Chapter 7

Gramophone, Telephone, Radio, Spy: Mediation and Espionage

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A crucial moment in John le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2017c/1974) occurs when George Smiley returns to his home to find his wife Ann, and his colleague Bill Haydon, in a post-coital tableau. 'Smiley returned unexpectedly from Berlin to find Bill Haydon stretched on the drawing-room floor of [his] house in Bywater Street and Ann playing Liszt on the gramophone. Ann was sitting across the room from him in her dressing gown, wearing no make-up. There was no scene, everyone behaved with painful naturalness' (le Carré 2017c, 183).

A scene straight out of the most banal English melodrama, the motif of the gramophone lends the moment a particular resonance. As we will come to find out, the scene is important in the narrative because it indicates the crucial tactical manoeuvre that Haydon (and the Soviet spymaster Karla) play on Smiley, to blind him to Haydon's political betrayal by making all-too-evident the personal one. Ann breaks three 'rules' or taboos in going to bed with Haydon: her lover is in the Circus; he is 'Set' (in the circle of friends and family); and she receives him at Bywater Street. More importantly for Smiley, Haydon has somehow 'hurt her deeply, which was the sin of sins' (le Carré 2017c, 183). However, the presence of the gramophone—an audio playback device which plays a 'record'—indicates the deep implication of sound transmission technologies in the novel and its adaptations. (1) In a sense, the crucial 'record' here is Smiley's memory, but the narrative is full of recordings, files, folders, documents.

This chapter will analyse the specific connection of *Tinker Tailor* and its adaptations with the networks of the period of analogue communications. Using the media theory of Friedrich Kittler, William Urrichio, and Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, I will investigate the connection

between espionage and transmissions, in the use of telephones, coded radio broadcasts, and in terms of analogue tape recording, which make key appearances in the texts. Radio espionage networks, and especially the phenomenon of numbers stations, have become part of spycraft's culturally visible (or audible) presence, but also have drawn this kind of clandestine communication into the realm of the uncanny. Ghost signals, still broadcast on analogue radio bands (collected in such commercially-available collections as *The Conet Project* (1997)), attest to the effectiveness and longevity of such techniques, but also bespeak the vulnerability of such operations. Two recurrent concerns in this chapter will be security and subjectivity, both threatened by the increasing diffusion of contemporary channels of mediation and transmission. In the espionage narrative, the motif of betrayal becomes modulated by the pervasiveness of surveillance.

Conversations

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy was published in 1974, but the technology and apparatus of spycraft presented in the novel is not dissimilar from that operating during the Second World War. In a world of espionage where information is the currency and capital—in terms of acquisition, exploitation, and trade (2)—much of the actual 'treasure' is produced and delivered *by hand*. When Smiley requires further information in pursuit of the mole Gerald, he twice sends Peter Guillam into the Circus to 'burgle' the files and logbooks stored there. Toby Esterhase, Roy Bland, and Bill Haydon take Circus files *by hand* to the Camden Lock safe-house for Polyakov to photograph. In the 2011 film of *Tinker Tailor*, we see Control sign, *by hand*, his typewritten resignation letter. Secure technologies of transmission, such as the coded teletype that Ricky Tarr uses in both Hong Kong and in Paris, are bound up with temporising and betrayal: Tarr has to return to London, to speak to Smiley, Guillam, and Lacon face-to-face, in order to tell his story.

As I will explore in this chapter, the crucial technological communications device used in the novel is the telephone, but this is almost entirely insecure: when Guillam reports to Smiley that he phoned Lacon to arrange a meeting, and had no reason to suspect that the phone might be tapped, Smiley retorts that 'There was every reason' (le Carré 2017c, 79). Essentially, the world of the Circus is that of what Lacon calls 'your generation … your legacy' (le Carré 2017c, 86), and what Connie Sachs labels her 'lovely boys,' 'trained to Empire, trained to rule the waves' (le Carré 2017c, 129). This is the wartime generation, of course, now in their 50s and in senior positions, if not quite Control. Little wonder that standard spycraft in the mid-1970s is aligned with tested, wartime procedures, familiar to these 'boys,' these 'old hands.'

The date of *Tinker Tailor*'s publication provides several resonant historical conjunctions which seem to suggest that the technological apparatus of the Circus is, at best, antiquated. Richard Nixon, in August 1974, was forced to resign the Presidency in relation to the Watergate Hotel burglaries and the subsequent cover-ups involving the White House 'plumbers' unit (a name reflecting that their job was to stop leaks, but which also has curious echoes of le Carré's scalphunters and lamplighters), and as documented in the audio tapes that recorded conversations in the Oval Office. The sound-activated taping system which had been introduced by Lyndon Johnson, Nixon's predecessor, produced the audio evidence through which Nixon was eventually forced to resign. Nixon's downfall can be considered a curious case of auto-espionage where the targets 'bug' themselves. It was the legally enforced release of this incriminating, technologically acquired information which sealed Nixon's political fate.

In the same year, Francis Coppola released the film *The Conversation*, which won the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes. The film is, however, the masterwork of its editor, Walter Murch. Murch was part of the generation of filmmakers that grew up in the 1960s, and attended postgraduate film

school in Los Angeles, at the University of Southern California. Among these filmmakers and enthusiasts were Coppola, George Lucas, John Milius, and Jim McBride. They gathered under the aegis of Coppola's 'American Zoetrope' film facility/production house, out of which films such as Lucas's *THX1138* (1970) and *The Conversation* were made. In two books, *In the Blink of an Eye* (2001) and *The Conversations* (2002) with Michael Ondaatje, Murch outlined the process by which he edits film and sound. Murch suggests that *dis*-continuity is fundamental to representation: that the world is too much, too full, to be represented without editing, without discontinuousness:

> We must render visual reality discontinuous, otherwise perceived reality would resemble an almost incomprehensible string of letters without word separation or punctuation. When we sit in a dark theatre, then we find edited film a (surprisingly) familiar experience. 'More like thought than anything else', in Huston's words. (Murch 2001, 63)

Murch believes that editing is analogous to alphabetised spacing, to a language, a grammar: it is spacing and segmentation, the condition of film editing itself that allows representation of the world. Comprehensibility comes through fragmentation and the re-ordering of visual impressions into a time-based montage. In the film of *Tinker Tailor*, we see Connie Sachs (Kathy Burke) doing this very thing, operating a Steenbeck machine to view and edit film.

In *The Conversation*, a meditation (and technical *tour-de-force*) on audio tape, surveillance, politics and ethics, made in the lee of the Watergate crisis, the 'bug-man' Harry Caul (Gene Hackman) is contracted to record the assignations of the young wife of a high-powered executive and her lover. The film begins with a high-angle shot of Union Square in San Francisco, where a crowd circulates, some having lunch, some talking, some feeding pigeons, some sleeping. We hear a band playing, as the camera zooms slowly in. We see a mime artist reproduce the body

language of a sequence of people, including an unremarkable middle-aged man in a grey-brown suit and see-through raincoat, who is drinking coffee: this middle-aged man is Harry Caul. Caul is repressed, uptight, a professional; but he inhabits an instrumental morality which, in the past, has led him to be complicit in the deaths of the 'target' of one of his jobs. 'I don't care what they're talking about, I just want a nice fat recording,' he says. This has damaged him, and his own 'caul,' the membrane which protects him from the world, makes him view it askew. As the camera pulls back, distortions and glitches are heard on the soundtrack. The film cuts to a shot through crosshairs, and momentarily engages the idea that what we have is a point-of view shot of a sniper (as at the beginning of *Dirty Harry* (1971), also set in San Francisco); a cut-away reveals a man on a roof, holding not a rifle but a directional microphone. What we have been hearing is the feed from audio surveillance; what we have been seeing is the point-of-view of the surveillance operatives.

The film opens out from, and returns to, the scene in Union Square throughout the film. Realising that there is something more going on than a simple case of adultery, Caul refuses to give up the tape, and reviews it once more. In a crucial scene, Murch has the film itself begin to mimic the emotional and thought processes of Caul as he tries to decode key passages, some of them garbled. As he manipulates the reel-to-reel tape decks, moving backwards and forwards to try to hear dialogue between the lovers, the film cuts to diegetic shots of the park: the visual track is determined by the sound track here, and we cut to what Caul himself is visualising as the audio plays. When he stops the tape, we cut back to shots of Hackman's face, or point-of-view shots of the equipment and Caul's hands. This blurring of interiority and exteriority is crucial, technically and thematically, for as the film continues it becomes apparent that what Caul *thinks*

he knows is not necessarily true. One not only has to be able to *hear* words without distortion; one has to be able to decode it clearly, too.

The film of *Tinker Tailor* has a similar sequence. We see Smiley (Gary Oldman) in his hotel room, running tapes backwards and forwards. It is as if, of course, these tapes are in actuality running through his mind. The tapes become a physical and auditory emblem of the work of memory that is so crucial to the unravelling of the Gerald plot, and the playback of the tapes allows Smiley to make intuitive connections. At a key point he stops the playback with a click, and this is the moment of 'breakthrough,' a cinematic device which has no real analogue in the incremental, deductive methods that Smiley uses in le Carré's novel, and in which there is no moment of revelation, as '[h]e had always known it was Bill. Just as Control had known, and Lacon in Mendel's house. Just as Connie and Jim had known, and Alleline and Esterhase' (le Carré 2017c, 394). At this moment, through his auditory manipulation of time and memory, Smiley comes to know the shape of the plot.

Harry Caul, in *The Conversation*, plugs in a filter and plays back the tape a last time, and hears the lover say: 'he'd kill us if he got the chance.' At this point, Harry's past conditions his hearing, and there is a wonderfully poignant moment as he switches of the equipment and resets all the dials to zero, as a piano figure plays quietly on the soundtrack: this is the point where the instrument begins to *feel*. But Harry reads the line incorrectly. As Murch says himself:

> Then, most unexpectedly, we discover that Harry has—all along—mentally altered the cadence of the line, which is hypersensitivity, because of what happened in the past, where people were killed as a result of his actions. So he *chooses* which of the characters are likely to be the innocent victims—the attractive young couple, particularly the girl. […] Harry has used all the technical filters to clarify the line. What sabotages him is the

> mental filter, the subjective filter that chooses to hear an inflection that isn't really there, because of his own past history. (Ondaatje 2002, 250)

Where Caul hears 'he'd *kill* us if he got the chance,' assuming that this would be the cuckolded Director's revenge, the true reading of the line is: 'he'd kill *us* if he got the chance,' i.e., if the young couple didn't kill him first. Murch concedes another blurring of boundaries, one where duplication and tape once again come together. 'I had a sense of doubling,' Murch tells Ondaatje:

> I'd be working on the film late at night, looking at an image of Harry Caul working on his tape, and there would be four hands, his and mine. Several times I was so tired and disoriented that Harry Caul would push the button to stop the tape and I would be amazed that the film didn't also stop! (Ondaatje 2002, 154)

Murch and Caul overlap, one editor becoming the other, diegesis and the 'real' blurring. *The Conversation* is a film that not only critiques the ethical and technical conditions of audio surveillance, but embodies it, necessarily, implicating itself in the material and political texture of the early 1970s. For it is the Watergate scandal, of course, which frames *The Conversation*.

The final scene of *The Conversation* shows Caul, now convinced that his own apartment has been bugged, ripping down the plaster walls until he is left, amidst the wreckage, still without incontrovertible proof. This paranoia reaches no edge, no conclusion. Paranoia, conspiracy, surveillance, covert operations: all had been a highly visible part of American popular culture in the 1960s, and considering the events of the decade, perhaps this is no surprise. Fredric Jameson suggested that paranoia and a belief in conspiracies is a function of the subject's dislocation in the contemporary 'world system': that there is 'some deeper incapacity of the postmodern subject to process history itself' (Jameson 1992, 16). Conspiracies loom large because of the

inability to process information properly (like Harry Caul); yet believing in conspiracies in the early 1970s was valid, as conspiracies indeed existed. How different, then, is the matter of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. There is no grand conspiracy of 'deep state' forces; instead, the secret state is itself penetrated from without, by a single 'mole' whose activities threaten the very existence of those secret operations. Although Haydon is unmasked at the end of *Tinker Tailor*, the Circus itself is at the point of collapse.

At the beginning of the next Smiley novel, *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), the Circus offices are in a similar state to those of Caul's apartment, with the very fabric taken apart in the hunt for hidden microphones. This signals a shift in the technological space of the Circus where, as I have noted above, in *Tinker Tailor* any espionage operations must take place *in person* (by Guillam), the files removed *by hand*. The operations of Haydon seem curiously antediluvian in comparison to Harry Caul's sophisticated audio-technical mastery; the machinery of British Cold War espionage appears to be, like the generation who now manage it, curiously out of date. The technical apparatus of the 1979 BBC television adaptation of *Tinker Tailor* works in a very similar post-war, back-room, file-clerking bureaucratic manner, with offices resembling those that one might find in a provincial English law firm. By the time of the 2011 film adaptation, however, as we shall see, the imagination of the very space of the Circus has shifted markedly, and is much more deeply technologized.

Telephones

In 'Phantasia and Technèē at the Fin-de-siècle,' William Uricchio identifies 'the parallel histories of storage media (photography, phonograph and gramophone, the motion picture) and transmission media (telegraph, telephone, and television), both rooted in the media technologies

of the first decades of the 19th century' (Uricchio 2005, 31), with the latter identified as implicated in a metaphysics of presence. Uricchio writes:

> The telephone, (ideal-typical) television, and *camera obscura* all operate in 'real' time, maintaining the temporal simultaneity of the viewing subject and the world viewed. Moreover, they construct a kind of spatial contiguity, connecting distant spaces through sight lines, wires, or radio waves. By contrast, media such as film, photography and recorded music are predicated upon temporal displacement, bringing images and sounds from the past into the viewer's present. Because of this temporal disjunction, they have the privilege of premeditation. (Uricchio 2005, 37)

The telephone presents an insistent simultaneity, or instantaneity of communication. On the telephone, you feel the presence of the other speaker, there *at the same time* as you. But where is that other speaker, at the other end of the line? Sound broadcast or transmission technologies enabled a form of *embodiment* through tele-presence, the belief that the other was somehow present in the room as you spoke to him/her via radio or telephone. In that sense, to know someone is there, that you are speaking to a person on the other end of the line, feels ontologically more secure than broadcasting into the ether. This station-to-station communication interpellates the caller/called as a node on a physical network; radio transmissions imply a more dispersed mediation (and subject).

Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, in *Life after New Media* (2012), attempt to renegotiate an understanding of mediation, not

> as a translational or transparent layer or intermediary between independently existing entities (say, between the producer and consumer of a film or TV program). It is a complex and hybrid process that is simultaneously economic, social, cultural,

> psychological, and technical. Mediation, we suggest, is all-encompassing and indivisible. This is why 'we' have never been separate from mediation. (Kember and Zylinska 2012, xv)

Drawing on Deleuze and Bernard Stiegler, Kember and Zylinska 'read mediation as an intrinsic condition of being-in and becoming-with the technological world' (xviii), a 'media flow' from which both subjects and institutions are instantiated. From this they propose a 'vitality of media': a '*lifeness* of media—that is, the possibility of the emergence of forms always new, or its potentiality to generate unprecedented connections and unexpected events' (Kember and Zylinska, 2012: xvii). In the light of Kember and Zylinska's argument about the 'intrinsic condition of being-in and becoming-with the technological world,' we can understand the recording of voice on tape to be a figure for the coalescing of subjectivity in the flow or matrix of voices, the 'ocean of sound.'

It would seem that such a conception of a network is actually at odds with the kind of bilateral 'trade' agreements which seem to constitute both political and espionage relationships in *Tinker Tailor*. When Guillam picks up Smiley in his sports car to drive him to an initial appointment with Lacon, he says: 'I asked whether 'lateralism' was a word to you', to which Smiley replies rather testily in the negative. Guillam explains:

> In your day the Circus ran itself by regions. Africa, satellites, Russia, China, South-East Asia, you name it; each region was commanded by its own juju man, Control sat in heaven and held the strings. […] Well today everything operational is under one hat. It's called London Station. Regions are out, lateralism is in. […] It makes us more secure. (le Carré 2017c, 35)

Lateralism is never mentioned again in the novel, but its deployment here emphasises the binary structures of Cold War conflict, that communication and espionage is, in effect, 'station to station' rather than part of a (very insecure) network. This, in part, helps explain Smiley's abhorrence of the 'radio man,' to which I will return shortly. As we find out much later in the novel, the Witchcraft 'game' that Karla plays is not simply to obtain British state secrets; with Alleline using the material to pitch a much stronger relationship with the American secret services, Karla hopes to obtain American 'treasure' in exchange for the Witchcraft 'chicken feed'. He cannot do this directly, so he deploys Witchcraft to use the Circus as a kind of relay station, a channel through which much more valuable material can pass. In *Tinker Tailor*, espionage is recognised as a kind of telephonic system, and mis-recognised by most as being the more secure for it; but as we have already seen, Smiley knows that 'there was every reason' to suspect that this station-to-station call is also being tapped. The Circus, except for Haydon, misunderstands who is on the other end of the line.

Telephones are, however, more secure than radio, an etheric network that both Smiley and Karla come to distrust entirely. Smiley confesses that 'We all have our prejudices and radio men are mine. They're a thoroughly tiresome lot in my experience, bad fieldmen and overstrung, and disgracefully unreliable when it comes down to doing the job' (le Carré 2017c, 235). This is part of a conversation Smiley has with Peter Guillam about Karla's experience with using radio with a cell in San Francisco. Karla was sent to the West Coast of the United States to re-activate a cell that had lain dormant for want of communication channels: he 'had smuggled a transmitter across the Canadian border and lain up for three weeks in San Francisco breaking in a new operator' (le Carré 2017c, 231). Test transmissions were made, according to a code book: 'according to a temporary inattention on the part of Rudnev's cryptographers, we were ahead of

the game. The wranglers broke the code and that's how we got our information' (le Carré 2017c, 231–32). (3) Smiley uses the word 'network' for the Californian cells, the same word Jim Prideaux uses for the Czech agents he had recruited: both groups are exposed and 'rolled up' without difficulty. Once the network was blown, 'Karla had never once touched illegal radio. He cut it right out of his handwriting' (le Carré 2017c, 245). (4)

Radio had, of course, been a significant part of espionage operations during the Second World War. In *Between Silk and Cyanide: A Codemaker's War 1941–1945* (1999), Leo Marks recalls his work for SOE (Special Operations Executive), who sent agents into Occupied Europe, who reported back using wireless and code phrases. Marks reports on several networks which themselves had been 'blown,' unbeknownst to SOE, which then fed back erroneous or misdirecting information from Abwehr operators. Marks fights a long internal battle to improve the security of these operations, but it is only the revelation of massive failure and collapse of cells in the Netherlands that allow his plans to come to fruition, otherwise blocked by institutional inertia and the familiar ways of operating. Early in the memoir, he notes that one of their Norwegian agents 'gave some of his messages to a wireless operator to be transmitted in the normal way (SOE was blasé enough to regard wireless traffic as normal)' (Marks 1999, 13). Even coded transmissions run the risk of being broken, or being 'indecipherable': a mistake in the coding rendering them almost impenetrable. To treat wireless as 'normal,' Marks implies, is an act of naïve folly. One imagines that he too would much prefer to 'cut it out of his handwriting.'

Marks also reveals something about telephones, in his typically arch manner: 'Scrambler telephones were in great demand in SOE because there were not only proof against crossed lines and wire-tapping but implied that those who possessed them had something to say which was worth hearing' (Marks 1999, 37). We can see again how the scrambled, station-to-station call is

thought to be far more secure, a security which both implies and affirms status within the espionage hierarchy. To be added to this multiple-bilateral network is to become an important node, a source and destination of valuable information. The diffusion of radio—anyone with the right equipment can tune in—not only makes it less secure, but also means it has less capital within the economy of espionage. SOE, a small outfit in the British wartime espionage operations, is all too reliant upon it.

Smiley's rejection of radio, and 'radio men,' is curiously gendered. As Marks recalls, much of the work of coding and codebreaking for SOE was undertaken by the FANY Corps, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry who were co-opted into this work. These 'girls' worked in groups and enthusiastically pursued Marks's demand for 'no indecipherables.' Many of the agents, most notably Violette Szabo, were also women. Smiley's description of the 'radio man,' 'bad fieldmen and overstrung, and disgracefully unreliable,' and particularly 'overstrung', implies a kind of male hysteria, a lack of the personal control that Smiley and Karla almost entirely inhabit. (It is in this scene with Guillam, where he talks about his meeting with Gerstmann and revealed much more about himself and his relationship with Ann than he obtained from Karla, that this control slips.) The homosocial world of the Circus, one directed by a man called Control for many years, embodies stereotypical characteristics of British Establishment masculinity, to do with restraint, confidence, and an assumption of mastery. (5) As Geraint D'Arcy notes in his article 'Information and Gender in the Novel and Adaptations of John le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*' (2014), the female characters of Ann Smiley and Connie Sachs spend most of the narrative offstage, in a kind of exile, and in fact represent different kinds of information, located in problematic memories, that is of use to the male characters. If the men speak station-to-station, D'Arcy, in his chapter in this volume, suggests that the women are symbolised by the

information that passes between them. The diffused and mediated subject *of radio* is de-masculinised.

The circulation of women, of course, is crucial to the trap that Karla sets for Smiley in relation to Haydon: his wife Ann, as the 'last illusion of the illusionless man' (le Carré 2017c, 416) will emotionally distort Smiley's perception of Haydon, the personal betrayal masking the political one. In a sense, Ann is a counter passed between the two men in the 'game.' This corresponds to the way in which Gayle Rubin understood gender and kinship relations within patriarchal systems to operate, in her well-known essay 'The Traffic in Women' (1975), in which she writes:

> If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the woman being a conduit of the relationship rather than a partner to it. […] If women are the gifts, then it is men who are the exchange partners. And it is the partners, not the presents, upon whom reciprocal exchange confers its quasi-mystical power of social linkage. The relations of such a system are such that women are in no position to realize the benefits of their own circulation. As long as the relations specify that men exchange women, it is the men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges—social organization. (Rubin 1975, 174)

Women, women as information, pass along the male telephonic system of espionage in le Carré's *Tinker Tailor*, a system of exchange and 'trade,' as I noted above. In the Circus, the 'Mothers' operate the material system of file storage and distribution; as we will see, particularly in the 2011 film, they are also physical operators of switchboards, radio sets, and tape machines.

Tapes

Developed by AEG and BASF during the Second World War, who 'hit upon the technique of radio frequency premagnetizing' (Kittler: 106), audio-tape technologies are bound up with the military and espionage. Greg Milner, in *Perfecting Sound Forever* (2009), narrates the story of one Jack Mullins, who during the Second World War was posted to an RAF facility in Farnborough, England, 'to investigate why some British radar stations were picking up severe interference' (Milner 2009, 114). While there, Mullin tuned in to German radio, 'broadcast far and wide thanks to the Reich's network of strong transmitters' (Milner 2009, 114). He began to question why he was hearing the 'crisp, clean sound of live music' in the middle of the night, a much more high-fidelity broadcast than the transcription discs used on American radio. Was the Berlin Philharmonic playing live in the small hours, or was there some kind of new radio technology at work? In fact, German technicians had created a vastly improved sound reproduction system in plain view. As Milner notes:

> The Magnetophon was hardly top secret. The Germans had shown off the AC-bias Magnetophon in June 1941, articles about it had appeared in general-interest magazines (some sold outside of Germany), and yet somehow the Americans knew nothing about it. Considering that the RRG was playing about 5,000 kilometres of tape every month, this has to constitute one of the oddest intelligence failures of modern warfare. (Milner 2009, 115)

High-fidelity audio tape allows control of the time of transmissions, and also affords the potential for tape manipulation: not simply reproduction, but alteration. As Friedrich Kittler, in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999) notes, 'the magnetic tape also revolutionised secret transmissions' (Kittler 1999, 107). The Abwehr (German Counterintelligence Service) 'had the 'handwriting' of every single agent recorded at the Wohldorf radio station close to Hamburg

before they went abroad on their secret mission' (Kittler 1999, 107). (6) The Abwehr, upon capturing Allied agents, were able to disrupt communications fail-safes (signs of compromise) by recording their messages on tape and manipulating them before broadcast. These deadly *Funkspielen* (radio games) went on for many years and, according to Kittler, cost the lives of up to fifty British agents (Kittler 1999, 107).

Most importantly, as N. Katherine Hayles notes in *When We Became Posthuman* (1999), 'like the phonograph, audio tape was a technology of inscription, but with the crucial difference that he had permitted erasure and rewriting' (Hayles 1999, 209). Kittler suggests that the invention of the audio-tape machine is so crucial because 'tapes can execute any possible manipulation of data because they are equipped with recording, reading, and erasing heads' (Kittler 1999, 108). This can work in the service of the (secret) state or against it. William Burroughs advocated the use of tape recording and playback as a means by which to confront and undo the programming of the 'reality studio' and the alienating viral occupation of 'the Word.' In a book of interviews and short pieces called *The Job*, also published in 1974, Burroughs identified tape technologies with political resistance, using the techniques of surveillance and espionage against state power:

> The basic operation of recording, pictures, more pictures, and playback can be carried out by anyone with a recorder and a camera. Any number can play. Millions of people carrying out this basic operation could nullify the control system which those who are behind Watergate and Nixon are attempting to impose. Like all control systems, it depends on maintaining a monopoly position. (Odier 1989, 20)

He also imagines how 'scrambling' technologies, as a metaphor for encoded (ideological) messages in mass-media communications, 'could be [used] to impose thought control on a mass

scale.' 'Remember,' he writes, 'when the human nervous system unscrambles a scrambled message this will seem to the subject like his very own ideas which just occurred to him, which indeed it did' (Odier 1989, 179). Technologies of inscription, however, can be *detourned*, re-imagined:

> It's all done with tape recorders consider this machine and what it can do it can record and playback activating a past time set by precise association a recording can be played back any the number of times you can study and analyse every pause and inflection of a recorded conversation […] a tape recorder can play back back fast slow or backwards you can learn to do these things record a sentence and speed it up now trying imitating your accelerated voice play a sentence backwards and learned to unsay what you just said… (Odier, 1989, 160)

Burroughs's instructions to turn the tape technology against itself, to disrupt the coding, again reveal the insecurities and anxieties of mediation and the network. In the early 21st century, we live in an age of encryption. With increased digital networking access comes increased securitization. We have passwords, PINs, fingerprint and facial recognition, all beyond the ken of mid-1970s espionage, to gain access to networked devices, virtual spaces, money. The word used for computer programming is 'coding'; in 1974, 'coding' was cryptography. The radical insecurity of an increasingly technologised environment is evident in the 21st-century re-imagining of *Tinker Tailor* for the screen.

The very space of the Circus in the 2011 screen adaptation is very different. The building takes the shape of a large warehouse rather than a warren of small offices; large open-plan floors, interrupted by girders and a large opening looking down into the level below (in a visual echo of *A Matter of Life and Death* (1945)), contain metal 'pods' which form secure office spaces for

Circus personnel. The first scene we see inside one of these pods is the moment of Control's resignation; the inside walls of the pods are covered with sound-insulation foam, like a recording studio, to protect the proceedings from being overhead or bugged. There is no such anxiety in either the novel or the 1979 BBC television adaptation; this is a contemporary re-imaging of Circus, and espionage space. Files are moved through this warehouse space by hand (we see women assistants pushing trolleys and opening secure cabinets) but also by automation: there is a small elevator, something like a cross between an oven and a dumb-waiter, which transports the paper files and folders from one level to another. When Guillam steals the Testify file and is almost caught doing so, the stacks are part-warehouse, part-library, as though there is a vast archive being attended by female administrators.

The credit sequence that follows Control's resignation, where he and Smiley depart the Circus, is most revealing of a different conception of the technologies of espionage. As the two men walk past their colleagues, most of whom seem shocked to witness the scene, part of the operation of the Circus goes on as normal. Around the walls of the large floor are cubicles, and in each of these cubicles sit female workers. On the desks in front of them are telephones, open-reel tape machines and what appear to be radio receivers. Sitting with their backs to the room and with headphones on, they are at once a part of the room and separated from it, as the gendered technological machinery of espionage is revealed. We see a similar 'backstage' machinery at work when Ricki Tarr seeks to use the equipment of Istanbul station (changed from the novel's Hong Kong location): telephones, reel-to-reel tape, a secure teletype. Before Guillam steals the Testify file from the Circus archives, a poster is seen on the wall: 'Remember telephone talk is not secure.' After Mendel telephones in the guise of his automobile mechanic, he hears Roy Bland whistling the tune that had been playing in the background from the garage: Guillam

knows, at that point, that the internal lines of the Circus are being monitored. In fact, earlier in the film we see a telephone conversation being taped and transcribed, with what sounds like Haydon and Esterhase in conversation, talking about Tarr. The 2011 adaptation of *Tinker Tailor* is, in a sense, a paranoid version. Where le Carré's novel is clearly drawing on the Cold War traitor tropes that were culturally urgent after the revelations about the Cambridge spy ring, the film works as if *Tinker Tailor* had been filtered through *The Conversation.*

In the novel, the key use of tape technologies is in the Camden Lock house that Polyakov uses to receive the 'Crown Jewels' from the Circus. The house is managed, in another highly revealing moment of gendering, by Millie McCraig, who somewhat disapproves of Smiley's intrusion. The house is bugged: 'two pairs [of microphones] to each room on the ground floor, one to each room upstairs. Each pair was connected to its own separate recorder'. Smiley asks Mrs McCraig to show him the system:

> Downstairs again, she showed him the switches which controlled the system. An extra switch was fitted in each finger panel. Any time Jefferson or one of the boys, as she put it, wanted to go over to record, he had only to get up and turn down the left-hand switch. From then on, the system was voice-activated; that is to say, the tape deck did not turn unless somebody was speaking.
>
> 'And where are you while all this goes on, Millie?'
>
> She remained downstairs, she said, as if that were a woman's place. (le Carré 2017c, 384)

Guillam reverses the switching so that Polyakov and 'Gerald' think the system is off, when it is, in fact, recording, providing evidence of betrayal. However, little is actually made of this process once Haydon arrives, and when the pair are confronted, they make no attempt to escape, taking their defeat and capture as a *fait accompli*. It is as if, at the very moment of the revelation

of Gerald's true identity, the tape technology becomes entirely redundant. Smiley later hears that Haydon is interrogated at Sarratt but again, Haydon passes over a narrative (or apologia) explaining his actions to Smiley *by hand*, and *in handwriting.* Once the game is over, the old ways of Circus espionage re-assert themselves; and also, in a sense, Bill Haydon re-emerges into the network of bilateral relations that would see him traded to the Soviet Union.

In *Call for the Dead* (1961), le Carré's first novel, Smiley appears as a much younger and more junior figure. Sent to interview a civil servant about accusations of Communist Party membership, a man who subsequently commits suicide, Smiley begins to unravel the truth of the matter when, visiting the widow, he answers the telephone: ''Exchange here',' he hears, ''Good morning. Your eight-thirty call'' (le Carré 2012, 22). From the very beginning of le Carré's (and Smiley's) career, the telephone, and the motif of 'Exchange,' has been crucial. *Tinker Tailor* emerges at a moment when the analogue communications systems of station-to-station calls and coded radio transmissions are shortly to be superseded by the digital global network, and at a point when the kinds of subjectivity interpellated by those systems begins to change. The multiple, anonymous subject of 'source Merlin' resolves into Gerald, and then into Haydon, the last embodiment of Empire's 'old hands.' With his death, the Circus passes into a different, much more 'lateral' mediated world.

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Notes

1. The scene is changed in the 2011 film adaptation, in which Smiley encounters Haydon alone, at the dining table, the crucial evidence being that Haydon (Colin Firth) is quietly stuffing his stockinged feet back into his desert boots. On the soundtrack, there are undecipherable beats: either feet on the floor above, or the sound of a vinyl record bumping against the end of its run-out groove.
2. It is worth noting the language of 'trade' that predominates in Le Carré's world of the Circus: the practice of espionage is 'tradecraft'; Smiley tells Karla (as Gerstmann) that the British have plenty of 'stock' to 'trade' for Karla's wife, should he decide to defect; and Witchcraft is called 'treasure' and 'gold' by Percy Alleline. What Witchcraft amounts to, in a sense, is a very ill-advised 'trading' relationship, in which the 'Crown Jewels' are exchanged for 'chicken feed'. The novel, in that sense, can be seen as a reflection of post-war, post-Empire British economic weakness, especially in relation to the United States.
3. The same problems with radio were also evident in Le Carré's *The Looking Glass War* (1965), in which the character of Leiser forgets to switch frequencies during secret radio transmissions, allowing East German security to identify his location.
4. We might note, once again, the motif of the hand and handwriting as part of verified and reliable tradecraft.
5. In his rather negative review of the 2011 film, Mark Fisher noted Oldman's performance as a 'shallow reading of his grandparents' generation: aloof, distanced, bottled-up.[…]

For Oldman, Smiley's restraint plays as repression and a certain malicious self-satisfaction' (Fisher, 2011: 37).

6. Note again the significance of the hand and handwriting in technologised espionage.