

Addendum: On a Frankly Political Note

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At the conclusion of my article in the last issue on current trends in censorship and the restriction of free inquiry,¹ I noted that the U.S.A. Patriot Act, which I considered in the latter part of the piece, was about to be renewed by the U.S. Congress. My hope, like that of most people concerned about freedom of inquiry, was that the Act would be modified in the renewal process, though I held out scant hope for such changes. My doubts were well founded. As signed into law by President Bush in March of 2006, the terms of the Act were merely extended, and all the most controversial areas were left intact. Thus the most intrusive act of its kind in the history of this country will be in place, *virgo intacta*, for several more years, enabling those who implement such things to delve into e-mails, phone calls, and even library borrowing habits virtually at will.

It has already been revealed that, at four public universities, the U.S. Department of Defense in the spring of 2005 tracked e-mail messages of students planning protests against the war in Iraq and the military policy, adopted early in the Clinton administration, of a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy on gays and lesbians in the armed services. The monitoring of these messages was part of a reporting system and database known as the Talon, created in 2003 specifically to track potential international terrorist activity. Once the messages in question surfaced—thanks, in this case, to the operation of the Freedom of Information Act (1966)—they were apparently removed from the database, but the fact that they were there at all calls into question the selectivity of such anti-terrorist surveillance programs and recalls the Vietnam era, when student groups protesting the war were routinely shadowed and infiltrated by a variety of governmental agencies, including the C.I.A. and F.B.I.² Given this level of selectivity, my example of what might happen if a message containing a passage from the *Wake* were randomly intercepted seems less and less far-fetched.

The recent mid-term election in the United States, which overturned Republican control of both houses of Congress, has put in power Democrats, many of whom have been critical of the secrecy and

protectiveness of the Bush administration and its tendency to overlook or bypass civil rights. This does not mean, however, that anything will change radically. Little resistance developed when the Patriot Act was renewed by a significant majority of both houses last March. The Democrats full know that they will not retain power in the election two years from now if they seem in any way reluctant to go along with existing anti-terror legislation.

Meanwhile, the protectiveness of the Joyce estate continues to plague Joyce scholars world wide, attracting not only the attention of the special fact-finding panel created by the Joyce Foundation to look into the matter, but also, increasingly, the popular press. The conclusions of the panel are available on the Foundation website from the Department of English at Ohio State University and need no rehearsal here. All Joyceans should look at them closely.³ The best article in a popular source about the problems of Joyceans with the Estate appeared in *The New Yorker* this past summer. With a focus on the difficulties experienced by Carol Loeb Schloss in publishing her book on Lucia Joyce, D. T. Max, the author of the piece, gives a broad, not overly optimistic, view of what relations with Stephen Joyce and the Estate are now and how they are likely to remain in the years ahead.⁴ In addition to the normal unpredictables of the scholarly enterprise, we are forced to add the vagaries and whimsicalities of the human spirit.

Notes

¹“The Censor Swings Again: Freedom of Inquiry and the Principle of Suppression,” *Papers on Joyce* 10/11 (2004-2005): 163-168. I would like to correct an omission in my notes for this article. For the information in the paragraph that deals with the popular song “Louie, Louie” (on p. 166), I am indebted to Dave Marsh, *Louie, Louie: The History and Mythology of the World’s Most Famous Rock’n’ Roll Song...* (New York: Hyperion Books, 1993).

²See Samantha Henig, “Pentagon Surveillance of Student Groups Extended to Scrutinizing E-Mail,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 21, 2006: A21. The Freedom of Information Act, created in response to government intrusiveness and secrecy in the Vietnam era, enabled the release of the 21 documents in this case, but would not necessarily apply to more “sensitive” material.

³ The new URL is <<http://english.osu.edu/research/organizations/ijjf/default/cfm>>.

⁴D. T. Max, “The Injustice Collector,” *The New Yorker* (June 19, 2006) 34-43.