

# Chapter 11

## Continuing Down the Streets of Paris: Memorialization, Representation, and Silence

**Julianna Kirschner**  
Claremont Graduate University, USA

### ABSTRACT

*As a result of the two world wars, the memorialization of traumatic events saw an exponential rise in the last one hundred years (Koshar, 2000). Many debates have been sparred as a result, and each one has a resonating theme of representation and silencing of voices. At what point does conversation end and creation begin? In this paper, two areas are explored: “vandalism” of cultural sites, and the reshaping of the narrative by those who visit these sites without prior knowledge of their meaning. These two areas bring forth the notion of what voices are represented in the memorial creation process and how one might define an intended and unintended public. Using Michel de Certeau’s (1984) example of walking the streets of Paris, the author presents new conclusions about memorials and the fluidity of their meaning.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is October 2014. The streets of Paris are damp, but not slippery; it is a space that is used to the elements. Stepping out from Hotel de France on Rue Monge, a street parallel to the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, the rain comes down steadily, but those already on the streets seem undeterred. Some pedestrians mask their faces from the precipitation with umbrellas, while others walk freely down the streets with soaked hair. The smell of baked bread from the café across the street is strong, and many gather at its entrance. The Quartier Latin is a bustling place, moving with life and conversation. It has a language that moves. As de Certeau (1984) describes, “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (p. 97). The performative function of the speech act can be seen through constant movement.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9728-7.ch011

Walking to the south, one encounters Starbucks, a common meeting place of college students, as evidenced by their backpacks piled near the exterior window. Without even entering, it is apparent there is not an open seat. Patrons drink coffee from glass mugs and vibrantly use their hands while speaking with others. It is a cultural dance of drinking and speaking all at once. When crossing the street to reach the other side of Rue Monge, the whimsical gesturing and engaged nonverbal communication is still apparent even as the distance grows. The flow of conversation is not yet disrupted by a silencing of free speech, particularly those of the victims of the Charlie Hebdo shooting. The melody of voices has not yet been interrupted by a cacophony.

However, the interactive environment veils a history of conflict that many would like to forget. The world wars have wounded this place and the country as a whole, and in its architecture, the scars are only beginning to fade with fresh paint. The refurbishment of century old buildings modernizes the aesthetic, while also maintaining a sense of neighborhood consistency and architectural white noise. These buildings continue to tell stories despite their respective facelifts. However, it is in the spaces that are untouched where one can gain a better sense of history.

These Paris streets have seen different intervals of ethnic conflict, and each one has subtly marked the space in both tangible and intangible ways. Caton (2008) remarks: "Social theorists generally agree that such work [ethnic conflict] depends on a concept of distributive justice for under-represented ethnic peoples, and that type of group justice will not happen simply by guaranteeing individual rights" (p. 1033). Although walking these streets represents only the beginning, it serves as a means to map out points of contention and areas that warrant further exploration. Walking the streets of Paris represents a new form of cartography, one that allows the spaces to speak for themselves.

Continuing north on Rue Monge, cafes are aplenty, and those that line the northern part of the street are local institutions. These gathering places are busy, while other fixtures are vacant. To the right, several local farmers set up display stands for their fresh fruit and vegetables. A bookshop opens after the lunch hour, and other souvenir shops turn their lights on. The businesses awaken again after the owners and employees have had a filling lunchtime meal, and the rain begins to subside. However, one area still appears to be vacant; it is an open park space on the western side of the street.

## **Pierre de Ronsard**

Upon closer observation, a monument has been built in the honor of Pierre de Ronsard, often referred to as the "Prince of Poets" (Quainton, 1980). The statue appears forgotten, and green moss creeps up the bust of de Ronsard (figure 1). The back of the statue reveals that it was placed here in June of 1928. Bits of the material have fallen off of one edge, making it unintelligible. However, despite its age, the statue seems to have weathered the elements well over the last ninety years. De Ronsard's face appears crestfallen, and other faces are outlined beneath his torso with similar expressions. When looking closer, the smaller faces are his own profile, repeated around him like an artistic band. One can hear laughter from a nearby business, the echoes resounding in this quiet space. Although this space is near a major thoroughfare, in this moment, it appears abandoned and off the beaten path. As a visitor of France, finding de Ronsard's memorial in this state raises some interesting questions. Do those living in and commuting to this surrounding area come to visit? Or does this statue remain isolated and forgotten? Although there are people dispersing from the cafes down the street, few of them are heading in this direction. Of those who are, they walk in groups on the sidewalk across the street. A few cars are parked along the street, but a car has not driven past in the last few minutes.

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/continuing-down-the-streets-of-paris/142318](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/continuing-down-the-streets-of-paris/142318)

## Related Content

---

### 'Birds of the Same Feather,' Shattered Hopes: Case of Zimbabwe Post 2018 Harmonised Elections

Obediah Dodo (2018). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 30-40).

[www.irma-international.org/article/birds-of-the-same-feather-shattered-hopes/224021](http://www.irma-international.org/article/birds-of-the-same-feather-shattered-hopes/224021)

### Channels Television on YouTube: Shaping the African Discourse on Migration

Oluwafolafunmi Omoladun Afolabi, Tolulope Kayode-Adedeji, Evaristus Adesina, Babatunde Adeyeye, Suleimanu Usaini and Nelson Okorie (2020). *Handbook of Research on the Global Impact of Media on Migration Issues* (pp. 115-141).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/channels-television-on-youtube/239183](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/channels-television-on-youtube/239183)

### Catalan Identity and Banditry in the Ancient Regime

Alejandro Llinares (2021). *History of Catalonia and Its Implications for Contemporary Nationalism and Cultural Conflict* (pp. 89-100).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/catalan-identity-and-banditry-in-the-ancient-regime/264855](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/catalan-identity-and-banditry-in-the-ancient-regime/264855)

### The Contributions and Challenges of Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organizations to Community Development: Lesson from Amhara Development Association

Degwale Gebeyehu Belay (2019). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 14-29).

[www.irma-international.org/article/the-contributions-and-challenges-of-government-organized-non-governmental-organizations-to-community-development/235391](http://www.irma-international.org/article/the-contributions-and-challenges-of-government-organized-non-governmental-organizations-to-community-development/235391)

### Mediating Social Media's Ambivalences in the Context of Informational Capitalism

Marco Briziarelli and Eric Karikari (2016). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 1-22).

[www.irma-international.org/article/mediating-social-medias-ambivalences-in-the-context-of-informational-capitalism/149854](http://www.irma-international.org/article/mediating-social-medias-ambivalences-in-the-context-of-informational-capitalism/149854)