

Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy 21

# Ritual in a Digital Society



EDITED BY

MARTIN HOONDEERT & SUZANNE VAN DER BEEK

# **Ritual in a Digital Society**

Edited by Martin Hoondert & Suzanne van der Beek

# Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy 21

## Published by

Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies, Protestant Theological University  
Institute for Centre for Religion and Heritage, University of Groningen

## Secretary

IRiLiS

De Boelelaan 1105

1081 HV Amsterdam

PO box 7161

1007 MC Amsterdam

Phone: 020 5984744 | E-mail: [irilis@pthu.nl](mailto:irilis@pthu.nl)

## Orders

Centre for Religion and Heritage, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Oude Boteringestraat 38

9712 GK Groningen

Phone: 050 3634587 | E-mail: [icce@rug.nl](mailto:icce@rug.nl)

## Editorial board

prof.dr. Marcel Barnard (editor in chief, Amsterdam/Stellenbosch), dr. Mirella Klomp (Amsterdam), prof.dr. Joris Geldof (Leuven), dr. Martin Hoondert (Tilburg), dr. Andrew Irving (Groningen), prof.dr. Paul Post (Tilburg), prof.dr. Thomas Quartier (Nijmegen/ Leuven), prof.dr. Gerard Rouwhorst (Utrecht/Tilburg), and prof.dr. Eric Venbrux (Nijmegen).

## Advisory board

prof.dr. Sible de Blaauw (Nijmegen), prof.dr. Bert Groen (Graz), prof.dr. Benedikt Kraneman (Erfurt), dr. Jan Luth (Groningen), prof.dr. Peter Jan Margry (Amsterdam), prof.dr. Keith Pecklers (Rome/Boston), dr. Susan Roll (Ottawa), and prof.dr. Martin Stringer (Swansea).

ISBN: 978-94-6375-464-4

ISSN: 1571-8808

NUR: 612

Printed by: Ridderprint BV, the Netherlands

Lay-out: Carine Zebedee

Cover design: Karin Berkhout (photo: Cynthia Lieshout)

© 2019 selection and editorial matter: Martin Hoondert and Suzanne van der Beek;  
individual chapters: the contributors.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever without prior written permission from the author and publishers.

## Contents

1	Introduction	1
	<i>Martin Hoondert &amp; Suzanne van der Beek</i>	
2	Studying ritual in contexts of online grief and bereavement: Methodological considerations	27
	<i>Nicolas Matthee</i>	
3	Spontaneous morality development in online affinity spaces for neighborhood commemoration	45
	<i>Mike de Kreek</i>	
4	Post-Camino storytelling: Navigating transformation in a digital age	65
	<i>Suzanne van der Beek</i>	
5	The algorithms of personalized funeral rituals	81
	<i>Janieke Bruin-Mollenhorst</i>	
6	Death and death rituals in digital games	95
	<i>Karin Wenz</i>	
7	Gay Victims & Heroes: Narratives of identity in online 9/11 memorials	109
	<i>Sarah J. Griffiths</i>	
8	Online education: Online pesantren	123
	<i>Wahyu Ilaihi</i>	
	About the authors	141

This publication was made possible thanks to financial support from the Sormani Fonds

## Introduction

*Martin Hoondert & Suzanne van der Beek<sup>1</sup>*

Every evening Martin's eldest son concludes the day with Snapchat, sending his friends pictures of himself or other short messages. For him, this is important and he really hates it when his parents ask him to stop snapchatting and to go to bed. In his experience, this Snapchat community is a valid and valued extension to his offline experiences of community in e.g. the classroom. It is not about content – there are hardly any relevant messages; it is not primarily a process of communication, but a way of being in the world with friends. For him, this Snapchat community is as real as being together in the same classroom. Concluding the evening with sending and receiving snippets and pictures confirms the friendship. That experience is important, especially at his age of 15 years at which identity and friendship are keywords in a process of growing and maturing (Buckingham, 2008).

### **Living in a digital age**

This example illustrates the central position that digital activities have taken in our day-to-day lives. Within a relatively short period of time, our processes of cultural production, distribution, and reception have been (re)shaped by digitalization. This new infrastructure has profoundly changed the modes of interaction in societies worldwide, creating an altogether new and continually changing panorama of cultural processes. A large part of our day-to-day activities involves a combination of offline and online actions. Everyday life therefore takes place at the offline-online nexus. This intermingling of offline and online activities and ways of being in the world has become so normal that it seems

---

<sup>1</sup> We thank our colleagues Odile Heynders and Jan Blommaert for their comments on an earlier version of this Introduction.

unnecessary to state that we live in a digital age. Of course we do! The certainty with which we feel this notion to be true, might indicate that in fact we have already entered a ‘postdigital age’, to use Miriam Rasch’s vocabulary. ‘Post-digital’ does not mean that we are *beyond* the digital era, but that the digital is so obvious that we can not separate it from the non-digital. Rasch writes:

Everything is online, online is everything. In just a few decades, all aspects of life have been transformed by the internet, from education to work, from friendship and love to suffering and death. A boundary between a real and a virtual world has long since ceased to exist: life has been mediated through and through. (Rasch, 2017, back cover; translated from Dutch)

Rasch’s notion of the postdigital resonates with our observations about the advanced integration of online dimensions in most of our interactions with the world. Based on lived experience, it has indeed become hard to think of notions like offline and online as if we could separate them from one another. However, from an academic perspective it remains productive to hold on to these concepts, because they allow us to critically evaluate the ways in which offline and online processes and practices are intertwined. Therefore, we will not use Rasch’s concept of the ‘postdigital’. Rather, we prefer to speak of a culture at the ‘offline-online nexus’. When we discuss the broader context in which these interactions take place, we will be using the terms ‘digital culture’. This terminology is applied in order to critically discuss the cultural practices that are a result of a lived reality in which offline and online dimensions are felt to work together seamlessly.

## Digital rituals

The shift in cultural practices towards a blending of offline and online dimensions, also affects rituals. For clarities sake, we use the term ‘digital ritual’ to refer to ritual practices that take place anywhere at the offline-online nexus. We use the term ‘online ritual’ in examples where the online dimension of the ritual is key. We begin by exploring the former, which makes use of different combinations of offline and online environments and affordances. We illustrate this by a short exploration of different types of digital rituals. We might start with the tutorials that abound on the internet. These can be found on specialized websites or through platforms such as YouTube. These so-called ‘How to...’ clips and websites provide information on the proper ways to perform a certain

ritual, usually a traditional religious ritual. Just one example of this is the website Muslim Funeral Services that gives detailed instructions about the ‘Ghusl procedure’: the washing and shrouding of a deceased Muslim. In these online tutorials, offline and online dimensions are directly linked, for they provide online information and guidelines to assist people performing an offline ritual in a proper manner. Other websites with a similar function do not provide canonical information, but rather provide ideas and suggestions to design a new ritual. For example, ritual coaches or counsellors may set up websites to attract clients and to help them design their own ritual, e.g. for a wedding or the welcoming of a newborn. An example is the website of ritual counsellor Annegien Ochtman-de Boer. Her website is an accompaniment to her book *Nieuwe rituelen (New Rituals)* (2015) and provides inspiration on how to design a divorce ritual, a funeral, or a wedding. The connection between online and offline dimensions remains the same here: information is shared online to guide the execution of a (mostly) offline ritual.

In other cases, we find a reversal of this situation: the offline ritual here precedes the online information. Digital recordings of rituals, once offline performed, are shared on photo- and video-sharing platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. One might think of the widely spread accounts of the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, that took place on May 19, 2018.<sup>2</sup> These digital rituals make use of the archival function of the internet to make available to a large public those rituals that are performed offline through online representation. As in any representation there is an added layer of creative agency and curation in this, a series of choices to be made in terms of selection and editing that allow the person or institution who posts these recordings to an online environment, to present the ritual within the desired frame.

In yet another combination of offline and online affordances, we find that the online account does not precede the offline ritual or the other way around. Rather, the two occur simultaneously. Take for example the official website of the grotto in Lourdes,<sup>3</sup> in which a permanent webcam is fixed to present the current situation in the French shrine to anyone with access to the internet. What is more, the website provides an agenda which the digital visitor can consult to know when a certain ritual will be performed at the shrine. This suggests that the visitor might tune in at the moment a certain mass will be celebrated in order to participate via this webcam through livestreaming. This particular offline-

---

<sup>2</sup> E.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMDtOgjQtX0> (accessed September 11, 2019)

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/>



online nexus can also be found in livestreaming websites and apps like Skype and WhatsApp that facilitate distant friends and family to join in e.g. a funeral in real time. Again, this possibility suggests that one might partake in an offline ritual through online affordances. Here we come to an interesting situation, because it shows how the offline and online dimensions become integrated in a ritual practice. Whereas in earlier examples we might argue that the online affordance plays second fiddle to the offline enactment of the ritual, we start to find here rituals in which the one does not take precedent over the other. We find both an offline and an online ritual at the same time: there is a funeral taking place within an offline context that people participate in, while simultaneously the distant son participates to the funeral of his father through livestreaming on his computer or smartphone.

Lastly, we refer to rituals in which the actual performance largely takes place online. In this category, websites and social media applications function as ritual sites themselves, becoming vehicles for participating in online rituals. Some examples are: praying in an online church like the Church of Fools (later St Pixels),<sup>4</sup> performing a wedding in Second Life (Heidbrink, Miczek, & Radde-Antweiler, 2011),<sup>5</sup> or commemorating a beloved deceased at the World Wide Cemetery.<sup>6</sup> In these examples, online affordances are used not to instruct or record offline rituals, but in order to provide an alternative to offline rituals. There is no offline activity to which these rituals refer, although of course there is still a reliance on offline actions (someone sits behind a computer, someone clicks a mouse, et cetera).

Here we might come back to our earlier note on terminology. Let's take the example of the rituals performed at the shrine in Lourdes, which is extended online through the use of a webcam. We can discuss this practice in different ways. We might argue that there is only one ritual that takes place, in which people participate through different means, either by participation in the direct offline context at Lourdes, or by participation at home in the mediated online context at Lourdes-france.org. We could refer to this fusion of offline and online participation as an example of the ways in which distinctions between those dimensions have disappeared. However, research indicates that these different ways of participating are not directly comparable (Ana & Sonia, 2017; Machackova & Serek, 2017). Participation through a website does not have the

---

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved July 25, 2019, from <http://www.stpixels.com/>

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved July 25, 2019, from <https://secondlife.com/destinations/romance/wedding>

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved July 25, 2019, from <https://cemetery.org/>

same meaning or impact as participation through offline means. This is not to argue that one experience is more valuable than the other, but to argue that the specific mix of offline and online features of a ritual impacts the experience of that ritual.

While writing about their research on internet rituals, Marga Altena, Catrien Notermans, and Thomas Widlok state: ‘Despite the alleged modernity of the medium, the Internet, including its rituals, draws on existing traditions and cultural conventions’ (Altena, Notermans, & Widlok, 2011, p. 134) This is undoubtedly true. Rituals that emerge on the internet make use of the ritual repertoire that has been developed in offline contexts over the last centuries: websites offer the opportunity to ‘light a candle’ online, or allow one to ‘e-mail a prayer’ – activities that are clearly inspired by offline rituals. However, the internet has also led to new, sometimes unexpected rituals. These activities do not necessarily fit the often-used definition of ritual as being a traditional and institutionalized performance (which will be discussed in the next section of this Introduction), but they do fit the notion of a ritual as a meaning-making practice, rule-guided, more or less formalized and stylized. We started this Introduction with an example taken from the everyday life of Martin’s son. It is tempting to compare this kind of activity with existing, offline rituals such as saying a prayer before going to bed or meditating on what you did that day. But that would be to miss the core of this ritualized behavior, which is both serious (maintaining friendship) and playful (sending silly pictures), and which differs from any other ‘end of the day’ practice by its rapidity in the back and forth of the messages and the massive amount of contacts and pictures involved.

The risk of comparing (new) digital rituals with (old) offline rituals is to maintain the dichotomy of offline and online culture while at the same time to remain blind to the characteristics and dynamics of rituals in the digital age. As said, we try to avoid these risks by taking the intermingling of offline and online culture seriously, or, to state it more precisely: to acknowledge that life takes place at the offline-online nexus. We see digital rituals not primarily as a variation on offline rituals, but first as rituals that are shaped within a digital context that is always a mixture of offline and online dimensions. Culture, and more specific: ritual, at the offline-online nexus evokes new questions, because it contains new rules, new possibilities, and new limitations. This context is not characterized by taking place online, but rather by interactions between offline and online activities, offline practices and online presentation, offline longing and online fulfilment. In digital culture and digital rituals, offline and online are

always linked, and it is the different ways in which these connections occur that we are interested in in this volume.

The chapters in this book explore digital rituals through a range of different case studies. The remainder of this Introduction explores rituals at the offline-online nexus from a theoretical perspective. First, we elaborate on the concept of ritual. We use the definition of ritual as phrased by our colleague Paul Post, but reconsider the elements of his definition from the perspective of offline-online dynamics: How to conceptualize ritual at the offline-online nexus; what are the pitfalls in exploring and analyzing digital practices *as ritual*? What concepts are useful in the study of rituals at the offline-online nexus? Do we need to re-define and re-invent concepts like authenticity, community, transformation, and liminality in this context? Second, we explore the so-called ritual fields within a digital context. With 'ritual fields' we refer to the classic categorization of rituals in more or less coherent domains, such as: religious rituals, commemorative rituals, leisure culture rituals, art rituals, and life-cycle rituals.

## **Defining ritual**

Ritual is a broad concept; scholars from disciplines such as religious studies, anthropology, liturgical studies, and theatre and performance studies have all studied rituals from their perspectives. Together they form the field of ritual studies which has developed over the past forty years. Rituals can be found wherever people are. In everyday language, the term ritual can have a negative connotation when it is used to describe repetitive and useless acts. However, ritual studies, taken as an academic perspective, looks at ritual as a cultural phenomenon and focusses on the structures, meanings, and functions of civil and religious, collective and individual rituals. It is the latter approach that we will follow.

Defining rituals might imply that there are clear-cut boundaries to the notion of a ritual. In reality, these boundaries can differ depending on the context that is being studied (Grimes, 2014, p. 196). However, there are common criteria, characteristics, or qualities that can be ascribed to rituals, to work towards a so-called polythetic definition of ritual. This approach to defining ritual is derived from Snoek (2006). A polythetic definition works with a set of characteristics that may be applied but do not necessarily have to be applied, as opposed to a monothetic definition that uses exclusive criteria which all have to be applied in all cases. A broad and polythetic definition that would suit the context of rituals

and the spiritual dimension of care, is a definition that Paul Post developed based on Ronald Grimes's work:

Ritual is a more or less repeatable sequence of action units which take on a symbolic dimension through formalization, stylization, and their situation in place and time. On the one hand, individuals and groups express their ideas and ideals, their mentalities and identities through these rituals, on the other hand the ritual actions shape, foster, and transform these ideas, mentalities and identities. (Post, 2015)

Characteristics that can be derived from this definition are repetition, enactment, symbolism, formalization, and stylization. The second part of the definition focusses on possible functions of rituals such as the expressive, social, and ethical functions that rituals can have. Despite the suggestive use of words like 'definition' and 'characteristics', this phrasing does not allow for a straightforward identification of a ritual. Grimes (1990) states that when an act becomes dense with ritual characteristics one can speak of ritualization or even a ritual. Whether or not an act is acknowledged as a ritual is not a matter of definition but is rather a cultural issue.

### ***Tradition, body, and community***

In the more commonly used definition of rituals, there are certain characteristics that more or less concern *form* or manifestation, including the notions of tradition, body, and community. The central role these characteristics hold in our understanding of rituals might hinder the development of ritual studies in the context of the digital society, because many digital rituals consist of actions that scholars might not recognize as *ritual* practices. Are we participating in a funeral when we watch it on our smartphone? If not, then why not? In the following, we will discuss the position of tradition, body, and community within digital rituals.

In many approaches to ritual, tradition is key. Altena notes: 'For some, rituals are old, traditional, and constant, while the Internet is contemporary and dynamic' (Altena et al., 2011, p. 133). Ronald Grimes, in his book *Reading, Writing, and Ritualizing* (1993), proposes to renew our view of rituals. He asks some critical questions regarding the study of rituals, the first of which reads (Grimes, 1993, pp. 5–22): Is ritual necessarily traditional? People who engage in ritual practices often deny the inevitability of rituals. What is more, some ritual studies scholars make tradition part of the definition of ritual, defining ritual as the enactment of tradition. Grimes cites Stanley Tambiah's definition

of ritual as ‘a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication [...] content and arrangement are characterized in varying degrees by formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition)’ (Grimes, 1993, p. 8). The notion of ‘tradition’, although not explicitly mentioned, is clearly implied in terms as ‘culturally constructed’ and ‘conventionality’. Grimes does not argue that ritual cannot be traditional, but stresses that it is also invented, new, and creative. This also counts for digital rituals: some are traditional and very much linked to older, strictly offline practices; others are new, resulting from (sometimes unexpected) affordances of technology or evolving from new cultural practices into ritual or ritual-like behavior.

A second formal characteristic of the definition of ritual which might hinder studying digital practices *as ritual* is the body. Altena explains that the ‘isolated user of the Internet, cut off from direct interaction with fellow humans, is far removed from the smells, sounds, and sights of rituals experienced in socially shared, bodily experience’ (Altena et al., 2011, p. 133). Catrien Notermans, who studied the website of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, argues against the possibility of replacing the physical pilgrimage to Lourdes by an online pilgrimage, mentioning the body as the main point of difference:

Traveling in organized pilgrimage groups, people can listen to each other’s stories of pain and suffering and offer each other a shoulder to cry on. This performance of pain and mourning is essential to the healing process during pilgrimage. The meaningful sequence of ritual activities that brings about emotional healing during the pilgrimage process, as well as sensory experiences such as smelling incense, witnessing each other’s physical suffering, experiencing bodily exhaustion, hearing pilgrims’ stories and the familiar chants in church, and touching or embracing the grotto all contribute to the profound physical and emotional experience of an actual pilgrimage to Lourdes that virtual pilgrimage cannot offer. (Altena et al., 2011, p. 147)

In a certain sense it is true that some digital rituals are disembodied, or more precisely: less embodied. But it is better to say that the body is involved in other ways than in offline rituals. By focusing too much on what is visible on the screen, we overlook that digital rituals take place at the offline-online *nexus*. The phenomenal rise of the selfie (see Snapchat, Instagram, Tinder) shows how the body is represented in an online environment. Martin’s eldest son, sending snapchat messages at the end of each day, is very aware of his body when he

takes pictures of his body from the waist up with specific facial expressions. On a more physical level we see participants in a predominantly online pilgrimage to Lourdes sing along in front of their screens, mumble prayers, or complete a physical walk before entering the online representation of the grotto (Post & Van der Beek, 2016, p. 48).

A third formal characteristic of the definition of ritual which might hinder studying online practices *as ritual* is community. Altena e.a. (2011) refer to the 'isolated user of the Internet', but with the current possibilities of social media there are serious reasons to presume that the so-called 'isolated user' is embedded in a (worldwide) community of people. One is never alone or isolated on the internet. Our colleague Jan Blommaert wrote a fascinating chapter about a so-called 'lone wolf': Elliot Rodger, the 22-year-old man who shot six people and took his life in a campus shooting in Santa Barbara, California, in May 2014. Rodger left a long memoir documenting in detail the journey he made from childhood to his 'Day of Retribution'. An analysis of this text shows that Rodger was not someone who communicated easily in offline contexts, but that he lived an intense online life in which games, movies, and misogynist platforms known as the 'Manosphere' figured prominently. It was in this online world that the women who rejected him became enemies and criminals, as did the men who were more successful in dating these women. Rodger, in other words, constructed a logic of action in the online world, leading to what he saw as justified revenge and punishment in the offline world. After the killings, he himself, in turn, became an online icon in the Manosphere, a template to be followed. Blommaert's analysis shows the complex interactions between online and offline spheres of knowledge and action, in new types of knowledge-focused communities (Blommaert, 2019). Rodger's online practices are not to be considered rituals, but Blommaert's analysis can be fruitful for ritual studies scholars. First, he makes clear that online social interaction has to be taken seriously. Rodger was acting on his own when he shot his victims and was as such a lone wolf; but he was embedded in a community in which – and that is the second point we learn from Blommaert's analysis – his identity was formed. Here, Blommaert follows Blumer: '[...] social interaction is a process that *forms* human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct' (Blumer, 1969, p. 8). Taking part in an online ritual is a form of social interaction, it acts upon the participants, enriches their knowledge, and forms their identity. They become part of a community of those who have learned the rules; learning – by just partaking in an online ritual or by first following a tutorial – leads to socialization and a sense of belonging. Once

again, Martin's son, snapchatting at the end of the day, is a good example. Partaking in this daily practice provides him with the opportunity to understand himself within that digital community and develop self-awareness.

In using Blommaert's analysis of the Rodger case, we have shifted from characteristics to functions of ritual. We consider rituals first and foremost as performative practices. Here, we follow, among others, Catherine Bell:

[...] the study of ritual as practice has meant a basic shift from looking at activity as the expression of cultural patterns to looking at it as that which makes and harbours such patterns. In this view, ritual is more complex than the mere communication of meanings and values; it is a set of activities that construct particular types of meanings and values in specific ways. (Bell, 1997, p. 82)

In the field of digital rituals, concepts and definitions from ritual theory have been continually turned over and undermined by the ways in which people perform ritual activities in a digital culture. Therefore, it will be more productive to focus on practices that we find in these cultures and study the functions they carry. This does not mean that we are not interested in developing a theoretical understanding of these practices, but rather that we are primarily interested in understanding these practices as they happen before we either welcome them into, or ban them from the field or ritual studies. Here, we follow Durkheim's epistemology, as outlined by among others Anne Rawls (1996): fundamental categories, like 'ritual', follow from the study of concrete empirical details of enacted practices. So, we need to investigate and re-investigate practices each time anew, checking traditional and existing features, characteristics and functions against new and evolving ones.

### ***Liminality and transformation***

Certain traditional characteristics of rituals seem to obstruct the development of a theoretical understanding of online practices *as rituals*, such as the notions of tradition, body, and community. In the previous section we have discussed these characteristics and showed how they might also be understood to enrich and challenge the study of digital rituals, taking the specifics of online interactions seriously. There are other, equally well-regarded conceptions of rituals that support this. These theories do not focus on rituals as formalized and traditional but rather look at the transformative qualities of rituals. This notion of transformation can play out both within the ritual repertoire, meaning that rituals change and develop over time, and in the effect rituals have on the people,

objects, and context that play a role in the ritual. The latter notion is most famously captured by the notion of ‘liminality’, as proposed by Victor and Edith Turner (cf. Turner, 1967, pp. 93–111; 1969; 1974). It refers to an experience of ‘in between-ness’ while transitioning from one situation into the next. This category, of being ‘betwixt and between’, defies recognized hierarchies and structures. Attributes of people in a liminal state ‘are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space’ (Turner, 1969, p. 95).

The notion of liminality was one of the first concepts from ritual studies to be mobilized in order to understand online experiences. In studies with suggestive titles like *Cybergrace* (Cobb, 1998), scholars would attempt to grasp the presumed liminal experience of entering ‘cyberspace’. These studies are interested in conceptualizing the internet as a place for ‘virtual experiences’ in the line of Turner’s theory of liminality. For example, Rob Shields, in his book *The Virtual*, sees in the internet a continuation of a long tradition of virtual environments:

Retrospectively, it is clear that there has been a history and succession of ‘virtual worlds’ which anticipate the information and communication technologies to make present what is both absent and imaginary. [...] Virtual space is not only betwixt and between geographical places in a non-place space of telemediated data networks, but participants take on ‘usernames’ or identities, and many surreptitiously engage in activities they might not otherwise consider.’ (Shields, 2003, pp. 11–13)

The usefulness of this model became increasingly questionable when the interaction with online environments became less of an exception and more of an integrated part of day-to-day life. Today, it is hard to imagine that we might experience opening the internet browser on our laptops as an act of defiance to social structures or as a step away from our stable identities and into an unimaginable web of possible manifestations. However, the notion of liminality is still relevant to our understanding of digital rituals today, precisely because it forces us to look out for notions of change and transition.

This dynamic outlook, that occupies such a central role in the theory of liminality, does not only apply to ritual participants, but also to the ritual practices themselves. Rituals, especially when understood as cultural practices, have always changed and developed over time. When societies develop and cultural



values change, ritual desires develop accordingly, and ritual practices are re-shaped to fulfill a different function. These shifts can range from impressively large to changes so subtle that they are hardly noticeable. One might think of the need for new rituals when divorces became more common, or of the new types of rituals that evolve when funerals are being held outside a religious setting. As commonsensical as this sounds, however, transformation of rituals can raise complicated questions, such as: what elements of a ritual can be changed, before the ritual starts to lose its essence? Does a ritual have an unquavering essence, or does it consist of a configuration of characteristics that can slowly be transformed into something completely different from what it started out as? In her important volume *Ritual* (1997), Catherine Bell describes this process in the context of liturgical changes considered by the Catholic Church in the 1960s:

It was clear that ritual changed over time; therefore, some parts of the liturgy were historically ‘accidental,’ that is, more a matter of circumstance than revelation. It also seemed clear that rites needed to change to some extent in order to remain relevant to changing communities. To sanction such changes, however, it was necessary to know what parts of Christian liturgy were ‘accidental,’ human, and fallible—and therefore legitimately alterable—and what parts were divine, revelatory, and therefore beyond human tampering. (Bell, 1997, p. 361)

We can easily translate this conversation to discussions on the (im)possibility of rituals in an online environment, including emerging everyday rituals like ending the day with snapchatting. Take for example the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. The contemporary manifestation of this ritual is hard to grasp as it is understood as a free and highly personalized experience. For some it is a journey of social encounters, for others one of individual silence; for some it is a journey towards God, for others a secular journey towards better self-awareness; et cetera. While some voice resistance to this hermeneutically open manifestation of the pilgrimage, most pilgrims chose to celebrate rather than criticize it. However, when researchers started to explore the notion of a ‘cyberpilgrimage’ (cf. Campbell, 2001; Helland, 2002; Hill-Smith, 2011; MacWilliams, 2002), the resistance was great. Both pilgrims and academics would argue that such a thing was a *contradictio in terminis*. The difficulty in the ensuing discussions, was that there is no real consensus about what defines a ‘pilgrimage’. The transformation that was occurring in this field therefore inspired not merely reflections on the phenomenon that was developing, but also

very fundamental discussions on the nature of pilgrimage and whether this ritual had any building blocks on which it relied for its ritual identity. These discussions pop up everywhere we find processes of ritual transformation and can help us to understand these practices more deeply.

Within ritual studies, much attention has been paid to the notion of tradition, as we discussed in the previous section. At the same time, we realize that there is not one ritual that has not changed and developed over time and through space. Much like the online world, rituals are in constant flux and new rituals emerge due to the affordances of technology. This should be understood in two directions: rituals themselves are subject to change, and rituals are activities that can change their participants and the environments in which they are enacted. Moving forward from that realization, the two fields of ritual studies and digital culture are well-suited to each other. What is more, the understanding of rituals through the lens of digital culture, or within the context of digital culture, can help us to be mindful of the constant transformations that take place both in ritual participants, and in ritual repertoires and rituals practices.

### **Rituals fields and the offline-online nexus**

In this book and in our research, we use the broad and polythetic definition of ritual as outlined by Paul Post. In the everyday use of the word ‘ritual’ many associate ritual with religion, tradition, and prescribed behavior. Using Post’s definition, we go beyond this narrow view of ritual and use this concept for both civic, secular, and religious rituals. Moreover, rituals can be institutionalized by governments (e.g. Remembrance Day), universities (e.g. the ceremony at promotions), or law courts (e.g. the robes of the judges), or individual patterns of behavior in relation to social interaction and self-presentation. With the broad and open approach, we go along with the development of ritual studies in the Netherlands in which Paul Post plays a decisive role. In the Netherlands in the 1960s-1990s, the study of ritual coincided with liturgical studies. Halfway the 1990s Paul Post started to plea for a more open approach of liturgical studies. He coined the somewhat tautological term ‘ritual-liturgical’ to put liturgy in the broader context of rituality, declaring every liturgical study to be a ritual study (Post, 1995; 1997; 2002a; 2002b). As of 2010, Post presented the so-called ‘ritual fields’ as a heuristic tool; each field is characterized by its own identity in ritualized cultural practices (Post, 2010a; 2010b; 2011). Actually, Post’s presentation of the ritual fields gives a systematic overview of where to find and study rituals, including the main theoretical frameworks appropriate to the

identity of the ritual repertoires. In the following, we will continue this line of thought. We present five ritual fields – religion, commemoration, leisure culture, art, and life-cycle rituals – and link these to the dynamics of the offline-online nexus. The examples of digital rituals are far from complete, but show how relatively traditional, or better: classic ritual fields now occur at the offline-online nexus. It is important to note that the fields are not closed units; the boundaries are fluid and many ritual-like cultural practices can be categorized in more than one field. The presentation of the five ritual fields gives us, on the one hand, the opportunity to link ritual studies to digital culture studies; on the other hand, it gives rise to theoretical reflections that have not been addressed so far.

### ***Religion***

Considering our earlier remark about the limitation of ‘ritual’ to ‘religious ritual’, it might be unwise to start with religion as the first ritual field. However, we cannot ignore the fact that religion is an important context in which rituals occur. Religious places such as churches and mosques are material manifestations of religious ritual repertoires; funerals and marriages (still) frequently take place within the framework of institutional religions. The digitalization of religions, including their rituals, has been studied by among others Heidi Campbell. In 2013, she edited the book *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Campbell, 2013) in which one chapter is devoted to ritual. In this chapter, written by Christopher Helland, one of the key words is ‘authority’. ‘Religious authority plays a key role in determining the rules and regulations associated with people’s interaction with the sacred. Religious authority often dictates the symbols that will represent the sacred, how they will be used, who can use them’ (Helland, 2013, p. 31). In a digital society, Helland argues, the role of traditional authority erodes. While the internet is by no means an environment that is free from regulating principles and institutions, it can have a democratizing effect on different cultural areas. Regarding online rituals, people are free to experiment, to develop their own ritual repertoire and to participate at any moment that suits them. Another key word in Helland’s chapter is ‘authenticity’. Often, discussions in the field of online religious rituals concern authenticity of the ritual experience and the legitimacy of the ritual performance. Often too, an offline ritual is presented as norm to judge participation in similar online rituals. Paul Post and Suzanne van der Beek write in their book *Doing Ritual Criticism in a Network Society*: ‘[The] old dichotomy between modern technology and religion is never far away [...]. Many empha-

size that much of cyberspace [*sic*] ritual is a “recreation” of offline ritual, and that therefore something essential is “missing” (Post & Van der Beek, 2016, p. 78).

Different studies have gone beyond the mechanism of recreation or transfer of rituals to show the links between offline and online environments. Research by our colleague Jan Blommaert explored his own place of residence: Oud-Berchem, near Antwerp in Belgium (Blommaert & Maly, 2019). Many migrants are settled there, making it a superdiverse area. It counts a large number of small evangelical churches catering for specific diaspora audiences from Africa. Posters at the church venues show information regarding the weekly organization of services in the church along with references to websites. One such poster refers to Bethel TV, a globally active religious enterprise based in California. Its YouTube channel has almost 150,000 subscribers. Starting at a small local church in Oud-Berchem, we enter a global network of people who have 24/7 access to the services of Bethel TV and draw spiritual satisfaction from it.

In this book, the chapters by Wahyu Ilaihi and Suzanne van der Beek similarly illustrate the ways in which offline and online environments interact in ritual practices. Ilaihi’s chapter in this book concerns *pesantren*, a form of traditional Islamic education in Indonesia with a strong local character. When the wave of internet technology came to the *pesantren*, many *pesantren* teachers transitioned their teaching methods from offline to online. It changed *pesantren*, both in style and character, including a change in the cultural exclusivity of *pesantren* to an inclusive global culture. The online *pesantren* are increasing rapidly, mostly because Indonesia is not only home to the largest number of internet users and Muslim populations, but also because it is supported by the communal nature of Indonesian culture. The link between social relations and support in the online environment of *pesantren* has led to the emergence of the new patterns and forms of social support in religious education.

Van der Beek’s chapter in this book concerns the Camino, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, and more specifically: the practice of post-Camino storytelling. For many pilgrims, the Camino is a transformative ritual. Through post-Camino storytelling in digital settings, pilgrims find strategies to incorporate their ‘Camino identity’ in their every-day lives and to operationalize lessons learnt during the pilgrimage.

## *Commemoration*

The second ritual field concerns forms of dealing with the past. In Western culture, we see an abundance of commemorations and other memory practices (Erll, 2011; Erll & Nünning, 2010; Perry, 1999; Winter, 2010), ranging from monuments, memory sites, and war cemeteries, to museums, documentaries, books, and films. Memories, i.e. ‘those images and narratives of the past which circulate in a given social context’ (Erll, 2011, p. 141), are transmedial: they are not tied to one specific medium. Contents of cultural memories can be remediated in an online environment. One thing that distinguishes internet-based forms of memory is their relatively democratic character. In many cases, online memory practices are a collaborative enterprise, initiated, organized, and updated ‘from below’. In those cases, there is no direct or clearly visible authority deciding on what is ‘relevant’ and what ‘marginal’. As Ekatarina Haskins writes in her article on public memory in a digital age: ‘The boundaries between the official and the vernacular, the public and the private, the permanent and the evanescent will cease to matter, for all stories and images will be equally fit to represent and comment on the past’ (Haskins, 2007, p. 405). This is convincingly illustrated by Mike de Kreek in his chapter in this book, in which he describes and analyzes two local memory websites, offering residents a space where they collect and share vernacular memories about particular places or experiences in their neighborhood.

Another example of an online memory practice is The Polynational War Memorial, an online global war memorial to commemorate all who died in wars since 1945, initiated and run by artist Jon Brunberg.<sup>7</sup> At the moment of writing this Introduction, the online memorial collection contains 108 records, covering 59 wars, which in total displays the names of 578,713 people (combatants and civilians) that were killed in wars since 1945. On the one hand this collection functions as an archive, on the other hand visiting this website and reading (part of) the names of war victims is an act of paying respect. If the visitor is willing to contemplate the names, the website becomes a sacred place. The impact of the website might be transformative, feeding a sense of (political) responsibility and empathy. The boundaries between archive and sacred place seem to be fluid, the visitor finds his position somewhere on the continuum between these two ends.

In many cases offline and online memorials coexist. In the United States, for example, American soldiers who died in the Vietnam War (1955-1975) are

---

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved August 28, 2019, from <https://www.war-memorial.net>

commemorated at places like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., but also at an online memorial: The Virtual Wall.<sup>8</sup> In some cases the online memorial functions as a substitute for a physical place to commemorate. This is the case for Jewish people who died in the concentration camps, for whom there are no personalized graves to go to for commemoration. The digital Jewish Monument may be considered as a substitute to a physical grave, a personalized place to visit for commemorative practices (Faro, 2014, pp. 128–136).<sup>9</sup> Sarah Griffith's chapter in this book discusses an online monument for the gay victims of the 9/11 attacks, a minority group with little presence in official narratives and commemorations.

### *Leisure culture*

The third ritual field, the field of leisure culture, extends from sports to travelling, festivals, visiting amusement parks, and wandering around nature. Sports and tourism can be categorized as subfields of leisure culture. Many people spend hours of their free time online by checking favorite websites and social media. The daily routine of doing this might be called a 'ritual', as Karl Spracklen does in his book on digital leisure (Spracklen, 2015), relating this routine to identity-making. Others spend time on online gaming and get involved in the rituals that are deliberately programmed by game developers. An example is the mandatory baptism at the start of the shooter video game *Bioshock Infinite* (released in 2013). At the start of the game, the gamer's avatar is guided through a kind of Christian baptismal ritual. The ritual is mandatory for the player in order to proceed with the game (Bosman, 2017). Other types of ritual action in role-playing games, in which players assume the roles of characters in a fictional setting, are beyond the intention on the part of game developers. In her chapter in this book, Karin Wenz gives remarkable examples of death rituals that take place in the context of online games (see also: Bosman, 2016).

An important role of rituals is creating social cohesion, group solidarity, and a sense of togetherness (Durkheim, 1971 [1912]). Leisure culture activities like festivals, pop concerts, and sports competition can be studied as rituals resulting in communities of interests. In many cases, these communities take shape at the offline-online nexus. Ilja Simons performed ethnographic research regarding

---

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved August 28, 2019, from <https://www.virtualwall.org>

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved August 28, 2019, from <https://www.joodsmonument.nl>

three annual festivals in the Netherlands, using Randall Collins theoretical framework of interaction ritual chains (Simons, 2019).

This theory explains how the shared event experience, in the form of interaction rituals, is linked to interactions before and after the event in a chain of rituals. Through these ritual practices, community is performed, making the event a central node in a more complex structure of offline and online interaction. (Simons, 2019, p. 146)

Collins, in his book on interaction ritual chains (2004), states that the emotional energy obtained from a communal ritual, like a festival, stimulates participants to seek similar experiences, which leads to the creation of interaction ritual chains. The chain of rituals can move outside the original event context to an online environment. Simons shows that the events she studied where the participants were bodily present, are preceded and followed up by online practices. These include interactions between event attendees who have met during an event and who prolong their friendship online, and the photographs of the event that are shared on the Facebook page of the event. In many cases, these practices take place outside the control of the event organizers. Through offline and online practices during and around the event, hybrid communities are shaped, performed, and maintained. A hybrid community is defined by Simons as ‘a diverse and dynamic community around shared meanings and symbols consisting of a complementary structure of event practices and online practices’ (Simons, 2019, p. 149). The online practices differ in level of agency: some contributions are creative, leading to new content that represents and/or produces a sense of community, other, such as liking and sharing messages on social media, contribute to the online presence and viral transmission of the hybrid community (Varis & Blommaert, 2018). Both types of activity are important to form and inform the community and to create the experience of being part of it.

### *Art*

The fourth ritual field concerns the participation in all kinds of art and artistic practices and performances. This field includes the etiquette when visiting a classical concert, the respectful silence in the museum, and the seemingly violent behavior in the mosh pit at a rock concert. The fluid boundaries with the field of leisure culture are clear. These ritual-like practices turn time and space into moments and places ‘set apart’; they introduce an attribution of meaning that expresses ideas and ideals that go beyond the mere experience of attending

a concert or being in a museum and mold the identity of the concert hall and the museum as a special place in society. Next to these practices in the field of art, we see the same kind of hybrid communities as in leisure culture, e.g. fan communities of celebrities like pop artists or writers (Heynders, 2016; Hou, 2018). Digital culture has highly influenced the art world. Due to online presence, artists are now able to reach audiences from all over the world. And they can find sources of inspiration from all kinds of cultures, available through the internet. Producing and selling art is easier due to digital DIY tools (Gronlund, 2017). As Kris Rutten writes: ‘Digital technologies have opened up the disciplinary boundaries of art and its focus has increasingly shifted towards process, participation, interaction and dialogue’ (Rutten, 2018, p. 2).

An example of a new digital ritual in relation to art, is the selfie in front of an artwork. Selfies, digital self-portraits, have become ingrained in museum visitors’ practices. Through the selfie the visitor becomes part of the art and s/he can immediately share her/his interaction with the art by uploading the selfie in social media (Giannini & Bowen, 2019). Some museums are even designed as ‘instagrammable’ places to facilitate visitors to make remarkable, original and beautiful selfies.<sup>10</sup> Uploading the selfie is performance of identity and of embodiment. To understand this type of identity work related to the museum as a culturally acknowledged meaningful place, we can confine ourselves to quoting Mead: ‘we see ourselves through the way in which others see and define us’ (Mead, quoted in Blommaert, Lu, & Li, 2019, p. 3). These kinds of practices might seem further removed from rituals than others described in this Introduction. However, there are several reasons to call the identity work by making selfies a ‘ritual’. First, the selfie – making, uploading and sharing it – is a performative practice, i.e. it acts upon the self by just showing the self to the other. There is no need to interpret the image, just showing and seeing is enough to start the identity work as a process of interactional co-construction (Blommaert et al., 2019, p. 3). So, the selfie as a ritual does not express, but rather performs identity. Second, and here we follow performance studies scholar Richard Schechner, the selfie as a practice is ‘twice-behaved behavior’, it has become a culturally accepted way of self-presentation which is both playful and serious (Schechner, 2002, pp. 28–30). However, and this makes it a ritual according to Schechner, the ‘serious’ is dominant. The selfie in the museum has been carefully designed precisely because the persons involved want to show them-

---

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved August 30, 2019, from <https://www.marresmit.nl/uncategorized/instagrammable-art/>



selves and as such want to give shape to their identity in an act of social interaction.

### *Live-cycle rituals*

The last ritual field concerns life-cycle rituals. Paul Post does not mention this field in the several overviews of ritual fields he has published. However, since churches in western societies have lost their monopoly on birth, relation, and death rituals, we see new rituals emerge and new sources of ritual creativity. Ritual counsellors are active on the internet in marketing their services and many ‘How to...’ websites give advice to people regarding DIY rituals. Nowadays, it is quite easy to buy a coffin online for a funeral, or funny attributes for a wedding.

Life-cycle rituals like weddings, funerals, and festivities around new-born babies, have changed due to processes of digitalization. This goes beyond the aforementioned increase in possibilities for designing your own rituals and finding information. People use online sources to find texts and symbols to enrich a ritual passage which takes place in their families or group of friends. Pictures and videos are immediately uploaded and shared on social media and sometimes rituals are shared through live streaming. Janieke Bruin, in her chapter in this book, shows how algorithmic culture has changed the selection and use of music during funerals. Nicolas Matthee explores the reality of online bereavement and in which manner ritual and ritualized behavior can be observed and studied in this context.

An extreme, rather counter-intuitive example, is the funeral selfie.<sup>11</sup> Increasingly, pictures have started to appear on social media of people posing with their dead relatives and friends. This example shows how worlds which are not quite compatible interact through digital media. The funeral is traditionally constructed as private or by invitation only. By posting a funeral selfie, the (in general young or young adult) mourner invites his or her social network to glimpse the ritual. We might call this an example of ‘context collapse’, a clash between the solemn ritual environment of the funeral and the online social networks (Kaul & Skinner, 2018; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Some people reject the funeral selfie as unworthy behavior, claiming that they are disrespectful and

---

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/11/obama-funeral-selfie-tumblr-mandela-teens> (accessed September 3, 2019)

narcissistic.<sup>12</sup> Funeral directors warn mourners to stop taking selfies and call it a tasteless trend.<sup>13</sup> Jason Feifer wrote a comment worth reading at the website of *The Guardian* as a response to the critique on the funeral selfie:

Many people interpreted funeral selfies as further evidence of millennials' self-centeredness. I didn't. Had my parents' or grandparents' generation grown up with the kind of social media tools that today's teens have, they'd have done equally embarrassing things for all the world to see. This isn't the nature of kids today; it's just the nature of kids. And anyway, when a teen tweets out a funeral selfie, their friends don't castigate them. They understand that their friend, in their own way, is expressing an emotion they may not have words for. It's a visual language that older people – even those like me, in their 30s – simply don't speak.<sup>14</sup>

Although we are not sure that the distinction between kids and older people is useful and tenable, we agree with Feifer that we have to reconsider the conceptual framework we use to analyze and interpret the phenomenon of the funeral selfies. It is a new code, a new language, linked to emotion in a context of social interaction. As such, it is a symbol, layered and open for interpretation, immediately understood for those who share the same symbolic language.

Next to the 'traditional' life-cycle rituals that increasingly combine offline and online dimensions, there are new, not-yet explored possibilities of ritualizing everyday online practices, such as the use of Snapchat by Martin's son. Alexandra Samuel wrote an article in the online *JSTOR Daily*, titled: 'Inventing rituals for the digital world'.<sup>15</sup> In this article she explores how to ritualize digital turning points:

---

<sup>12</sup> E.g. <https://www.businessinsider.com/are-funeral-selfies-bad-2016-5?international=true&r=US&IR=T> (accessed September 3, 2019)

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4207946/Funeral-directors-tell-mourners-stop-taking-selfies.html> (accessed September 3, 2019)

<sup>14</sup> Jason Feifer, Obama's funeral selfie is a fitting end to my Tumblr – Selfies at Funerals, *The Guardian*, December 11, 2013. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/11/obama-funeral-selfie-tumblr-mandela-teens> (accessed September 3, 2019)

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://daily-jstor-org.tilburguniversity.idm.oclc.org/inventing-rituals-for-the-digital-world/> (accessed September 3, 2019)

[...] the kind of digital turning points I get excited about—my daughter’s first tweet, the demise of a favourite social network—is a relatively new kind of life experience. As such, our online milestones are not yet surrounded with the traditions or rituals that mark significant offline turning points.

Samuel proposes rituals for entering a new digital social network (signing up for Instagram, joining a new professional group on LinkedIn), reconciliation rituals in case of online conflicts (e.g. by collaborating on a blog post or setting up a Google hangout). Samuel’s conclusion opens a field of ritual creativity and research:

Once we recognize the value that ritual can bring to our online lives, we can see all sorts of occasions that might deserve some form of personal or social ceremony. From our first moments with a new device or network, to our very last moments on the Internet (which may now take place after we have drawn our last breath), the digital world is both medium and witness to many of the most important moments of our lives.

### **Dedicated to...**

In the previous sections of this Introduction, we have referred several times to the scholarly oeuvre by our colleague Paul Post. This book is dedicated to him at the occasion of his retirement. In his active life as a professor of ritual studies at Tilburg University, Paul Post has initiated many research projects related to changing ritual dynamics. His impressive list of publications shows articles and book chapters regarding changing ritual repertoires and reflections on cases in relation to particular places, communities, and events like disasters and forced migration that are in need of rituals. One of the last fields Paul started to explore was that of ‘rituals online’ or ‘digital rituals’. This field, which has only really started to emerge in recent years, still offers many opportunities for exploration. In this Introduction and the following chapters, we will take up some of the first impetuses Paul has given on these topics.

We are not the first to write about online or digital rituals. Important names in this field include Stephen O’Leary (1996), Nick Couldry (2003), Heidi Campbell (2013), and Teresa Berger (Berger, Bem, & Böntert, 2012). Yet, we have chosen not to invite these established colleagues, but rather to invite fairly young researchers in the field of ritual studies, memory studies, and culture studies. During his professional career, Paul Post has always stimulated and

supported young researchers. He supervised an impressive number of PhD candidates and encouraged his younger colleagues to take part in the research projects and the research networks he was engaged in. In line with this approach we have invited early career researchers to present their work regarding ritual practices in the digital society.

## References

- Altena, M., Notermans, C., & Widlok, T. (2011). [Place, action, and community in internet rituals](#). In R. Grimes (Ed.), *Ritual, Media, and Conflict* (pp. 133–163). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ana, Y., & Sonia, R. (2017). [Keeping citizens engaged: A comparison between online and offline participants](#). *Administration & Society*, 49(3), 394–422.
- Bell, C. (1997). *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, T., Bem, K., & Böntert, S. (2012). *Liturgy in Migration: From the Upper Room to Cyberspace*. Colleagueville, Minn: Liturgical Press.
- Blommaert, J. (2019). Online-offline modes of identity and community: Elliot Rodger's twisted world of masculine victimhood. In M. Hoondert, P. Mutsaers, & W. Arfman (Eds.), *Cultural Practices of Victimhood* (pp. 193–213). London/New York: Routledge.
- Blommaert, J., Lu, Y., & Li, K. (2019). [From the self to the selfie](#). *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, 222.
- Blommaert, J., & Maly, I. (2019). [Invisible lines in the online-offline linguistic landscape](#). *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, 223.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Bosman, F. (2016). [The word has become game: Researching religion in digital games](#). *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, 11, 28–45.
- Bosman, F. (2017). [Accept your baptism, and die! Redemption, death and baptism in bioshock infinite](#). *Gamevironments*, 6, 100–129.
- Buckingham, D. (2008). *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Campbell, H. A. (2001). [A new forum for religion: Spiritual pilgrimage online](#). *The Bible in Transmission*, 1–3.
- Campbell, H. A. (2013). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. London: Routledge.

- Cobb, J. (1998). *CyberGrace: The Search for God in the Digital World*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
- Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Couldry, N. (2003). *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Durkheim, É. (1971 [1912]). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. (J. W. Swain, Trans.) London: Allen and Unwin.
- Erl, A. (2011). *Memory in Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Erl, A., & Nünning, A. (2010). *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Faro, L. M. C. (2014). *Postponed Monuments in the Netherlands: Manifestation, Context, and Meaning*. Groningen/Tilburg: Instituut voor Liturgiewetenschap/Instituut voor Rituele en Liturgische Studies.
- Giannini, T., & Bowen, J. (Eds.) (2019). *Museums and Digital Culture: New Perspectives and Research*. Cham: Springer.
- Grimes, R. (1990). *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in its Practice, Essays on its Theory*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press.
- Grimes, R. (1993). *Reading, Writing, and Ritualizing: Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical, and Public Places*. Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press.
- Grimes, R. (2014). *The Craft of Ritual Studies*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gronlund, M. (2017). *Contemporary Art and Digital Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Haskins, E. (2007). [Between archive and participation: Public memory in a digital age](#). *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 37(4), 401–422.
- Heidbrink, S., Miczek, N., & Radde-Antweiler, K. (2011). Contested rituals in virtual worlds. In R. Grimes (Ed.), *Ritual, Media, and Conflict* (pp. 165–187). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Helland, C. (2002). Surfing for salvation. *Religion*, 32(4), 293–302.
- Helland, C. (2013). Ritual. In H. A. Campbell (Ed.), *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (pp. 25–40). London/New York: Routledge.
- Heynders, O. (2016). *Writers as Public Intellectuals: Literature, Celebrity, Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hill-Smith, C. (2011). [Cyberpilgrimage: The \(virtual\) reality of online pilgrimage experience](#). *Religion Compass*, 5(6), 236–246.
- Hou, M. (2018). *Social Media Celebrity: An Investigation into the Latest Metamorphosis of Fame* (PhD dissertation, Tilburg University, Tilburg).

- Kaul, A. R., & Skinner, J. (2018). *Leisure and Death: An Anthropological Tour of Risk, Death, and Dying*. Louisville: University Press of Colorado.
- Machackova, H., & Serek, J. (2017). [Does 'clicking' matter? The role of online participation in adolescents' civic development](#). *Cyberpsychology*, 11(4), article 5.
- MacWilliams, M. W. (2002). [Virtual pilgrimages on the internet](#). *Religion*, 32(4), 315–335.
- Marwick, A., & boyd, d. (2011). [I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience](#). *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114–133.
- O'Leary, S. D. (1996). [Cyberspace as sacred space: Communicating religion on computer networks](#). *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64(4), 781–808.
- Ochtman-de Boer, A. (2015). *Nieuwe rituelen. Vorm geven aan de belangrijke momenten in je leven*. Baarn: Spirito.
- Perry, J. (1999). *Wij herdenken, dus wij bestaan. Over jubilea, monumenten en de collectieve herinnering*. Nijmegen: SUN.
- Post, P. (1995). Zeven notities over rituele verandering, traditie en (vergelijkende) liturgiewetenschap. *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek*, 11, 1–30.
- Post, P. (1997). Liturgische bewegingen. Een literatuurbericht. *Praktische Theologie*, 24(1), 59–80.
- Post, P. (2002a). De kus door het glas. Moderne media als ritueel-liturgisch milieu. In C. Sterkens & J. A. van der Ven (Eds.), *De functie van de kerk in de hedendaagse maatschappij* (pp. 263–285). Averbode: Averbode.
- Post, P. (2002b). Space for liturgy: Current perspectives for liturgical inculturation. *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek*, 18, 45–59.
- Post, P. (2010a). [Heilige velden. Panorama van ritueel-religieuze presenties in het publieke domein](#). *Tijdschrift voor Religie, Recht en Beleid*, 1(3), 70–91.
- Post, P. (2010b). *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. De speelruimte van een ander sacraal domein*. Heeswijk: Uitgeverij Abdij van Berne.
- Post, P. (2011). Fields of the sacred: Reframing identities of sacred places. In P. Post, A. L. Molendijk, & J. Kroesen (Eds.), *Sacred Places in Modern Western Culture* (pp. 13–59). Leuven: Peeters.
- Post, P. (2015). [Ritual studies](#). In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/ritual-studies-2>

- Post, P., & Van der Beek, S. (2016). *Doing Ritual Criticism in a Network Society: Online and Offline Explorations into Pilgrimage and Sacred Place*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Rasch, M. (2017). *Zwemmen in de oceaan. Berichten uit een postdigitale wereld*. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij.
- Rawls, A. (1996). [Durkheim's epistemology: The neglected argument](#). *American Journal of Sociology*, 102(2), 430–482.
- Rutten, K. (2018). [Participation, art and digital culture](#). *Critical Arts*, 32(3), 1–8.
- Schechner, R. (2002). *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Shields, R. (2003). *The Virtual*. London: Routledge.
- Simons, I. (2019). [Events and online interaction: The construction of hybrid event communities](#). *Leisure Studies*, 38(2), 145–159.
- Snoek, J. A. M. (2006). [Defining rituals](#). In J. Kreinath, J. A. M. Snoek, & M. Stausberg (Eds.), *Theorizing Rituals* (pp. 3–14). Leiden: Brill.
- Spracklen, K. (2015). *Digital Leisure, the Internet and Popular Culture: Communities and Identities in a Digital Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Turner, V. (1967). *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. (1969). [The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure](#). London: Routledge & Kegan.
- Turner, V. (1974). *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Varis, P., & Blommaert, J. (2018). [Conviviality and collectives on social media: Virality, memes, and new social structures](#). *Multilingual Margins: A Journal of Multilingualism from the Periphery*, 2(1), 31–45.
- Winter, J. (2010). Sites of memory and the shadow of war. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (pp. 61–74). Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.