmic data-mining and narrative-bioinformatics synthesis to deal with it, to sift through this glut of excess temporality and territory. What’s really interesting is that you have these algorithms sorting video, and doing data-basesynthesis and reconbinance, looking for certain behavioural signatures or triggers – known as ‘pattern of life’ or cultural ‘cues’ – which are compartment, movements, body-types, and digital histories, on an aggregate, diffuse population level over long periods of time and vast areas. Is ‘military aged male’ a new gender? Here subjectivity and the body expands beyond liberal and humanist ideas of the individual, the body and so on, which is part of why liberal or rights discourse can’t deal with it. Coming back to ‘drag’, the work asks how can we theorise attempts to drag the UAS’s use of video-algorithmic 'Target Signature' searches, and how can we consider or use this creatively as a new kind of networked 'biopolitical theatre' blurring the population and individual?

Elliot Hughes Logette Elliotz 2012, HD video still, 33min. Courtesy the artist.

Elliot Hughes Logette Elliotz 2012, HD video still, 33min. Courtesy the artist.
R.S: There is currently a lot of media coverage of drones… Do you see good art out there addressing drones or network war? What got you started on working on it?

R.E: Well, I thought ‘tranny drone art’ may be the next big thing. The majority of the coverage consists of intensely naive writing on ‘privacy’, ethics, outmoded ideas of nation-state sovereignty and territory, etcetera. A lot of ‘ethics’ and C&W in the same sentence. It’s embarrassing. Given the preponderance of twee, naive artistic engagement with surveillance, war and networks, it may well echo the media coverage. The majority of existing work really doesn’t take in the biopolitical, ontological, cultural scale change inherent to these technologies, and seems mainly to be in the ‘how very dare they’ or ‘imagine drones at home’ school, of which Omer Fast’s video work is a better example. Alex Riviera and Trevor Paglen are worth mentioning, as are the numerous US DIY drones groups. In terms of anything on drone drag, Adam Harvey’s anti-facial-recognition makeup and anti-infrared fashion line will give you an idea of what it means by naïve. The interesting stuff is mostly in the theory, and the military is way ahead of everyone else here. To an extent our interest in drones came out of Faustian publications on military simulation, participatory surveillance and conducting an anthropology of Counter-insurgency.

R.S: In mentioning terrorist emergence, I’m reminded of your work that engages deep time and monumentality, like the time capsules, or the speculative futures of space travel…

R.E: Maybe this’d be the time to plug our ongoing projects for the 2018 Australian Trinitermis! Anyway, beyond the notions of anti-infrastructural and ‘slow’ violence, temporality circulates in really interesting ways here. The title of our work on this is Our Silicons vs. Their Sons, which was a pretty prescient quip by a U.S. MIT engineer. We look at how Our Silicons vs. Their Sons captures not just the ‘risk transfer’ facilitated by the UAS, but the layers of these allochronic typologies, that of flesh versus data embodiment, cyborgian and autological versus genealogical kinship, ‘dead’ versus fleshy labour and reproduction, and gets closer to the erotics or fetish of telepresent time and affect. What’s ironic in this case is that ‘terrorist-militants’ are often positioned as the theoretical future. That is, they’re considered to be more networked, diffuse, flexible, the rhizomatic leaders in a co-evolving ecosystem. Anyway, this is a lot of what I’m getting at in my project Meta Et cetera, particularly the narrative cycle entitled Terminator Roushes: Future War Now!

R.S: I’ve always considered Terminator 2 to be very prescient. Tell us more about Meta Et cetera.

R.E: Meta Et cetera is a six-week club residency I’m curating in Sydney in 2014. It’s about putting the kind of politics and ideas I’ve discussed here into a queer nightclub performance, installation and party space, and it’s structured around a six-part narrative cycle and, of course, an extensive text-base. Never knew you missed club performance work on algorithms, ACTUS and counter-insurgency.

R.S: I guess I didn’t. What’s your current work looking at?

R.E: Over the next year I’m working and presenting on a series of academic journal articles including what we’ve discussed, and a new performance-lecture series called School[Al]lens// 3D/minus//Noise/science—we’re taking on tour next year to the USA, which takes in cryptozoology, techno-hysteric, alien hybrids and the tranny stuff you love so much. Plus there’ll be a lot more on the playful-controvertial end of things too.

Rachael Featting, a Melbourne-based artist, writes for various blogs and underground magazines. She is currently working on a collaborative 3d-printing ritual project, and an anthology of writings on Yenistek failure, due for publication in 2014. Rachael can be contacted at: r featting@gmail.com