

“If I can’t dance, it ain’t my revolution”: Queer-Feminist Inquiries into Pink Bloque’s Revolutionary Strategies

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This article is an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural encounter and debate between two feminists on the question of what constitutes revolution. In the first two sections we will draw on examples from our respective research on women’s political activism in order to reflect on dominant ideas of revolution, ideas that some feminists have criticised as masculinist, in the ways in which they homogenise and universalise the notion of politics and the violence it espouses. With our vastly different historical and geopolitical vantage points, Dominique Grisard’s queer-*femminist* historical approach on the one hand, and Barbara Biglia’s feminist activist psychosocial critical lens on the other, we will not pretend to homogenise our different embodied experiences. Instead our goal is to fruitfully put them into conversation. Drawing on cis-gendered women’s political interventions, our goal is to present past and present activist voices. In fact, we will quote the (written or spoken) opinion of feminist activists and critically analyse the effect of their actions.

In the first section we will introduce and problematise the distinction between so called political and socio-cultural revolution. This allows us to reflect on what we deem relevant for and indicative of socio-cultural change. We will move on to discuss the extent to which feminism could be understood as revolutionary before introducing our case study, which will allow us to think through the effects of two *femminist* practices — ‘passing’ and ‘femme drag’ — and whether they could be considered revolutionary or rather involutionary. Our case study discusses the interventions of a radical feminist dance troupe called Pink Bloque in the early to mid 2000s. In the last section we will

critically discuss if and under what circumstances ‘passing’ and ‘drag’ could be seen as socio-cultural revolutionary strategies due to the ways in which they destabilise contemporary understandings of femininity, politics and potentially revolution.

Political and Socio-Cultural Revolution

The dominant cultural imaginary of revolution is one of ‘political revolution’ and tends to be of an uprising that aims to bring about profound governmental change. At best the uprising subverts the state or the system in order to create a new one. Women and feminism hardly ever figure in these narratives, and if they do, it is to take back their claims in honour of the ‘main’ goals of the revolution.

To give but one example: Leftists/Marxist famously argued that the social discrimination of women was only a side contradiction of the capitalist system, and that once capitalism was overturned gender discrimination would dissolve automatically. As an Italian ‘autonomous’ activist states “the most absurd thing I’ve ever heard in my life, and this is just the comrade to say it, is the slogan first doing the revolution, everything else will follow and no one knows who is going to do it” (Federica, 2001).¹

In fact, gender relations are still confined to the private sphere. “Within the revolutionary realm,” a Spanish cis-gendered female activist stresses, “sexualities are like a separate problem, they are considered part of your private life and private life is not considered a part of the political fight. [...] The struggle starts outdoors” (Paloma, 2001). This understanding of revolution affects women activists’ everyday lives deeply, pushing them to an undefined borderline space (Biglia, 2013).

We are hard pressed to find examples where a ‘political revolution’ did not marginalise gender justice, and where it led to a fundamental transformation of gender relations. On the contrary there are many more examples of political revolutions and socio-political unrest that reaffirmed and stabilised gender inequalities. In the French Revolution for instance, female allegorical figures such as Marianne came to stand for nature, sensibility and charity, and less predictably for liberty, reason, and victory (Hunt, 1984). However, the celebration of female revolutionary figures and the virtues they stood for did not translate into greater acceptance of real women who dared to take up masculine subject positions. In fact, women like Olympe de Gouges who claimed active citizenship for women (Kelly, 1987), ended at the Guillotine, whereas all women and those men who did not qualify as self-creating and autonomous remained excluded from the so called universal Rights of Man (Scott, 1996).

Thus, even when women assumed active, public and seemingly masculine roles during armed revolutionary struggle, they tended to be pressured into retreating to the private sphere (Fernández Poncela, 2000; Strobl, 1996; Vázquez, Ibáñez and Murguialday, 1996). Indeed, this is not a problem of the past: The Egyptian feminist group Nazra for Feminist Studies observed that in post-revolutionary Egypt “(t)he trend of targeting female activists, to punish them for participating in the public sphere and to exclude them from political life, became evident through the testimonies given by female

activists” (Joint statement, 2012). The tendency to sideline feminist goals in revolutionary struggles is the reason why some feminists claim that “(r)evolution will be feminist or it won’t be” a revolution (Feministas indignadas, 2011; García Grenzner, 2014). This statement may be self-evident but it still is not well received by many activists, as pointed out by *Comisión Feminismos de Sol* (2011). Given these examples of political revolutions that have proven to strengthen hierarchies between gender and between the public and the private, it begs the question whether they are indeed revolutionary or whether they should instead be considered ‘involutionary.’ The relationship between political revolutions and feminisms is extremely complex and fraught, and never linear. Against this background a feminist lens seems tantamount when it comes to decide what a revolution is and does. Along with Ariella Azoulay (2012) a socio-cultural revolution can be conceptualised as a contingent effect of a collection of civil statements and formations. Accordingly revolution goes beyond a statist definition of one government or ruler overthrowing and substituting another. Indeed, revolutions are not inherently made up of two and only two parties, the subjugated, revolutionary subjects and those in power. Thus, when feminists’ revolutionary struggles are depicted as a war waged by women against men – whether in all earnestness or humorously – the intended effect is to caricature and disclaim feminisms. Such binary depictions of war or revolution discount the manifold ways in which they involve and affect societies in their entirety, including the seemingly private and intimate. However, a queer-feminist perspective is not just wary of gender binaries, but also deconstructs the ostensibly “natural” link between sex, gender and (heterosexual) desire. Today, in a globalised world where political and economic networks reach well beyond the nation state and its government, it seems outdated to work with a statist, polarised notion of revolution. As a matter of fact, to frame revolution in such a manner could be seen as counter-revolutionary, creating false enemies by blaming feminists for relationship problems between men and women, instead of focusing on structural inequalities and injustices. Articles on the “war of the sexes” are commonly featured in mass media and popular science, which not only produces conflicts between women and men, but also causes tensions among “good” women and feminists. Furthermore, we see the need to call into question the dominant understanding of revolution as a progressive motion of bodies around one axis or centre. Instead, we argue that “power has many centres. Power is sometimes disorganised and contradictory, and without a set location from which it emanates. This is not to say there isn’t a state in which power is concentrated or that all power sites are equally significant” (Eisenstein, 1988:16). Indeed, revolutionary calling into question of power relations may involve many different actors and circulate through multiple nodal points. In lieu of subscribing to a teleological model to explain socio-cultural change; a tableau that takes into account the three-dimensionality of space as well as the fourth dimension of time and movement might be a better conceptual tool to trace the different and often paradoxical changes, gains, and setbacks in their full complexity (Maihofer, 2007; Grisard, König and Jäger, 2013a). In fact conceptualising social change on a global, historically infused scale enables intersectional, four-dimensional analyses of power relations, thus counteracting linear narratives of cause and effect,

origin and envisioned endpoint. Mapping the queer-feminist actions we describe here on a dynamic four-dimensional tableau goes beyond the scope of this article. However, we argue that a tableau would allow us to be attentive to a vast array of elements and actors directly and indirectly involved in a potentially revolutionary process.

Finally, we caution against the idea that a revolution is only a revolution if there is immediately visible fundamental social change and a complete overturn of the previous order, especially since from our feminist point of view personal revolutions are a necessary and constitutive part of collective or social change. Indeed, “working on gender entails undergoing a kind of personal revolution” (Pujal, in Biglia, 2011). Similar to the idea behind feminist consciousness-raising groups in the 1970s (Studer, 2011), we believe that in-depth change implicates the individual and the private, and that both are imminently political. Recognising the power of micro-revolutions is thus an important step towards reconceptualising revolution as a process that is intimately tied to many fundamental feminist claims.

Feminism(s) as Revolution?

A sustained debate about revolution or, to put it more broadly: about feminisms’ relationship to social change is therefore urgent. Feminists know full well that gender justice is not achieved by osmosis. They have worked hard towards effecting fundamental social transformations. All the same, their practices and goals hardly ever resemble the ‘political revolution’ imprinted on the occidental cultural imaginary. However, feminisms’ struggle to transform the socio-cultural order by targeting both the intimate and collective socio-cultural discourse and practice produced what could be called a ‘socio-cultural revolution.’

Nonetheless feminisms have either been congratulated for instigating fundamental change or blamed for blocking it, thus causing ‘a backlash’ (Faludi, 1991). Scholars such as J. Jack Halberstam (2012) assert, for example, that feminism has been one of the most successful social movements that produced fundamental changes in social, political, cultural and sexual aspects. But are these achievements a product of revolutionary practices? What kind of revolution, if any, have feminist movements pushed for? bell hooks states that “(a)lthough feminist radicals have always recognised that society must be transformed if sexist oppression is to be eliminated, feminist successes have been mainly in the area of reforms” (hooks, 2000:159). In her view not only were these changes not achieved through radical revolutionary practices, but “these reforms have not corresponded with decreased sexist exploitation and/or oppression. Prevailing sexist values and assumption remain intact,” not to mention racist values among some white feminists (hooks, 2000:159). Judith Lorber holds a similar view when she claims that “(i)n the past 150 years, women’s status in the Western world has improved enormously [...], but the revolution (or evolution) that would make women and men truly equal has not yet occurred” (Lorber, 2000:80). hooks and Lorber agree that feminism has achieved personal and collective revolutions. Yet, the question remains: Have they brought about revolutionary *social* change?

Clearly the institutionalisation of some feminisms and the mainstreaming of their demands (Walby, 2002) effected changes in the political rhetoric. Among other things they led to greater attention being paid to the use of sexist and homophobic language (Mills, 2008), and they were useful when it came to developing certain gender policies. However, the institutionalisation also brought about a cooptation of many feminist claims (Motta, Flesher Fominaya, Eschle, Cox, 2011), as it happens, for example, with the use of politically correct language and attitudes by politicians and broader society (Mills, 2008) or in the case of sexual and reproductive rights discourse and politics (Biglia and Olivella, 2014). This is well illustrated by the mainstreaming of the term 'gender.' On the one hand, the use of the concept made it possible to recognise the socio-cultural norms and values, pressures and incentives involved in constructing gendered subjects and a binary, heterosexual order. On the other hand, the term is frequently used to dismiss the necessity of feminist analyses. In fact, it is mostly employed in mainstreaming policies that tend not to be sensitive to central feminist issues in regard to power, hierarchies, and difference.

In addition, it seems as though the tools introduced by Black, Chicana or Postcolonial Feminisms and others have been lost on the way to gender mainstreaming (Walby, 2011), and the different effects revolutions have on subjects depending on their gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc., are hardly ever talked about, let alone analysed. For example, the glass ceiling might be fissuring at one end, now that some white middle class women are moving up the career ladder. However, their success comes at the expense of people of colour and migrants working long hours at minimum wage in the deregulated domestic and care sector (Hochschild 2000; Manalansan 2006).

Against the background of the unpredictable uses of the category of gender, we caution against hasty celebrations of feminist successes. Some feminist achievements that at first glance appear revolutionary can turn out to have the exact opposite effect. The following example illustrates this well: Feminists fought hard for gender violence laws. Little did they know that these laws would become a new way of exercising governmental control over the female body (Marugán Pintos and Vega Solís, 2002), and that cis-gendered women would be held responsible for solving the problem (Biglia, Olivella, Jimenez, 2014; Bustelo and Lombardo, 2006).

To conclude, it is without question that feminist struggles have produced major changes and gains as well as backlashes. We thus posit that there is a continuing necessity for a feminist revolution that sees itself as interdependent with racial, class and sexual struggles in many different arenas. We couldn't say it better than the feminist collective *Women in Black* in their poem/manifesto entitled "Why Do I Need a Revolution:"

If I have no freedom to say what I think and who I love ... if I cannot go to the theatre because I use a wheelchair or to a shop because my skin is not white enough, if I cannot hold my boyfriend's hand and kiss my girlfriend because I love her ... if they beat me because I am not like everybody else, if I belong to those who are Others and Different ... if I have the right to vote and I have to keep silent for everything else, if they point a finger at me because I look poor or respect some other holiday ... if I dream in fear during nights and if I live in fear in the daylight ... if I do not have friends—not because I do not want to but because others are ashamed of me ... if I do not have support because others do not care about my problem ... if I dare not say I feel badly and my body is shaken by a virus ... if I am afraid of words and looks, if I am anxious about being raped and beaten ... IF I CANNOT DANCE” (Women in Black in Barry, Djordjevic, 2007)

Women in Black's manifesto is reminiscent of the sentiments Emma Goldman expressed in her autobiography (1931) and alludes to the dictum “If I can't dance, then it ain't my revolution,” popular in the early 2000s to describe queer-feminist groups (Jonathan, 2004).

It is against this background that we ask ourselves: Under which circumstances can feminists produce socio-cultural revolutions? The repertoire of feminist activism has been extremely rich, spreading from practices of self-reflections to others that insist on putting the body in play. When the body enters into the game, both its feminised or masculinised uses have been hailed as subversive and/or criticised for reproducing gender roles and binaries or, finally, blamed for normalising a masculine, heteronormative model. In what follows we will explore the feminist revolutionary potential of dancing, or to put it more analytically: dancing as a strategy of passing and femme-drag.

Pink Bloque's Femme-Drag and Tactical Flirting

Pink Bloque's professed goal was to challenge “the white supremacist capitalist patriarchal empire one street dance party at a time”.² The small group of Chicago based feminists came up with an unusual strategy of conveying this message. For their first action in 2001 they “set up camp [...] in front of City Hall and started dancing to Donna Summer's ‘She Works Hard for the Money’.” By bobbing around in matching outfits in a colour intimately associated with the feminine, they made strategic use of the comfort of the familiar, and the familial as comfort. As Rachel Caidor and Dara Greenwald, two of Pink Bloque's founding members, state, rather than trying to disrupt feminine stereotypes “by going the opposite direction [by yelling, breaking things], we use our audience's comfort with those stereotypes as a conversation point of entry” (Caidor and Greenwald, 2004). As they underline on their homepage: “Knowing the power of spectacle in our culture, we chose to use it to engage others and to make protest more accessible.” Therefore Pink Bloque's performance opened passers-by up to engage in a political discussion about wage inequality, sexual violence, or racist and sexist wars.

Generally the term 'passing' is used to describe the discursive constellation of a person accessing 'normality' due to missing or barely pronounced visual or habitual markers attributed to marginalised identities. The underlying assumption of a person passing is "that there is a self that masquerades as another kind of self and does so successfully" (Halberstam, 1998:21). Negative connotations tend to be associated with this; namely that passing is to pretend to be someone else, thus fooling others. This understanding, however, rests on essentialist notions of identity and the self as if there is an identifiable set of visual and habitual signifiers and that these markers are a 'natural' expression of an 'inner truth' of a specific identity (Butler, 1993). Importantly, the 'passer' is *doing* gender, sexuality, and class identity as much as everyone else around her/him. Thus, relegating the passer's performance to the status of copy or derivative is an exercise of power that reifies social orders. It is against this background that feminists have come to problematise a politics that holds on to original, natural, and exclusive identities. They argue that it is a major obstacle to achieving equality and justice (Butler, 1993). In fact, if one understands identities as neither natural nor coherent but as constructed, as many feminists do, there is no original to be copied. In other words: Pink Bloque's cultivation of a seemingly heterosexual, consumer-friendly femininity persona was "a copy of a copy" (Butler, 1993: 314).

Following RuePaul's provocative slogan "we're born naked, and the rest is drag" (1990), we go further and consider Pink Bloque's performance as a particular form of drag (Duggan and McHugh, 2002). The term drag is generally used to describe the conscious, often ironic impersonation of the opposite sex (Walker, 2001; Butler, 1990). In this case, the activists did not impersonate the opposite sex, though they certainly parodied the Euro-American ideal of white girly heterosexual femininity. It is why we consider their performance to be 'femme drag.' As Minnie Bruce Pratt (1995) affirms, femme performances play with in/visibility in a way that is different to cross-gender drag. On the one hand, a femme performance in a sea of masculine protesters clad in black makes the performers in question hyper-visible. On the other hand, their radical mission remains invisible until they choose to make it known. The performance of girlieness allows the activists to access the subject position of the "double agent" (Grisard, 2009), effectively blurring the borders between 'us' and 'them,' revolutionaries and conservatives, pinks and blacks. Indeed, femme drag and femme passing's revolutionary potential is intimately tied to an affective reveal, and to the socio-cultural context more broadly.

The thought that went into the design of their costumes and the choreography of their dance routines underscores Pink Bloque's investment in the specific political potential of 'femme drag.' This becomes most apparent in their "7 P's of the Pink Bloque Philosophy," a seven point manifesto detailing their understanding of "protest" and "public space" as much as their stance on "party" and "pinkness and femme-inism". In this vein, the members of the activist group implemented a de-escalation and communication strategy they themselves called 'tactical flirting': active listening, remaining gracious and calm even if the person they struck up a conversation with did not reciprocate. The Pink Bloque's flirty action in response to the media and police

hysteria about the potentiality of protests during the *2002 Transatlantic Business Days* illustrates this well. They devised ‘2 cute 2 be arrested’ patches and handed them out at the protest after their performance. The humorous slogan managed to appease the police, and “had sticking power with the press” who used the catchy and humorous catchphrase as a hook to write about police brutality. According to the activists’ own assessment, the pink outfits, poppy dance routines, and non-confrontational conversation style meant that the public did not view them as ‘foreign bodies.’ Indeed, for them, making the audience feel ‘comfortable’ was an important means, namely to create positive feelings that smoothed the way to getting their message for social change across. Members would also periodically do ‘vibes checks’ with each other. This was to ensure that they had not “lost the tactical flirtability and are about to get in a fight” (Caidor and Greenwald, 2004).

The tactical flirting could be considered a feminist socio-cultural micro-revolutionary practice, one that generates and circulates ‘comfort’ vibes in a quest to change the world ‘one step at a time.’ In their own words: “In 1999 the anarchist black bloc was making news for its direct action tactics at the anti-World Trade Organisation protests in Seattle. The coverage of these actions re-introduced the notion of ‘protest’ into US popular discourse while shifting the image of a protester from 1960’s hippie to 21st century anarchist. In the year 2000, thousands of protesters in pink took to the streets for the anti-corporate globalisation protest surrounding the meeting of the International Monetary Fund in Prague, adding another evocative image to our notions of what protest looked like” (Caidor and Greenwald, 2004). The fact that the group chose to name themselves Pink Bloque seems important in this context, as it exposes the Black Bloc’s implicitly masculinised colour code, and the escalating, violent imaginary of revolution it reproduces. Indeed, their whimsical pink outfits and dancing routines were intended to clash with the grave reasons for the protest. The group’s tactic was to juxtapose the hard world of global finance and the soft cuddly world of pleasure and consumption. The dance troupe members readily admit that they tapped into the ‘Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice’ virtues propagated by much criticised little girl princess culture and Pink Ribbon cancer advocacy (Ehrenreich, 2001 and 2010; King, 2006; Sulik, 2011). However, they were convinced that their use of pink would counteract the critique commonly voiced against this colour, namely that it fosters excessive, frivolous consumption and stabilises the ideal of submissive, passive, and cute femininity. As the dance troupe’s slogan “ya catch more flies with sugar than you do with shit’ underlines, pink femininity can be (mis)appropriated” and subverted (Caidor and Greenwald, 2004). The various statements by members of the group suggest that they were keenly aware of the conditions of possibility of their interventions, and that they were operating within an attention economy (Franck, 1993), where attention has become a scarce commodity. Given the majority of black and grey protesters and the short attention span of passers-by, the use of pink codes clearly increased their visibility. This indicates that the group was conscious of the power of (directing) the gaze, a hot topic in feminist and queer theory (Mulvey, 1975; Halberstam, 2001).

In sum, four aspects of Pink Bloque's embodied revolution are worth noting: (1) they consciously play with the cultural imaginary of revolution and protest, (2) in the process of which they not only render their (mis)appropriations of dominant feminine tropes meaningful, (3) but avail themselves to ostensibly masculine politics of visibility in the logic of today's attention economy while (4) also invoking seemingly feminine and apolitical affects and feelings of lightness and joy. As such, Pink Bloque's 'femme drag' not only formulated an elaborate feminist critique of violent protest forms, it also implemented it.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

In writing this article we were intrigued by the technique of 'fem(me)inisation' that the members of the Pink Bloque resorted to because it seemed to form part of a larger movement criticizing traditional left-wing protest forms. Groups such as Pink and Silver, Pink Bloc, Radical Cheerleaders, Raging Grannies and Code Pink gained visibility in the 2000s by injecting colour, theatricality, dance, humour and an element of surprise into the predictably sombre protest marches at the time (Kutz-Flamenbaum, 2007; Gross and Heaney, 2010). It is against this background that we explored the notion of passing and femme drag as potentially feminist, revolutionary acts. We drew on Walker's understanding of how "the passer [sic!], as a figure of indeterminacy, destabilises identities predicated on the visible to reveal how they are constructed" (Walker, 2001:10), in order to discuss Pink Bloque's femme drag as a politics of in/visibility, double agency and affect.

The sweet, cheery feelings promulgated by Pink Bloque's choreographed dance routines are, to put it in Sara Ahmed's (2004:4) words, not just mushy but "sticky"; they adhere to specific bodies and objects. However, their actions were not just intended to disseminate feelings of comfort and cuteness, their aim was to leave a sour after-taste of social injustice, exploitation, and sexism; feelings that remain bound up with the "absent presence" (Adams, 2010) of consumer culture and feminised conformism. In an economy that places high value on the control of attention and the management of feelings, not just dress and colour but surprise and innovation can become prized instruments of protest. They have the ability to affect contagion; that is they produce an affective and collaborative response. Nonetheless, their performance of seemingly superficial, consumer-friendly femininity runs the risk of being perceived as a neoliberal kind of 'choice feminism' (Ferguson, 2011) of the kind that Naomi Wolf proposes: "we deserve lipstick if we want it, *and* free speech; we deserve to be sexual *and* serious – or whatever we please; we are entitled to wear cowboy boots to our own revolution" (1992:2). In this case, Pink Bloque's intervention could be written off as an individualised consumer choice that not only reproduces ideals of capitalist consumer culture and feminised conformism but also conflates affect and emotion with womanhood, thereby reaffirming the same gender stereotypes and prejudice they set out to critique. Indeed, we argue that Pink Bloque's role as 'double agents' is a double-edged sword. The productive openness, visibility, surprise and confusion facilitated by their seemingly 'feminine' modes of protest underscore that politics can be girly,

tactical, and effective at the same time, and that pink femininity is neither genetically nor politically determined. This may already count as an effective subversion of gendered notions of the political. Indeed, these actions could be read as examples of the postmodern truism that any gender role is performed, as much as it is inextricably intertwined with consumer culture. Moreover, Pink Bloque's 'feminine' tactics could allow us to understand the work that goes into *doing* and *consuming* gender identities on a daily basis.

All the same, flawless gender performances like Pink Bloque's tactical flirting could also be perceived as representations of true feminine essence, which would make the act of passing 'involutionary' instead. Pink Bloque members' performance of innocent girlieness could just as much reinforce gender dichotomies. Furthermore, to read their non-violent tactics as distinctly feminist may contribute to associating feminism with pacifism, thereby reproducing the stereotype of women (and by extension feminists) as pacifist by nature. It would not be the first time that the cliché of the inherently peaceful woman was used to criticise, dismiss and denigrate feminist acts that adopt militant tactics of political intervention. A case in point: The pejorative expression *feminazi* has become popular to describe feminist direct action.

In a similar vein, hailing their interaction with the audience as a particularly seamless tactic of getting the message across may have the undesirable effect of reinforcing the notion of otherness as dangerous. Thereby, racism and stance towards difference is never explicitly critiqued.

However, incorporating feminised cultural references and embodiments in public protest can be productive when it comes to breaking down cultural assumptions that link femininity to weakness, conformity, and consumption. In this sense, Pink Bloque's femme drag could form part of a new, potentially revolutionary repertoire of actions. Notably, it was less their words but their unexpected embodiments that troubled dominant constructions of femininity while, at the same time, reappropriating protest, humour, pleasure, and femininity as formations that weren't mutually exclusive (Berlant, 1997).

Again, with their expert performance of femininity Pink Bloque members' run the risk of reifying gender stereotypes, thus obscuring the sexism still rampant within social movement. In that case, the effect could just as likely be 'involutionary' rather than revolutionary. Why are we insistent on this point? Not all performances are accompanied by a disclaimer that reads: Please proceed with caution. Although, feminist activists might be conscious of the gender stereotypes they embody, they will invariably have only partial control over how their performance is read. Thus, there is no guarantee that their provocative and strategic, humorous, and ironic performance of stereotypical femininity is understood as exactly that: a performance. It could also be (mis)understood as a natural expression of womanhood. Sadly, sexism has yet to be dethroned. Indeed, newer forms of sexism, often labelled 'retro-sexism' (Williamson, 2003), 'ironic sexism' (Quart, 2012), or 'enlightened sexism' (Douglas, 2010) deploy very similar strategies – humour, irony, exaggeration – to some of the feminist radicals

working to de-naturalise stereotypes (Grisard and Maihofer, forthcoming; Mills, 2008). This is obviously not Pink Bloque's fault. However, the persistence and complicated workings of sexism have to be taken into account when designing feminist practices.

Our aim in showing this contradiction is not to devalue the creative and transformative interventions by feminist activists, but to stress that the (counter)revolutionary effect of any action are not implicit in its form. It is thus not enough to come up with a new and improved repertoire of actions but we have to be aware of the effect they may have and shoulder the responsibility of our choices and decisions. Moreover, actions need to be devised with the specific socio-cultural context in mind if they are to have a revolutionary effect. Mapping any queer-feminist action on a dynamic four-dimensional tableau might sound elaborate and involved. However, we argue that a tableau allows us to be attentive to a vast array of elements and actors directly and indirectly involved in a potentially revolutionary process.

Queer-feminist interventions are inscribed in every day practices, and thus made up of collectively embodied and shared differences. Whether their effects are revolutionary can only be discerned retroactively. Our analysis of the Pink Bloque's performance suggests that the practice of passing or 'dragging' is not revolutionary in and of itself. The revolutionary effect depends on the theatricality of the performance and the subsequent reveal. What connects them to other queer-feminist activists of the 2000s is a desire to overcome stark oppositions between anti-capitalist politics that by virtue renounces all sorts of pleasure and a seemingly apolitical media-savvy and spectacle-driven hedonism. Indeed, their revolution can be televised. As the poem-manifesto "Why Do I Need a Revolution?" stresses, revolution also means the freedom to 'dance'; a metaphor for the freedom of movement, expression, and visibility often negated to women and non-normative subjects, the freedom to speak with their bodies or, rather, to embody their messages and emotions.

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Notes

1. Federica and Paloma (pseudonymous) have been interviewed for Biglia (2005) PhD.
2. All Pink Bloque quotes without citation of the source are from their webpage www.pinkbloque.org/newpast.html