

Detecting Landscapes of the Romanian Holocaust through Psychogeography in Romulus Balazs's *Souvenirs de Iași* (2016)

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In his recent article on 'The Struggle for Holocaust Memory in Romania', Simon Geissbühler recalls an incident from 2012 in which 'a young senator from the socialist party said on a TV show that only twenty-four Jews were killed' in Iași at the end of June 1941, and that these murders were perpetrated exclusively by Germans. (1) That this young politician seemed unaware of the scale of Jewish death and Romanian collaboration in this city during the Holocaust exposes the continued influence of communist-era censorship and revisionism in Romania. There, memories of the Holocaust did not emerge after the breakdown of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime in 1989, but rather in the mid-2000s, when international pressure sparked a critical process of national self-reflection. As a response to the continued post-communist legacy of structural forgetting in Romania, this paper critically examines the ways in which the nation's state-sponsored memory cultures have sought to obfuscate, trivialise and deflect responsibility for the Romanian Holocaust—so-called due to Romania's implementation of genocide independently from the German Reich. It then analyses Romulus Balazs's self-funded documentary film *Souvenirs de Iași* (2016) as an example of how localised, unofficial memory cultures from the region have critically intervened within these revised versions of the past. The paper explores the central role played by techniques of filmic mapping we might describe as 'psychogeographic' in Balazs's work—those which reflect the central tenet of psychogeography, which is best defined as 'a way of psychoanalysing the psychosis of place'. (2) I draw on psychogeography as a forensic and hauntological tool with which Balazs is able to locate sites of Jewish murder and persecution in Romania, and through which are able to sense the posttraumatic past inscribed within the topographical fabric of these places from which Jewish life and culture has been erased.

(1) Simon Geissbühler, 'The Struggle for Holocaust Memory in Romania and How Ukraine can Learn from it', *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* (2016) 10:3, 471-480(474).

(2) Ian Sinclair in Simon Sellars, 'Psychogeography? Psychopathology, maybe....', *Ballardian*, 21 February 2.