Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu

Cold War Media Mythologies: Conspiracy Myth, "Red Scare" and Blacklisting in *The Front*

ABSTRACT
Myths, as essential narrative structures and patterns, are massively recycled in contemporary media, from advertising to cinema. The myth recycling strategies used by various media are also to be found in political discourse, being used to legitimise leaders and policies, to persuade electors and offer convincing models. The current paper focuses on the early Cold War period, dominated by the conspiracy myth, first discussed by Hazlehurst (1968), Girardet (1986) and others. While I dealt elsewhere (2013) with the shape taken by the anxieties in anti-American propaganda, this paper analyses its counterpart. The study focuses on the "Red Scare" that marked, through McCarthyism and blacklisting, the late 1940s and 1950s in the United States, affecting the media implicitly and explicitly: the film industry and television. Films like *The Front* (1976) describe one of the most dramatic and disturbing effects of what started as a conspiracy myth or theory, moving from a psychological or emotional issue to its coercive materialisation.

KEYWORDS
Conspiracy Myth; Media; Cold War; Blacklisting; Woody Allen; *The Front*.

ANDRADA FĂTU-TUTOVEANU
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
andrada.pintilescu@gmail.com

Political Myths and the Media

As essential narratives structures and patterns, traditional myths are massively recycled in contemporary media, from advertising to cinema. The audience's familiarity with them, which contributes to a rapid – although not necessarily fully conscious – identification and emotional reaction is, among other reasons, one explanation for the employment by media of these traditional narrative and/or behavioural patterns, in the former's attempt to communicate interesting stories or impose successful and memorable characters. As discussed elsewhere[1], the myth's rich symbolism – such as the multiple mythological layers in cinematic narratives like *Avatar*[2]–, the fantastic characters and moralising tales of different mythologies, all contribute to the seemingly never-ending fascination of contemporary media for classic mythologies. The storytelling media, such as cinema, television or advertising favour the recognisable narrative patterns. However, expanding the discussion to the political use of myth patterns (usually also in relation to media), we could say that this goes beyond the interest in the narrative structures. The political message requires trust and reliability and the myth structures – through their sense of familiarity and previous acceptance by the community as

representative and/or belief in their message – can prove most useful for political legitimising attempts. Thus, the survival (recycling) of myths can serve to advertise and legitimise leaders and/or policies, through sometimes sophisticated political visual representations and performances. The purpose of this power paradigm replacement – mythology and religion being replaced in terms of functions by civil religion and the so-called political religion[3]– is, ultimately, an issue of manipulation and persuasion.

As G. Gill argues – most significantly for the use of myths in political discourses – myths are narratives that provided the traditional communities with symbolic, yet coherent structures on the story and history of the group. He defines myth as "a shared narrative that gives meaning..., the basic rationale for the community, a sense of its meaning and purpose."[4] Therefore, far from being just stories, defining as they might be for a community, the myths functioned in the traditional communities as foundational structures, marking the basic structures of meaning of the group.

> What is important is less the empirical basis of the myth than that the myth is accepted and believed in. To cite Murray Edelman, myth is "a belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning; it is typically socially cued rather than empirically based". Myth is therefore socially constructed and is a means of both defining and explaining reality for those who believe in it.[5]

The function of myth structures is similar to that of other grand narratives such as history or religion. The deep significance for the community and the latter's belief in its message are also revealing for the employment of myth patterns in political discourse, which also attempts to be convincing and have an impact on the community. As Sandu Frunză argued:

> Mass media plays an important part both with respect to mythical creation and its function, which in archaic societies was fulfilled by mythical communication instances… Mass media valorizes myth as an ethical mode of responding to human needs that are always forgotten, always postponed, but pertain to the human condition and its protection. In this context, mass media is responsible for the elaboration and implementation of politics of symbolic construction of reality, both at the level of mass culture and of very elaborate professional culture.[6]

This expected impact is emotional, as myths also tend to be figurative and symbolic, possessing "an enchanting power, and they tend to favour the emotional elements rather than the rational ones"[7]. This emotional impact lies, however, not in a harmless return to a primitive "age of innocence" and to symbolic community stories, but also involves, in the political discourse, an emotional regression, both of the individual and of the community, to a psychological stage of dependence on (and, therefore, belief in) the authority (religious, media or political messianic characters). So, no matter the period, "myth remains a fundamental datum of the political world"[8]. However, this becomes even more so in the ages of media and new media, when these symbolic narrative structures, figures or actions could convey a strong message in a basic, simplified and yet extremely efficient manner. The ages of media and new media – see "the information age", in Castells' terms[9]– are therefore essential here because of the post-war dramatic evolution, based on the

technological progress, of the means of production, reproduction and distribution of information. This, led to a cultural "massification and industrialisation […], consumerism"[10], favouring especially the image or visual representations. It was, as Hall and Evans argue, "a great process of development in which, in an era of mass communication and the commodification of information, messages can be transmitted in principle to a plurality of recipients and audiences"[11]. This massification was characterised the use of structures and patterns that could be representative for large groups or communities and target the most basic psychological and emotional reactions. On the one hand, the new storytellers, such as the cinema or television, focused on functional narrative structures, such as the hero's journey, with its trials and stages, preserved even in what appeared to be non-stereotypical contexts (such as what I called "a reversed *Odyssey*" in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*[12]). On the other hand, the post-war political mythology also focused, in its media representations, on several archetypal structures and/or figures that can be reduced more or less to the classic fourfold typology discussed by Girardet (1986), perhaps with the greater prominence of the myth of the *conspiracy, the saviour and the golden age* (the myth of the unity was probably the most significant and visible in WWII propaganda). Beyond their cultural mythological origin, these structures may reveal the relationship the political agent attempts to establish with the community, turned into audiences.

> The nature of the conspiracy, the saviour and the golden age will differ from community to community and myth to myth, but clearly these three elements are linked. They provide major structuring devices for the community's myths, with other components of those myths locking in with these themes. It is these themes which provide the main sustenance for the community's myths.[13]

Therefore, we could say that these recurrent patterns survive (or, rather, are recycled) in post-war media, with specific emphasis on one or the other in certain historical or political contexts.

Cold War, Conspiracy Myths and Collective "Paranoia"

Thus, while in general the post-war period was strongly influenced, in terms of media communication, by this use of (political) myth patterns, the Cold War and particularly the first decade stand out as extremely revealing in this respect. The beginning of the Cold War was a specific context in terms of media messages and representations, due to the specific polarised propaganda and Manichean imagery promoted, employing hostile media representations of the Enemy. In this context, the political myths favoured the contrasting formula *conspiracy – saviour*, while the community (local, national or global) is threatened by a "conspiratorial organisation […] shrouded in mystery and […] hierarchically regulated"[14]. In terms of emotional impact, this type of imagery involves strong negative feelings, such as fear and hatred or distrust, legitimising the "community paranoia" and, eventually, its radical acts of violence or exclusion. The two main poles or superpowers involved in the Cold War, the United States and the USSR, built complex reciprocally hostile representations. While the American dystopian representation in the communist media – as a land of economic, cultural and moral crisis – was elsewhere discussed[15], the current study focuses on the

American perspective towards the Soviet threat. This is justified not only by a wish to analyse them complementarily, but also because in the case of political mythology, the conspiracy is better represented by the so-called "Red Scare" and the witch hunt related to the McCarthyism and, within media, to blacklisting. It is therefore a representative embodiment of this myth, although not the only one, as "the conspiracy theory has deeply penetrated American thought", as Gordon B. Arnold argues in his work on conspiracy theory in popular culture[16]. Indeed, the conspiracy is symptomatically present within American cultural and political myth-related representations, perhaps as a counterpart or threat to the American dream utopia.

> Conspiracy theory is a staple of American popular culture, with a particularly strong presence in film and television…. Despite its durability as a cultural and political theme, conspiracy theory has not been a static notion. Rather, its portrayal in popular culture and in politics has constantly changed, and so has its meaning. What this idea tells us about American life and culture shifts from one era to the next. Once, the term "conspiracy theory" was synonymous with fear and paranoia.[17]

Therefore, the myth has persisted in other contexts in "popular entertainment since World War II, and that we have only changed the focus from time to time to conform with the tenor of current affairs."[18] Concerning the Cold War, the American media focused and reinforced the psychological state of fear or community paranoia which had, during the period, a very clear target (despite the mystery implicitly involved in the idea of conspiracy).

> In the anxious age of the new Cold War, conspiracy theory gained a new prominence in American popular culture, first in movies and later in the still-fledging medium of television. Hollywood responded to the fears and anxieties of the era in several ways. [...] Directly mirroring society's fears and obsessions of that era, these films featured plots in which communists conspired to dupe Americans and overthrow the U.S. government. Such movies played to anxieties that audiences brought with them to the movie house or drive-in theater. The message was clear: be vigilant, be wary, or you will end up a victim of the wily, scheming communists.[19]

This type of message can be related to the observation that these conspiracy narratives worked in an ambivalent manner in terms of impact: the media did not only (or always) mirror the realities (although it embodied the community's fears and anxieties) but many times it contributed to stirring them[20] or to directing in a certain direction.

The fear and anxiety was therefore not related to the basic identity of the Enemy, represented by an ideology and lifestyle and embodied by the Soviet Union, but toward this enemy disguised as a fellow. The deepest anguish related to the conspiracy myth materialises in the paranoia itself: "the fear of not being able to trust others (which is related to but transcends the spy scare, the Red scare)"[21].

The Blacklisting and the Media

This community paranoia reached a peak – especially if we think of media, the film industry and television – in the famous witch hunt materialised in the hearings and blacklisting of cinema and television professionals suspected of being communists. As it is well-know, the most representative figure was that of

> Joseph McCarthy, a Republican senator from Wisconsin. McCarthy, who is so closely associated with this pervasive political and cultural phenomenon that it is often called McCarthyism, began a spirited fight against the Red Menace, as the communist threat was sometimes called. (Although McCarthy is remembered as the most visible figure in the anticommunist fervor, many other members of Congress shared his obsession with a perceived communist enemy.) The search for the unseen enemy was to become so vigorous, however, by the mid-1950s, some people started to think it was a witch hunt.[22]

If we consider the evolution of post-war media, we can say that the witch hunt affecting professionals in this area (cinema at first, but also television, according the emergence and impact of one or the other) started to manifest rather early (1947). It was a form of the often mentioned "vigilance" as well as an intuition of the politicians involved about the impact of media in shaping, as Douglas Kellner observed, the values and behaviour of the audiences.

> Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols, *myths*, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture. Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not. They dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their places or be oppressed. We are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society.[23]

Therefore, in as early as the late 1940s and 1950s, the politicians had the intuition of this highly significant functions and impact of media, in the context of the massification and commodification of media products (at first, mainstream Hollywood cinema and later the television, which practically turned everyone into receivers of the message). Naturally, in 1947, when the witch hunt began, the first to be considered dangerously influential were the Hollywood filmmakers and actors; a special category was that of screenwriters, most significant as first-degree creators of the message that reached the masses.

> The movie business had been regarded as a potential threat to the American way of life by some people even before the anticommunist fervour of the Cold War. Not surprisingly, then, the film industry came under the glare of the House Un-American Activities Committee as early as 1947. It is widely remembered that actors, directors, screenwriters, and others who stood accused of communist leanings were subjected to the notorious "blacklist" practices that essentially cut them off from their livelihoods.[24]

The famous case of the "Hollywood Ten" remains significant for the witch hunt related to the early Cold War paranoia. The rhetoric concerning this case of a political and legal witch hunt is itself representative for the Cold War perspective, as well as for the enemy-making language and imagery and for the community conspiracy myth and collective paranoia.

> In 1947, J. Parnell Thomas chaired a series of hearings on alleged Communist infiltration in the Hollywood motion picture industry. Twenty-four "friendly" witnesses – including Gary Cooper, Ronald Reagan, and Walt Disney – testified that Hollywood was infiltrated with Communists, and identified a number of supposed subversives by name. Ten "unfriendly" witnesses [...] refused to cooperate with the Committee, contending that the investigations themselves were unconstitutional [...] The "Hollywood Ten" as they came to be known, were convicted of contempt of Congress and served sentences of six months to one year in jail.[25]

Firstly, the "infiltration" of mysterious enemies that must be identified by "naming names" is typical of the conspiracy myth: "some Hollywood insiders cooperated with the search for communists and sympathizers. Those cooperating included Ronald Reagan and Robert Taylor"[26].

Secondly, an opposition was established between "friendly"– "unfriendly" witnesses, cooperating or not with what was considered – due to the involvement of state institutions –, as legitimate and fair. This legitimacy as well as patriotism were emphasised despite de restrictions of the rights of some individuals (see the paradox mentioned before between the claims that it was an "unconstitutional" procedure, on the one hand, and the "conviction of contempt of Congress", on the other). However, the cause and threat invoked by the politician allowed severe measures, so the witch hunt expanded, initially taking the shape of a conspiracy ("Nobody admits there's a blacklist", *The Front*, 1976). These measures focused on prevention (campaigns of intense control, involving the "naming names" of "friendly" witnesses) and coercion (the professional marginalisation of those involved). However, as the case study on *The Front* reveals, the cooperation of the "friendly" witnesses was in many (or most cases) not voluntary but rather a consequence of a "carrots and sticks" policy.

> Shortly after the hearings, more than 50 studio executives met secretly at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. They emerged with the now infamous "Waldorf Statement", in which they agreed to suspend the Hollywood Ten without pay, deny employment to anyone who did not cooperate with the investigations, and refuse to hire Communists.[27]

Like in the case of the media reflection of the conspiracy fears, the paranoia "mood of the day"[28] mirrored and was mirrored at the same time, fuelling and being fuelled by the political actions. While extremely influential itself, "Hollywood was caught up in the complicated web of fear and paranoia that fuelled the conspiracy theory inclinations of that time"[29]. The legitimising discourse focused on patriotism and Americanism versus treason and "un-American activities"[30]. The latter actually implied "anti-Americanism", as the Cold War was, after all, about taking sides. So, these oppositions were clearly implied, and the hostile attitude was immediately deduced, especially when one refused to be cooperating,

neutrality or an apolitical attitude not being an option. This is again most obvious in *The Front*, where even a character with no political views like Howard Prince ends up in front of the Committee as a subject of the hearings.

Most significantly, the hearings and witch hunt themselves used media in order to reach the audiences, again due to the awareness on the impact of the former.

> In highly publicized hearings, both the House of Representatives and Senate zealously aimed to flush out potential traitors in America's midst. It was the beginning of an anti-communist campaign that later became the hallmark of much of the 1950s. [...] McCarthy's later televised appearances in Congressional hearings made a fascinating spectacle. The immediacy of the still-young broadcast media made the proceedings more sensational than ever before.[31]

The Front: A Case of "Mistaken" Identity?

This conspiracy myth-related witch hunt, affecting the American film industry and media in general became itself a topic for research and even, most significantly, media productions. However, as Jeanne Hall argues, the film industry, perhaps the most (or at least the most visibly) affected, avoided the topic[32]. Although she mentions *The Front* (Martin Ritt, 1976) among the exceptions, what is notable is the fact that the film itself focuses on the environment of television rather than on Hollywood (as does, for instance, *The Way We Were,* Sidney Pollack, 1973). As a parenthesis, this interest in the topic that emerged in the 1970s can be significant for that period itself[33]. Coming back to the choice of television as the environment for the film, it was explained first of all as a personal choice, as the filmmakers themselves had been blacklisted (as had many of the actors and staff involved in the filmmaking). So, the film actually mirrored their experience and in some cases made direct reference to an event or another from their past as blacklisted people.

> Woody Allen fans and other casual viewers of *The Front* (1976) have often been puzzled that a film about the entertainment blacklist of the 1950s was set in television and Manhattan, rather than movies and Hollywood. Even more puzzling was why the plot had to be a comedy rather than the dark history it really was, both for those who were punished and for American culture at large. [...] Ritt and Bernstein's personal experiences with the blacklist, moreover, had been in their up-and-down careers in television. It was the world they knew best.[34]

The choice of *The Front* is justified by the exclusive focus of the film on the topic of blacklisting, revealing the dimensions of the officially fuelled paranoia and conspiracy myth inside and about media. This was implicitly emphasised, as I anticipated, through the main character, the most stereotypical embodiment of the common, ordinary man, with no intellectual or political interests ("he didn't even know what the Fifth Amendment was"[35]) and therefore the absurd levels reached by the collective paranoia: "The genius of *The Front* is that it managed to capture the absurdity in all of this, as when the self-described "practically illiterate" front"[36]. Buhle and Wagner also consider the film relevant for its popularity (together with the already mentioned Pollack's *The Way We Were*)[37]. Moreover, the topic itself regarded the "anathemizing

popular entertainers as 'Un-American'"[38] and therefore the revelation of their drama could only stir sympathy.

There are at least a couple of memorable scenes, concentrating the emotional message of the film. First, it is the drama of identity loss or transfer: "'People change their names,' the front shrugs, 'It's no big deal.' But the audience comes to understand that discarding an old identity for the sake of a new one is painful and humiliating—and meant to be."[39] The dialogue in the very first scene is most revealing for this dramatic and humiliating situation which seems worse than a disease in terms of one's existence and even survival.

> "Howard, I can't work anymore.", "Yeah? What, like writer's block?", "No.", "Well, what? You're not sick, are you?", "I'm blacklisted.", "Yeah, all right, but you feel okay.", "I feel terrible", "But you're healthy, besides your ulcer.", "Howard, they won't buy my scripts. I'm on a blacklist. You know what that means? It's a list of names. The studios have them, the networks, the ad agencies. You're on the list, you're marked. You don't work. So, what difference does it make if I'm healthy?"[40]

This first scene explicitly reveals the drama of the blacklisted, as the writer Alfred Miller (young and productive) approaches Howard Prince – a cashier with no political ideas or even awareness of what was going on – to attempt a final solution to continue his work and that is "borrow" Prince's name and identity.

This problem of identity and identity loss or deprivation is actually the key of the film and extends in the dramatic scenes concerning the "naming names" practice (and is, therefore, parallel to the conspiracy myth related search for "revealing", "unveiling" the mysterious identities of potential enemies). The first scene is probably most revealing for the identity drama, although, as I said, this continues as an issue throughout the film (as the character starts a romantic relation based on his fake identity of a writer or refuses to sign a manuscript as not good enough for his "name").

The lack of solutions or alternatives – legal or of other sort – of the writer (who is, not by chance, I think, at the peak of his career) transpires beyond the recognisable Woody Allen style of dialogue.

> When Alfred explains that he can't get work because he's a Communist sympathizer, Howard is genuinely baffled: "So? You always were." "It's not so popular anymore," Alfred replies. Howard naively suggests first a legal solution ("So who can you sue?") and then an illegal one ("I know some guys who will break their legs"), foreshadowing the more sophisticated strategizing that ensues when he himself is called to testify. Howard readily agrees to "front" as a writer for his friend, only mildly protesting the ten percent cut Alfred.[41]

Although the solution Alfred finds is ingenious, precisely due to the credibility of Prince, a man with no political past, it is also nonetheless dangerous and eventually humiliating: again, here we can mention the scene of Prince's refusal to put his name on a not good enough manuscript written by one of the writers he ends up being a front for, as well as other discussions, concerning the financial agreements and so on. The film describes more than a transfer of identity, it depicts an identity loss or deprivation, which affected one's name, work and social status so eventually one's life. The individual, although still creating, becomes a shadow of his own self.

West *versus* East: Patriotism, Informants and the Cold War

A second very significant focus of the film – concerning the materialising of the conspiracy myth in relation to media and the potential enemies "infiltrated" there – regards the attempts of the Committee to recruit Hecky Brown, one of key-characters of the film, played by the former blacklisted actor Zero Mostel. Most popular as a comic entertainer, Hecky is blacklisted (for crimes far more ambiguous than Alfred Miller's open communist views) and ends up desperate for not being able to work and provide for his family. He faces humiliating situations (the extremely low payment he must accept when is, for once, hired) and he eventually commits suicide. During the tragic transition, a key moment is marked by his dialogues with Hennessey, the representative or voice of the Committee. Against Hecky's openly manifested desperation and his offer to do *whatever* necessary in order to be rehabilitated, Hennessey asks for his cooperation, meaning the spying on the seemingly innocent Howard Prince.

> "You don't remember their names either?", "I'm terrible with names.", "They remember you.", "I'm a well-known personality. You talked with these people?", "Some of them were kind enough to write letters.", "Then you know who they are. So it's not so important I remember.", "You know already. Your sincerity is important. Your desire to cooperate fully.", "I told you what I did! I apologized! I come to you on my hands and knees, Mr. Hennessy. Please. All I wanna do is work. That's all I care about. I have a wife. Two growing boys. [...] I sold my car last week for peanuts! A brand-new model! [...] I can't pay the rent, Mr. Hennessey.", "Do you know Howard Prince? [...] Think you could get to know him better?", "I'm not good at that sort of thing. Honestly...", "He knows you already. You're very likable. I'm sure he feels sympathy for you.", "What could I find out?", "Who his friends are. What he does in his spare time. Where he stands on the issues of the day. ", "Can't you ask him that yourself?", "If he were part of the communist conspiracy, could we believe him?" "You want me to spy on Howard Prince?", "We're in a war, Mr. Brown. Against a ruthless and tricky enemy who will stop at nothing [...] to destroy our way of life. To be a spy on the side of freedom is an honor." "And if I spy on Howard Prince, I can work?", "I don't do the hiring, Mr. Brown. I only advise about Americanism. But in my opinion, as the sign of a true patriot... it would certainly help."[42]

The scene not only follows a patterns of McCarthyism pressure and coercion but also actually parallels the communist recruitment of informers in Cold War Eastern Europe, as many of them, far from offering voluntary service, were pressed or blackmailed to inform on their friends, colleagues or family (under threat or following political detention). The soft language used when describing the process of recruitment – "some of them were kind enough to write letters" – attempts to dissimulate de pressure and coercion. This actually mirrors the process of signing of the "agreement" and of "informative reports" of Eastern European recruited collaborators as described by the following paragraph in the dictionary provided by the (Romanian) National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (NCSSA):

By the signing of the *Engagement,* the status of collaborator – informer, resident or host for meeting houses – became official; a status which a person voluntarily accepted (when the recruitment was made based on "patriotic feelings") or coercion, "compromising methods" or blackmail. The circumstances in which the document was signed with the secret services [Securitate, in Romania] were minutely described in the the officers' reports.[43]

The methods described above are clearly similar to those concentrated in the film, as Hennessey makes use both of reference to *patriotic feelings* (being a spy on the "right" side, that of the Americanism) and *coercion* (the blacklisting in the dramatic forms described above). In Hecky's case it becomes apparent – during his struggle to cope with the request (his disturbing search through Prince's things) but especially through his suicide – that the coercion was the actual weapon and not the explicitly mentioned patriotism which, in the scene quoted above, takes a grotesque shape, most visibly since it is not a sufficiently convincing slogan.

Conclusions

For the contemporary society – especially due to the post-war technological progress and massification and commodification of information, increasingly easy to reproduce and distribute – the media has become one of the most influential factors of human life, establishing values and behavioural patterns, favouring some against others, deciding between the positive and negative models. Both as a contemporary storyteller and as model in terms of ethics and distribution of good and evil, the media found in traditional mythological narrative structures a great source, for both forms (symbolism, recognisable patterns) and content (the myth's providing of meaning and coherence). This myth recycling strategy used by media is also to be found in political discourse, in the latter's struggle to legitimise leaders and policies, to persuade electors and offer convincing models. The emotional impact of these recognisable (or unconsciously recognisable) patterns is expected to be high and surpass the rational factors. During the Cold War and especially at the beginning of it, one particular myth structure detached itself and this favoured the conspiracy myth, discussed by Girardet and others. The attributes of this myth structure involved and reflected (as well as transmitted) the feelings of fear, anxiety and even community paranoia against a mysterious (or disguised enemy). While I discussed elsewhere[44] the shape taken by these anxieties in anti-American propaganda, here I focused on its counterpart, the "Red Scare" that marked, through McCarthyism and blacklisting, the late 1940s and 1950s in the United States, affecting implicitly and explicitly the media: the film industry and television. In the 1970s, films like *The Front* made a significant contribution by telling the story of the blacklisted film and

television professionals, many of them rehabilitated and involved in filmmaking. The focus on a character such as Howard Prince – that has no political interests and still ends up as hunted by the system besides the actually affected characters of writers and actors –, speak about the absurdity and cruelty of this witch hunt, which takes, as I have tried to emphasise, similar forms to what happened behind the Iron Curtain. The dialogues reveal the deep drama of those deprived of their identity and life through blacklisting, leaving them only tragic alternatives such as spying or suicide. Despite its comic Woody Allen accents, the film describes therefore one of the most dramatic and disturbing effects of what started as a conspiracy myth or theory, moving from a psychological or emotional issue to its violent materialisation.

Works Cited

Arnold, Gordon B. *Conspiracy Theory in Film, Television, and Politics*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008.

Bertrand, Ina. "'Goodbye Mr Red': Paranoia and Film Culture after the Second World War." *Journal of Australian Studies* 15.28 (1991): 29-39.

Buhle, Paul, and Dave Wagner. *Hide in Plain Sight: the Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950-2002*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Castells, Manuel. *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Vol. 1, The rise of the network society.* Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

—. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Vol. 2, The Power of Identity*. Blackwell, 1997.

—. *End of Millennium (The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, volume III).* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

Evans, Jessica, and Stuart Hall. eds. *Visual Culture: the Reader*. London: Sage Publications, 1999.

Fătu-Tutoveanu, Andrada. "Identity Stereotypes: The U.S. in the Romanian Media of the late 1940s: Political Cartoons (Image Analysis)." *Americana* 6, no. 2 (2010). Online journal, http://americanaejournal.hu/

—. "Soviet Cultural Colonialism: Culture and Political Domination in the late 1940s-early 1950s Romania." *Trames* 1 (2012): 77-93.

—. "'America is Sad': Images of Crisis and Media Construction of an American Anti-utopia in Early Cold War Communist Propaganda." *Caietele Echinox* 25 (2013): 237-251.

—. "The Reversed Odyssey. Identity Construction, Cultural Archetypes and Stereotypes in Contemporary American Cinema. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008)", In Adrian Radu (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference, Constructions of Identity (VII), Cluj-Napoca, 24-26 October 2013*, Edited by Adrian Radu, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2014.

—, and Corneliu Pintilescu. "Religious 'Avatars' and Implicit Religion: Recycling Myths and Religious Patterns within Contemporary US Popular Culture." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 11.33 (2012): 182-205.

Frunză, Sandu. "Media Communication and the Politics of the Symbolic Construction of Reality." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 29 (2011): 182-202.

Gill, Graeme J. *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Hall, Jeanne. "The Benefits of Hindsight: Re-Visions of HUAC and the Film and Television Industries in *The Front* and *Guilty by Suspicion*." *Film Quarterly* (2000): 15-26.

Hazlehurst, Cameron. "The Conspiracy Myth." *Lloyd George*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall (1968): 148-57.

Index de termeni şi abrevieri cu utilizare frecventă în documentele Securităţii, www.cnsas.ro.

Kellner, Douglas. "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture", in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003.

Milošević, Katarina, and Miša Stojadinović. "Understanding the Contemporary Political Myth through the Prism of National Identity." *Facta Universitatis-Series: Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History* 11.1 (2012): 77-87.

Murray, H. A. "The Possible Nature of a 'Mythology' to Come." In H. A. Murray (Ed.), *Myth and Mythmaking*. New York: George Braziller, 1960.

Roske, Octavian. "Dicţionarul biografic al represiunii: metodologie, format, surse." *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 3-4 (2007): 133-149.

The Front. Dir. Martin Ritt 1976. DVD. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2004.

Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

Törnquist-Plewa, Barbara. *The Wheel of Polish Fortune: Myths in Polish Collective Consciousness during the First Years of Solidarity*. Diss. Lund University, 1992.

Voegelin, Eric. *Political Religions*. Vol. 23. Edwin Mellen Pr, 1986.

Wolfe, Gary K. "Dr. Strangelove, Red Alert, and Patterns of Paranoia in the 1950's." *Journal of Popular Film*, 5:1 (1976): 57-67.

Notes

[1] Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, Corneliu Pintilescu. "Religious 'Avatars' and Implicit Religion: Recycling Myths and Religious Patterns within Contemporary US Popular Culture." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 11.33 (2012): 182-205.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 82-205.
[3] Eric Voegelin, *Political Religions.* Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986.
[4] Graeme J. Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 3-4.
[5] *Ibidem.*
[6] Sandu Frunză, "Media Communication and the Politics of the Symbolic Construction of Reality." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologie*s 29 (2011), p. 194-195.
[7] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*. Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 28.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 9.
[9] Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. Vol. 1, The Rise of the Network Society. Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
[10] Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, Corneliu Pintilescu, *op.cit.*, p. 183.
[11] Jessica Evans, Stuart Hall. eds. *Visual Culture: the Reader*. London: Sage Publications, 1999, p. 3.
[12] Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, "The Reversed Odyssey. Identity Construction, Cultural Archetypes and Stereotypes in Contemporary American Cinema. The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008)", In Adrian Radu (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference, Constructions of Identity (VII), Cluj-Napoca, 24-26 October 2013*, Edited by Adrian Radu, Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 153-163.
[13] Graeme J. Gill, *op.cit.,* p. 3-4.

[14] Katarina Milošević, Miša Stojadinović. "Understanding the Contemporary Political Myth through the Prism of National Identity." *Facta Universitatis-Series: Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History* 11.1 (2012), p. 80.
[15] Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, "'America is Sad': Images of Crisis and Media Construction of an American Anti-utopia in Early Cold War Communist Propaganda." *Caietele Echinox* 25 (2013): 237-251.
[16] Gordon B. Arnold, *Conspiracy Theory in Film, Television, and Politics*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008, p. 2.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 1.
[18] Gary K. Wolfe, "Dr. Strangelove, Red Alert, and Patterns of Paranoia in the 1950's," *Journal of Popular Film*, 5:1 (1976), p. 57.
[19] Gordon B. Arnold, *op. cit.*, 19.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 2.
[21] Gary K. Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[22] Gordon B. Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[23] Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture", in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003, also available online at http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/SAGEcs.htm.
[24] Gordon B. Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[25] Jeanne Hall, "The Benefits of Hindsight: Re-Visions of HUAC and the Film and Television Industries in *The Front* and *Guilty by Suspicion*." *Film Quarterly* (2000), p. 16.
[26] Gordon B. Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[27] Jeanne Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[28] Gordon B. Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[29] *Ibidem.*
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 15.
[31] *Ibidem.*
[32] Jeanne Hall, *op.cit.*, p. 16.
[33] *Ibidem.*
[34] Paul Buhle, Dave Wagner. *Hide in Plain Sight: The Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950-2002*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
[35] *Ibidem*, p. 3.
[36] *Ibidem.*
[37] *Ibidem*, p. 1.
[38] *Ibidem.*
[39] *Ibidem*, p. 3.
[40] *The Front*. Dir. Martin Ritt 1976. DVD. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2004.
[41] Jeanne Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 20
[42] *The Front*, 1976.
[43] *Index de termeni şi abrevieri cu utilizare frecventă în documentele Securităţii*, available at www.cnsas.ro.
[44] Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, "America is Sad", p. 237-251.

Copyright of Caietele Echinox is the property of Echinox Cultural Foundation and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.