Leisure and Life through the Ages

Studies from Europe

Edited by
Ishwar Modi and Teus J. Kamphorst
Mapping Leisure and Life through the Ages in Portugal

Leisure and Sexuality, Mirror Play

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Introduction

This article takes its cue from Kelly’s (1993: 5) claim that ‘Life is sexual, so centrally that few leisure events are devoid of sexual dimensions’. Setting aside the possible exaggeration of this proposition, it has the merit of suggesting that, insofar as it is possible to map leisure through sexuality, leisure can also claim centrality: not just through being mirrored in sexuality, at the same time as sexuality is mirrored in leisure, but above all because it makes us think that social change—over time and down the ages—can be read from a very particular methodological perspective that claims leisure as an analytical dimension.

Following through this idea, this article proposes research that, taking seduction rituals as leisure practices, allows us to question social change by comparing different universes of the imagination associated with these leisure experiences. In other words, a case is made for a methodological perspective which goes beyond taking leisure as an object of study, lassoing it when it gallops past us. To use a cowboy metaphor, the challenge is above all to take leisure as the actual rope that enables us to tie knots of intelligibility in the social arena. Seen in this way, leisure presents itself as an analytical dimension and a methodological perspective. To do this, we take into account the mirror play between sexuality and leisure over time and down the generations. As Hobsbawn (1995) rightly argued, it is through the structure of relations between the sexes and the generations that we can bring to light the most radical cultural changes. And it is here that leisure plays a central methodological role, allowing us to understand the meaning of the ceaseless passing of social and historical time.

Insofar as sexual conquests are associated with illusions of seduction, it is no coincidence that the etymological root of illusion (illusio) is found in the Latin ludere, deriving precisely from ludus (play). Illusions presuppose a capacity to imagine. To imagine a reality means, in a certain sense, to play with it as a possibility. So in analysing seduction rituals and sexual conquest the starting point is provided by basic premises of symbolic interactionism, belonging to a sociology of strategy, based on a framework mapped out by game theory (Fudenberg and Tirole, 1991). The adaptability of this theory to social relations and interactions—and also the existence of playing fields for sexual action and seduction—was fully acknowledged by Coffman (1970: 134–237). At the same time, if we use the definition of play provided by Caillios (1967), we will find that all the respective ingredients are manifest in games of seduction. These games also involve complementary ideas of luck and skill. Assessment of available resources (money, talent, beauty, etc.) and calculation of foreseeable eventualities (an encounter, a message, a mere glance) is accompanied by a different form of speculation: a kind of wager where the outcome is expressed by a risk accepted or an anticipated result.

Taking a long time scale (Braudel, 1983; 1992), I shall first of all analyse courtship rituals in bourgeois milieus in 19th century Portugal, starting out from the proposals position proposed by Simmel (1969), for whom the ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ possibilities of coquetterie, converging on the ‘maybe’, enrobes the coquette in the subjective pleasure of a game into which the man is also drawn. This unit of stimulus, which the ‘maybe’ suggests, circumscribes the entire conduct of the coquette, as is clearly signalled in many minuettes (popular songs) of the period: ‘Naughty man/Kiss away! Don’t chase me…/But come here/D’you want a kiss? Guess where I’m going! Well you won’t get one…/But here’s your kiss’ (Dantas, 1917). This takes us up to the ‘Roaring Twenties’ of the last century and in to Portugal’s lengthy dictatorship (1926–1974), during which time sexuality was subordinated to a severely repressive discursive and ideological order, eventually undermined by youth movements sharing in the ideas of May 1968 (Zancanini-Journel, 2008). With the Carnation Revolution of 1974 we will see that political freedom coincides with times of sexual freedom. This will prompt a discussion of the social values surrounding sexuality in the light of possible generational discontinuities.

My sociological research into historical periods (covering the 19th century and the first three quarters of the 20th century) was based on documentary sources, mostly literary, including etiquette manuals. As there is no alternative, for the historical period in question, to the use of this type of source, we must acknowledge that the information extracted may not be absolutely in step with reality. However, literary sources, although boundless on the fantastic, help to objectify reality, through multiple re(constructions of environments. For the more recent period, corresponding to the last four decades, it has been possible to make use of other sociological approaches, most notably a Survey of Cultural Practices, based on a statistically representative poll of the inhabitants of Greater Lisbon (Pais, 1994), ethnographic studies conducted in old people’s homes and virtual communities (Pais, 2006), analysis of the content of ‘Agrony Aunt’ columns in women’s magazines and, lastly, in-depth interviews with young people (aged 15 to 18) and discussion groups involving young people and, separately, their parents.1 The interviews conducted made it possible to cross-reference discourses and social representations, using a comparative method permitting exploration of generational heterogeneities and intergenerational discontinuities.
Stage-Sets for Seduction in the Romantic Era: The Conquest of Public Space

Until the mid 19th-century, public space was segregated by the type of person frequenting it. The status of a public man was assigned to persons enjoying social prestige, in other words, who deserved public recognition. In contrast, a public woman meant a prostitute, precisely because she circulated in a male-dominated space, with intentions which attracted suspicion. This means that the space assigned to virtuous women was domestic — women should stay at home. At most, they might be permitted to take tea in the house of their female friends (a common habit in bourgeois milieus) or attend religious services. For this precise reason, churches provided the setting for the most cunning games of seduction. If, as Simmel (1969: 27) suggests, the peculiar characteristic of coquetterie lay in its arousing pleasure and desire, by playing with typical antitheses and syntheses — offering and refusing, at the same time, saying yes and no, by symbols and insinuations, surrendering oneself without actually doing so — then this peculiar characteristics of coquetterie is effectively to be found in the religious worship of the 16th and 19th centuries. Suffice it to recall the picturesque way in which eighteenth century nuns would offer sweets through the grille, charming their hungry suitors. The delicacies were savoured as they smiled, sighed, sweet, set riddles and sang serenades to the accompaniment of a guitar (Dantas, 1917: 94–5). Portuguese sweet-making today reflects this monastic tradition, with names such as Nun’s Belly, Love Cakes, Abbots’ Sins, Friar’s Kiss, Angel Delight, St. Catherine’s Sighs, Heavenly Bacon and Postulant’s Tins, amongst other delicacies (Consulgeri and Abel, 1999).

Seduction occurred most frequently in church, and was significantly more difficult outside it, where distance reduced sociability to a minimum. This was the setting for the celebrated ritual of the pinch. The pinch was normally given at the holy water font, although the expert pinch could show off his skill by looking towards the Epistle while pitching toward the Gospel. This operation required considerable expertise, because the iron hoops in women’s dresses protected them from the waist down, meaning that to pull off a ‘seven heaven’ pinch, which was on the hip, the suitor had to learn to slip his hand under the footrails and gently up the whole wire structure. A number of pinchers caught with their hand in ‘heaven’ were exiled to Brazil for debauchery (Pais, 1986: 36–7). Less conspicuous was the ‘breast pinch’, as the daring suitor could bless himself with his right hand whilst surreptitiously raising his left hand to the lady’s breast. As the priest declined from the altar ‘Glória Tibi, Domine’, sharp cries — ‘ai! ai!’ — profaned the silence of the church (Dantas, 1917: 52–3).

Obsessed by ritual, some Portuguese men crossed the boreed to share their pinches with Spanish girls, normally at religious ceremonies — processions or masses — in Madrid, Salamanca or Seville. If a Spanish girl felt a sudden pinch on the hip or the arm, it was common knowledge that a Portuguese man had to be in the environs (Pais, 2002: 212–27).

However, in the mid 19th-century a craze for Parisian fashions took hold in Lisbon and the bourgeois ladyfolk were eager to keep up with the latest trends; The Chiado district of Lisbon, and later the Passeio Público (Public Promenade), were at the centre of attention as bourgeois women made a conquest of public space. The bourgeois taste for showing off in public (in gardens, theatres and promenades) lead women to convey messages through their adornments (Berthelot, 1985: 119). The ribbons and bows worn by ladies at the back of their waist were codified with meanings such as: ‘Follow me, sit’, ‘Pinch me here!’ or ‘Marry me daddy!’ (Noronha, 1926: 34).

When bourgeois women began to circulate in the public areas of the city, previously the territory of truly public women (prostitutes), the circumscript husbands of respectable bourgeois women sensed a waiting danger. What if their wives were to be confused with those other women, the prostitutes? It was at this juncture, in the mid-19th century that legislators started to busy themselves with measures to impose order of public chaos, in order words so that their respectable wives would not be confused with prostitutes. What did they do? They regulated prostitution. Public women were to be ghettoized, on the margins of the urban fabric; at best, they could be tolerated, in special houses designated for this purpose, so that the respectable bourgeois women, the new public women, could walk the streets without being confused with the others (Pais, 2008).

With the turn of the 20th century, bourgeois women started to claim rights previously reserved for men: to play sport, to ride bicycles, to wear trousers and even to smoke. The female body was progressively laid bare. With the fashion for sea bathing, naked legs were seen for the first time on beaches. If a fiancée refused an invitation to the seaside, her suitor immediately suspected that her modesty concealed a fear of exposing her ‘barren hips’ (Almeida, 1927: 219–220). The bathing craze was part of an unceasing campaign for a freer life, in contact with nature. The campaign was embraced by a number of feminists who, dressed in a sporting style, invariably appeared on bicycles (another craze), greeted by approving and disapproving whistles from male onlookers.

Men also, in the late-19th century, took up forms of physical exercised which required ‘semi-nudity’. A fastidious Englishman observed: ‘In Portugal, only spectacular sports appeal (…) They have taken a fancy (…) to foot-ball, which they see as a chance to show off. (…) Yes, because a foot-ball player has the chance to show off his slim form to his beloved (…) Most – indeed all – players take part not for the physical benefits of exercise, but because the matches are attended by their lady friends – and even when the ladies present are not their friends, they are creatures in skirts which is enough to bring the Portuguese male to the boil’ (Kotrav, 1918: 275–6).

The shift from courtship at the window to courtship in the cinema corresponded to a tremendous change in mentalities. The window had served as a meditative function in courtship rituals. This form of courtship was tolerated by more liberally-minded mothers and more acceptable to neighbours, especially the local matrons anxious not to miss an instalment in the drama of their neighbours’ daughters’ romances. Courting couples were so harassed in their attempts to be discreet, that the more cunning among them found ways of frustrating the curiosity of local gossips: either by billers dox which they raised and lowered by strings hanging from the window, or else by means of a tubular contraption based on fundamental acoustic principles, identical to those which later gave way to string telephones and eventually to courtship on the telephone proper. Until the cinema came along, finally bringing courting couples into discreet proximity, away from the maternal eye: ‘Anyone passing by a cinematograph (…) will think
they are witnessing a cannibalistic spectacle (...). Some time before the doors open, the crowds are eagerly pressing forwards, pushing and crashing, in extravagant waves and excitement' (Kotay, 1918: 53). With the venue for cinema, courtship at the window entered into decline. The darkness of the cinema provided a chance for contact in a way formerly unimaginable, with hands exploring legs in queering excitement. But the euphoria of the roaring twenties was to usher in long decades of sexual repression.

The Dictatorship (1926–1974)

In the early 20th century, the female image became simpler and lighter, as women discarded their corsets and girdles. In their place, they adopted short hair, bare legs, lightweight clothing and comfortable shoes, symbolizing the whole change in mentality from traditional bourgeois womanhood. The dance rhythms popular in the early 20th century (fox-trot, one-step, tango, shimmy, etc.) are suited to daring, incandescent tolistex. But in reaction to the 'masculinization' which led women to cut their hair à la garçonne in the roaring twenties, the dictatorship reimposed a puritanical ethic on the body (Pais, 1990: 350–51). In effect, from 1926 to 1974, Portugal lived under a conservative dictatorship which, in the name of morality, sought to deal with sexuality by means of containment. Tradition held out against modernity. Salazar, the charismatic head of government, was opposed to any foreign influences which might perturb the calm of this cultural backwater. The family was one of the regime's ideological banners. In the field of sexuality, great importance was attached to the role of women in sexual reproducton, a role they were expected to play as caring and submissive wives, and self-sacrificing, dutiful mothers. The gestures of everyday life were subject to constant moral scrutiny. For Salazar, a well-behaved woman should not smoke, 'as this was a communist habit'. In 1956, the Ministry of Education prohibited 'women teachers from using make-up', as unbefitting of the 'majesty of their ministry' and these teachers were only permitted to marry if their fiancé displayed good moral conduct (Mónica, 1996: 219). A married woman had few rights. If she wished to travel abroad, she needed her husband's permission, even if she were travelling to join him. Despite the traditional machismo prevailing in Portuguese culture, the newspapers supporting the regime published 'bizarre discussions as to whether men who were chaste were more patent than those who were dissolve' (Mónica, 1996: 219). Dances were discouraged because they could lead young women sterile and pervert their maternal instincts, as well as causing other side effects such as 'sleeplessness', 'tainting', 'circulatory disorders', 'phenomena of self-intoxication', 'spasmodic nervous', 'memory and language disorders', etc. (Faria, 1938: 106). Anomalous behaviour in public -- such as��sing or suspicious hand holding -- was kept in check by the police, in case it undermined 'good customs' (Baptista, 1990: 359).

The commissioner of the proto-fascist Portuguese Youth (Moçidade Portuguesa) movement argued that girls should abstain from sports such as swimming, tennis, water sports and other games which could have a 'demoralizing influence o the virtues we value in our women' (Pimental, 2008: 158). The official publication of this organization even turned its vigilant and censorious eye on young girls' sleeping arrangements. Their bedrooms should be a sacred place: 'The most beautiful ornament (...) is a crucifix and a print of Our Lady. Our bedroom is also our private chapel, where, morning and night, we kneel to pray' (Freire, 2010: 63).

In the 1950s (Portaria [Order] 69035/9 January 1953), Lisbon City Council instituted severe crimes to avoid outrages against public morality, practiced in areas of 'leaky urban vegetation' in the capital. A scale of fines was established, for a corresponding scale of offences of increasing gravity: 'hand in hand; 'hand on that (female sexual organ)'; 'that (genitalia) in the hand'; 'that in that (vaginal penetration)'; 'that behind that (anal penetration)'; and 'with the tongue on that (oral sex)'; the most severely penalized of these moral outrages (Freire, 2010: 125–6).

However, rather than preventing distinct forms of socialization depending on the gender and social condition of the young people involved, sexual morality actually promoted these differences. Boys were therefore encouraged in sexual experimentation, whilst girls were indoctrinated with the need to preserve their virginity. Amongst the upper classes, boys often experienced their sexual initiation with serving girls (Brando, 2010). These girls would make the beds but also lie in them with their employers' sons, happily or unhappily, through fear of dismissal (Freire, 2010: 147–164). In working class milieu, sexual initiation was frequently with prostitutes. Indeed, children were socialized to move early into the adult world, combining the leisure practices of boyhood and manhood. When they started work aged seven or eight, they pocketed their meagre wages with delight, as they would let them go to the circus and see the horses at the fair, but also because they could visit the women at the archery stalls who sold refreshments and kisses. Children who had to contribute their wages to the housekeeping could count on the solidarity of their fellows, and also frequented the fairs. If their money ran out, they would amuse themselves by stealing chicken or fruit from heavily laden orchards. They would spend the money they earned from this on prostitutes. They also played ball, making the ball by stuffing rags into an old stocking, and entertained themselves by bragging about their exploits with women. They would meet in low-life taverns, 'where they played at being men: drinking, gambling and talking football, smoking and swearing' (Gomes, 1971: 148). This was therefore a form of 'socialization by anticipation', a socially mobilized transition to adult life. Unlike boys, girls had great difficulty in separating the domains of sexuality and marriage (Pais, 1990: 162–6). Courtships took place in a local context, such as at factories. This is where girls would first get themselves noticed. Later, they could go to dances at the weekend, although the girls would be accompanied by their mother or an aunt, to keep them in order.

In rural milieux, courtships also grew out of everyday happenings: at fairs and village dances, in the churchyard, at the village tap and during work. For example, after harvests, the villagers would gather at night, around a bonfire, but pride of place would go to the girls of marrying age who, spinning linen with their mothers, were courted by the village lads (mulas), tempting them to set aside their spinning and to join them in singing and dancing. The ecclesiastical authorities banned these public spinning parties, as they brought men and women together at night. In north east Portugal, the festas dos rapazes persisted as an ancient rite of initiation into manhood. Taking its place in the cycle of
Christmas is also known as the festa de carneiros or festa de chocalheiros, as the boys went around with tin masks (caretão), with bells (chocalho) round their waist. The caretão raced after the girls who, once caught, were shaken (chocalhado) in simulations of a sexual act. The masculine identity was celebrated in a festive, transgressive and orgiastic style. This was the domain of sociabilities in which masculine identity was constructed, in a web of complicities which later lived on in the taverns, cafes and brothels. Indeed, the festa dos vapores was an opportunity for boys to escape from their mothers' skirts and be initiated in the vices of manhood.

One of the high points in the festa dos vapores was the loan, comical eulogies peppered with ribaldry and satire, exploring the social concerns of the communities in which they were preached (Godoiho 2006). The loans fabricated unlikely marriages, mixed up social hierarchies, marrying the right to the poor, in a satirical inversion ritual (Turner, 1969). They provided an anarchic parody of the prevailing order to the precise extent to which the anarchy was just a joke. The loan had the purpose of solving a problem, that of marriage, involving family disputes at the root of economic interests and conflicts. Who should marry whom? Who is good enough for the suitor? Who deserves a gifted girl? Through their jokes, the loan unmasked village life. When young people reached marrying age, common sense counselled them: 'If you can marry well, look for one of your own kind'. The young people's parents were also warned by popular wisdom: 'marry your son with your own kind and no one will speak ill of you.'

The rituals of conquest were built into the workings of clandestine reproduction which prevented social mobility.

The Carnation Revolution of 1974: Times of Freedom

With the carnation revolution in April 1974, social mores underwent a clear process of liberalization, creating openness to new ideas and experimentation. With scenes regarded as audacious, broadcasts of the Brazilian soap opera Gabriela, Cava e Canela, scripted by Jorge Amado, almost brought the country to a standstill, and even resulted in the suspension of parliamentary sessions. As tradition lost its grip on the country, everyday life opened up to a diverse range of options and experimentation. In 1994, when Lisbon was European Capital of Culture, a survey of the cultural practices of Lisbon residents, aged 15 and over, clearly pointed to the existence of socio-cultural currents that encouraged processes of personalization, anchored in a desire for individual autonomy. Some of the cultural practices surveyed had been adopted with almost religious intensity. Prayers (a daily practice for 30 per cent of those surveyed) had been overtaken by other cults, such as showering (93% of respondents), shopping (49%), eating cakes (39%), smoking (35%) or phoning friends (33%) (Pais, 1993: 135). Other indicators from the same survey provided recognition of the existence of a field of intervention where a right of personal choice (Mochec, 1993) may be exercised. Hence the growing popularity of diets and investment in personal image, at a time when increasing importance was attached to 'visibility', 'physical fitness' and 'sexual charm' (Featherstone, 1982; Breton, 1992; Czosnok, 1994; Le Gall, 2002). Women led the way in the importance they attached to their personal image, but men were close behind: in the use of cosmetics (71% of women, compared to 42% of men), haircuts (86% vs. 70%), fashion (73% vs. 60%), body shape (74% vs. 67%) or ageing (76% vs. 55%) (Pais, 2000).

Nonetheless, gender differences persist. The mechanisms of attraction are different when respondents are asked about the attributes of an 'interesting woman' or an 'interesting man'. The leading attributes in the case of women were 'expression of eyes or mouth', 'hair or hairstyle', 'how she dressed', in addition to other attributes such as 'cooking ability', 'tenderness' or 'seductiveness'. In contrast, the characteristics most highly prized in men were 'intelligence', 'good with words', 'sense of humour', 'self-assuredness', 'interest in culture', 'material wealth' and 'charm' (Pais, 1995). In other words, the ideal types of man and woman had not yet broken down the traditional representation in which a cultivated and powerful man is matched to a beautiful and expressive woman. However, with the end of the dictatorship, Portuguese women achieved very significant advances, both in education and employment, and in terms of their financial independence. In the field of sexual conquest, women also took up a more active role: 50 per cent of the women surveyed (including housewives and the elderly) revealed the habit of seducing members of the opposite sex (Pais, 1995). A family woman who in former times had taken on the role of seductress - a housewife, a worker in the textile factory, a nurse or a primary school teacher - would almost always be seen as this and worse. For both sexes, society moved away from the time when sexuality was the useful standard and playful eroticism a perversion of this standard.

This liberalising culture has been accompanied by increased demand for relationships and communication, even amongst the elderly, despite the fact that institutions serving the elderly remain relatively intolerant of their users' love lives. In any case, the prolonging of an active sexual life amongst the elderly is possibly one of the most significant changes today in the intimate domain (Boron, 2000). In research into loneliness in old people's homes, I noticed that in the dances held from time to time, not as often as might be desired, leisure presented itself as a strong form of countering loneliness. The dearth of some elderly people is an invitation to bring the ear to the mouth of one's dancing partner, whilst the dancers' bodies are drawn along slowly, supposedly without an 'ulterior motives'. But only very rarely do old people's homes organize dances. The daily life of most of the homes surveyed (Pais, 2000) is strictly regimented: set meal times, set outings to the garden, windows which can only be opened by staff, prohibited card games and silenced laughter. The depletion of the identity of the elderly swings between infantilization (treating the elderly like irresponsible children) and depersonalization (contempt for particular personal needs). Playful forms of leisure are rare. Little or no value is attached by home managers to dance therapy, possibly due to suspicions of 'ulterior motives'. Nonetheless, old people who normally use a walking stick to move around are happy to leave it behind when they got up to dance. Even singing is repressed, as one elderly woman told us: 'They don't want us to sing. Sometimes we sing softly... to amuse ourselves. All Songs we still remember, from when we were girls... Songs that sometimes make no sense at all (laughter). It's true. To pass the time (laughter), to forget the life we have.'

The search for relationships and communication can also be found in virtual communities where people come together to find a sense of belonging (Rheingold, 1994). Under the cover of nicknames and, to a certain extent, free from the control and the barriers of inhibition, internet users can enter and leave
(like in chat rooms) without being identified, or else, with a little daring, invent as many personalities as they are able to imagine. Simulated identities are accordingly common, as is the adoption of multiple personalities, and it is even possible to reduce the same person using different identities and different game plans. This engenders the formation of identities as fictitious as the just-as-fictitious images people form of others, although these identities are real inasmuch as they are the product of the capacity of invention. However, these virtual communities present a phenomenon which, albeit to a different degree, has now been reproduced in real life: relationships are easily disposable. Relationships can be interrupted at any time, and shut down by simply hitting the Esc key. Infidelity lies waiting in every window. You can communicate in several windows at the same time. Each window has the potential for flirtation. On a given channel you can have a (virtual) affair with someone (who is also virtual), whilst paying court to someone else in a different window. All this depends on your capacity for seduction and the time you have available. Relational continuity has been replaced by contingency, unity of identity by fragmentation, authenticity by artifice. Sincerity has lost its meaning and is diluted in indetermination, opening the way for a 'pastiche personality' which, as defined by Gergen (1997), is a social chameleon which continuously borrows fragments of identity from any source, tailoring them to the circumstances. In this case, we find ourselves before 'fantasy game' aesthetic inspired by 'romantic sensibility' (Cobins, 1999).

However, in reality, seduction is associated with fear of rejection. The Agony Aunt sections in certain women's magazines – read openly by women and in secret by many men – suggest an obvious tension between a desire for experimentation fed by undisclosed fantasies and the threat of their realization being rejected. A lady from Porto complained in Maria:

'I'm 38 years old and I have a secret fantasy: to be taken on top of the washbasin in the bathroom. I've already hinted at this to my husband, but he said it was impossible because I'm too fat and the washbasin was new' (Maria, 25 April to 1 May 2001).

The theorists of reflexive modernization (Beck et al. 1994) have taught us that to live in a 'risk society' means to live in a permanent process of calculating the consequences of action. What is more important: a new washbasin or a moment of pleasure? We may also observe confessions which fit into the model of 'reflexive modernization', concerning experimentation which is successful, but normally experienced alone, and not without its own tears. Indeed, one of the reasons why the 'reflexivity of self' produces more exact and penetrating knowledge of the 'self' is because it helps to reduce dependency on others, in the field of eroticism. In the magazine Mulher Moderna, a lady asks apprehensively:

'I saw an advertisement on a foreign television channel which drew my attention to a curious fact. Although I have a satisfactory love life, I have always masturbated using vibrators. The adver I saw was about a mobile phone that vibrated. Could I use mine for this purpose, without harming my health?' (Mulher Moderna, 12 to 18 July 2001).

We already knew that mobile phones were multifunctional. You can use them to talk, send messages, take photos, film, as a personal organizer, alarm clock, etc. But their adaptability to sexual functions clearly shows how far reflexive modernity can go when supported in 'mediated experiences' by new (mobile) technologies. This juxtaposition of heterogeneous components of knowledge or information is what Giddens (1995a) calls the 'collage effect'. The overall experience of modernity means that the intimate characteristics of personal life open up to 'everyday experiences' (Giddens, 1995b: 77) – which no longer depend only on tradition or individual intentions but on various sources of technological interference. In certain brothels in northern Portugal I noticed (Pais, 2011) that some older men with erectile issues made frequent use of sex stimulants, vibrators and dildos (a rubber penis attached to a belt worn around the waist). In a society where macho value still rule supreme, men are obliged to have a sexuality available on a permanent, indiscriminate and compulsive basis. Medical and technological innovations may give a hand.

Values and Generations

We shall now try to explore possible convergences and divergences which may unite or separate generations, in terms of values (Mannheim, 1990). One of the most significant traits has to do with the fact that young people today belong to generation less circumscribed by a given territory: they travel much more, they often go away for the weekend, they are more familiar with new information technologies, they circulate in a wider range of social networks (Lasch, 2005). Another distinctive trait is the increased propensity of younger people to shun commitment. In the past, boyfriends and girlfriends were almost always regarded as potential spouses. The reputation of young girls was regarded as the supreme symbol of emotional and intimate ties, and was watched over by their families, so as to safeguard their honour. Parents exercised strict control over courtships which were consequently conducted 'in secret', or at best 'at the window', with the girl leaning out, and the boy gazing up from the street.

Leticia: Young people used to court at the window...

Artur: In secret! (...)

Leonel: With their brothers and parents chasing after them (...).

Silvio: Having a girlfriend was like being married!

Leticia: So there are people today who are not so old, 50 maybe, for whom the only person they've had in their life is their husband. They haven't had anyone else...

José: When today a young girl aged... it's cute... 16 ...

Artur: Has had some four bushands!!! (laugh). (Interview with a group of young people)

In every generation, amorous encounters go through successive stages, what are known as the 'stages of love (ordo gradus amoris): sight, conversation, touch, kissing and that' (factum) (Witze, 2008: 255). However, young people today will leap through the stages at speed. Formerly, before reaching the factum, there were many torments and trials to endure. As a general rule, boys would only have access to the house of their girlfriend's parents when the relationship was on a relatively stable footing. Today it is normal for girls to
bring male friends and boyfriends home to spend time, sleep and whatever else may be imagined.

Xaruxa: My husband only entered my parents’ house ... a few days before our wedding! Nowadays, girls take their boyfriends... home with them...

Anastácio: (...). Can you imagine me, in those days, taking a boy home to my parents’ house? (Interview with a group of women)

The mothers interviewed generally had the same ideas about young people and generation gaps, with one significant detail: the mothers of boys regard the girls as much more free and easy. If it is true, as argued by Octávio Paz (La Llama Doble. Amor y Erotismo), that there is no true love without freedom for women, it is quite possible that not just the increased capacity demonstrated by girls to attract boys, but also their greater freedom of conquest (or rejection), reflects the storming of the ramparts which was once regarded as transgression but nowadays may (or may not) be a propensity for love or experimentation. A recent survey of sexuality in Portugal showed that in the generation aged 18 to 24 years, only 2.8 per cent of men and 4.7 per cent of women said they had come to sex at a late age (over 17 years), in contrast with the generation aged 55 to 65 years, where the equivalent percentages were 20 per cent and 50 per cent (Ferreira, 2010: 236–7). The bygone days when the sexual initiation of girls took place on their wedding night whilst that of boys occurred at the brothel (Le Gall and Le Van, 2007) are just that: gone. In older generations (that of the grandparents of the young people interviewed), virginity had indeed been sacralised, as a kind of symbolic capital of reputation, discretion and chastity. The generation born in the 60s/70s (the parents’ generation) had laid claim to sexual pleasure and to personal experiences which give rise to the construction of subjectivity (Bozon, 2001). The contraceptive pill contributed decisively to sexual liberation. After the revolution of 1974, pre-marital sex became common, as did children born out of wedlock and teenage pregnancies. The position taken by some of the parents interviewed is sociologically significant when they express acceptance of pre-marital sex as a safeguard for marriage:

‘Sex is very important in a marriage, very important, because if a couple isn’t sexually compatible, I mean... the marriage will suffer, it really will’ (Interview of a group of parents)

The discussion generated amongst the young people on the subject of a popular saying (‘Men in public life, women at home’) provided a test of the persistence of the old ‘masculinity/femininity’ dichotomy, in which a passive and submissive woman (regarded with tend to the domestic sphere) is matched with an active and experienced man (dominating the public domain). Young people showed clear proof that they had broken with this relational model, by calling for democratization of conjugal relations, on an egalitarian and companionship basis (Singly, 1986). But the facetious line taken by the young men (‘I agree, but it’s... the man in the café and the woman in the kitchen’; ‘the man watching football and woman washing the dishes’) also clearly showed that the model has yet to be consigned to history. In this instance, comparison of the attitudes of young people with those of their parents does not always confirm the hypothesis of ‘detraditionalization’ (Helas et al., 1996). The gender gap, in this case, is stronger than the generation gap.

Conclusive Notes
The research conducted suggests that seduction rituals may be taken over, time, as manifestations of strategy games and labels. But these labels are becoming less rigid as a result of social changes which have done away with the heavier constraints which dictated the rules on the coming together of the sexes. Conquest rituals (courtship, display, seduction) continue to lay claim to a comedy of appearance (Maffesoli, 1979: 128) acted out in a ritual of play, closely associated with leisure. However, as envisaged by Bennett (1978), it has also been proven that where a more intense social and public life predominates is also where affinities are most often found between the domains of the theatre and the street, and where social life appears most as theatrical representation (Goffman 1969; Durgnaut, 1981: 9), as happened in courtship rituals in bourgeois milieu in the 18th century.

As we move towards the early 20th century, the personalization of social relations and the affirmation of a personal identity, to the detriment of a play-based and theatrical presence, meant that codes of worldly interaction gave way to codes of mutual recognition, based on subjectivity. This tendency became more marked in the sixties and subsequent decades when opportunities for social mobility became more real. Fresh importance was attached to appearance, to the need for social recognition (Perrot, 1984: 95). Prestige is conquered by the ability to ‘show off’ and to ‘impress’ (Ishem, 1995), which is achieved through an idealized personal style and appropriate bodily postures. More than just a gift, innate or revealed, presence is strategically and patiently constructed through investment. A successful presence is also developed in interaction in the way in which styles become fashionable or give rise to processes of stigmatization. Adolescence is today the age when identity starts to be invested in the manner of dress (Gallard, 2006) – i.e. in bodily codes and distinctive adornments. When they have a conquest in view, they project bodily poses – the posture of a body which is intended to be expressive: a walk, a particular style of carrying a backpack, a way of smiling, a special hairstyle, a cologne to irritate a singular presence – in short, repeated acts that assign symbolic value to the ‘techniques of the body’ (Mauss, 1992). Depending on the person’s haircut, the way they shake their head, to keep their highlighted hair out of their eyes, may become a tick revealing originality of presence. Then they have to use their gaze with skill, catching the attention of the person they want to seduce. Knowing how to wield the tactile effects of a significant glance means committing to mutual recognition, borne out by smiles, surreptitious looks and bodily touching. The attention of the other is attracted by the gaze that attracts. It is also important to master new forms of communication, by phone and face to face. This is where we find the attribute of lúbia (smooth talk, powers of persuasion). Smooth talking is connected to a set of seduction strategies concealed in spoken language. Smooth talkers are able to play with words and the ideas or half-ideas they can convey. An invitation to a café, to a concert, to a shopping mall or, more daringly, to come home to do homework but not just for homework, are artifacts sending out subliminal invitations to realizing desires which make use of a figure of speech (syncdoche) which, explicitly, only refers to part of a whole range of possibilities. The part signifies the whole, inviting
thought to leap over what is actually said in pursuit of the unsaid but implied. And the unsaid is what is concealed as a seduction strategy: the possibility of going further. Language has instituted itself as a rhetorical power that wins over interlocutors through persuasion, sense of humour or seduction. Smooth talk means being able to create imaginary worlds, to affirm subjectivities, to produce meanings, all through words. Smooth talking is regarded as being as essential as having a contraceptive.

Comparing the courtship rituals of the 19th century with those of today, we can point to a de-ritualization of seduction, as it traditionally occurred: standardized and walled in by labels. Seduction today is based on the contrasting qualities of lovers. Contrast, of course, is based on difference. And difference points in turn to originality. In the Romantic period, the prevailing mode of seduction was ritual. The period was fertile in etiquette manuals which taught seducers complex rules of conduct which they had to follow to the letter: how to walk, greet, write a bilhet dous, handle a fan, cane, hat, etc. Etiquette manuals gave way in turn to photographic novels, radio soap operas, television soaps and, finally, brochures that catalogue all the most varied position of the act which is euphemistically called ‘making love’. The important thing, for the modern seducer, is to have the talent of being original. It is necessary to be surprising, fun, different. This is the secret of seduction in today’s world: there is not single formula. At the same time, women have taken an increasingly active role in seduction rituals. Large numbers of publications are marketed to women in bookshops and supermarkets, advertising seduction techniques and teaching them to arouse male interest. This is not to say that women were not previously seducers. They clearly were. Especially when they pretended not to be. But women are now open about pursuing seduction. So it would seem that seduction has ceased to be a ‘male preserve’. Indeed, it probably never was one. Or rather, society is increasingly permissive about women taking on the role of seducer. A few decades ago, the prevailing morality would not have countenanced such a situation.

We have also found that amorous relationships are more fleeting, experimental, permeable to diffuse sentiments, confused and profuse. Just the other day I saw too books on sale, side by side, one of them entitled ‘The Smart Girl’s Guide to Driving Men Crazy’ (by Jamie Callan) and the other with the opposite title of ‘How to Dump a Guy’ (by Kate Fillion and Ellen Ladowsky). Courtships were previously selective and long term. Today they tend to be fleeting and superficial, disposable even. Indeed, the very word namoro (the tradition Portuguese term for the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship) is falling out of use. Instead of a long-term commitment, the emphasis is on the present, and having a good time. Sexuality is no longer geared merely to reproduction, and sexual satisfaction is no longer an issue to nature, as once thought. The natural thing is to make love. The artificial thing is to have children—or to make every effort not to have them, using artificial means of contraception. Old age is also a period which today provides more opportunities for the imagination and for living out sexuality. There is less conformity to social stereotypes and a greater diversity of affective possibilities. In any case, seduction continues to set the imagination free, and not just in virtual relations mediated by computer. Reality is outweighed by the image we construct of an other, reducible to ideализation that foments the jumble of desire. The other shimmerers and twirls in the image bestowed on it by imagination. Does this mean we are living in a neo-Romantic era? As Giddens (2005c) has suggested, romantic love is the precursor of pure relationships—relationships based on emotional equality between the genders—even if these may come into conflict with romantic love. At the same time, despite new sensibilities relating to affection and sexuality, amorous conquests continue to be made with strategic advances and retreats, through reconnaissances and siege, feints, intuition and bluff. The persistently playful, game-like character of seduction is food for thought. Just as the arts of seduction remind us of problem solving in algebra where the solution is contained in the actual enunciating of the problem, the deciphering of the unknown represented by seduction involves finding the most elegant demonstration and logical path to reaching the answer. Leisure may be an interesting route when taken as a methodological lever in our understanding of social phenomena.

Notes

1. This study, still unpublished, was carried out under the Youth Observatory (Portugal). The fieldwork was completed in 2009, comprising interviews of 50 young people in five groups of six to nine members each, and 18 in-depth group interviews with young people from rural and urban milieus. The parents (also a total of 18) were interviewed in three discussion groups. Both the individual interviews and the group interviews had a duration of between 50 and 90 minutes.

2. Significantly, an etymological breakdown of the word culture reveals its religious essence, as it points us to the Latin cultus, referring to the idea of ritual, daily practice and repetitiveness, attributes that characterize rituals of a religious nature.

References