

# Non-Response and Free Speech

by [G. Tod Slone](#) (June 2025)



**Once upon a time, I was** on a career pathway to tenure. But after five years, my contract was not renewed, and I was accorded a year's salary as compensation for which the college never stipulated the reason. In vain, I'd fought openly against its intrinsic corruption. Its student newspaper even published some of my criticisms. Bravo to the student editors! Well, I have no regrets, nor am I angry and full of hatred, as those who despise my criticisms tend to dismiss me. Thanks to the corruption experienced first hand, my creativity as a writer and cartoonist burgeon. If I had gained tenure, perhaps I would have eventually been dismissed anyhow, for within my very being is a strong compulsion to question and challenge—to think—as opposed to turning a blind eye and team playing. And so, after years of battling with establishment careerists—professors, poets, artists, writers, editors, curator censors, etc., I have come to conclude that the latter detest vigorous debate ... and thus free speech. Many of them

seem compelled to explicitly favor the latter, when in reality they do not.

Non-response is an interesting concept. As a veritable outlier, regarding the academic/literary establishment, I have experienced non-response almost always regarding my open questioning and challenging of its diverse adherents. On very rare occasions when I receive a response, it essentially never addresses the points of criticism made. Non-response reflects a certain inability to accept and deal with inconvenient criticisms. Truth, rude truth, is more often than not placed in the back of the buses driven by those firmly attached to their careers. As editor of a literary journal, I actually not only encourage and constantly ask for criticism, but publish the harshest received with my regard in each and every issue. Never do I ostracize a rare poet, writer or whomever who sends such criticism. Where are the other editors who do that ... in the name of free speech? I have yet to find one who explicitly requests criticism with his or her regard.

Cancel culture existed before the term became widespread. The other day, I was looking over *Poets & Writers*, which from my experience is certainly not an adherent of free speech. Non-response has been its response to my various criticisms with its regard, including especially the egregious absence of real criticism on its website (see [here](#), for example). Its fundamental purpose is to serve as a publicist for publishers, poets, writers, etc. In the perverted realm of DEI, it excludes voices of poets and writers who dare criticize, for example, the control of Big Money over poetry. Now and then, I examine its classified section and sometimes obtain grist there for my writer's mill. A paid listing by *Rattle* recently grabbed my attention and sparked this essay. Had *Rattle* radically reformed?

*RATTLE SEEKS SUBMISSIONS from Rebel Poets for the Spring*

*2025 issue: Poems may be any style or subject but must be written by poets who rebel against the literary establishment in some way. Explain with a note. Deadline: October 15. Online submissions accepted. For more information, visit our website: [www.rattle.com](http://www.rattle.com).*

In the past, I'd sent *Rattle* criticism. Its editor responded, but not really to the points made. Eventually, the editor stopped responding (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Criticism—real criticism—against the “literary establishment” constitutes the prime taboo for those in it or seeking to become part of it. And what is that establishment, if not BIG MONEY, huge sums of money? Poetry Foundation, for example, possesses a \$200 million Lilly drug-money endowment. Another of its prime cogs, the Academy of American Poets, has over \$15 million in assets. As for *Poets & Writers*, it possesses over \$11 million in assets. Such information is available on the Cause IQ website. Those organizations are non-profits!

BIG MONEY serves to co-opt, castrate, and corral conformist poets and writers seeking renown as opposed to expressing overtly rude truths. Many of the so-called rebel poets of the Beatniks sought renown and money. Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, and Diane di Prima became college professors. Ginsberg was constantly seeking renown. He was chief advertiser for the Beatniks.

As a poet and editor of a poetry journal, my voice has essentially been ostracized into oblivion by the “literary establishment.” Sure, critics exist within its realm, but they tend in reality to be paid publicists. Backslapping and self-congratulating characterizes “literary establishment” poets, not rigorous questioning and challenging. Because I stand for the latter, it has been impossible for me to obtain any grant money whatsoever. Big Money pushes poetry for the sake of poetry, not poetry apt to rattle the “literary establishment.”

*Rattle* is hardly a journal that rebels against the “literary establishment.” In essence, it forms an integral part of it.

How else could it offer a \$15,000 poetry prize and pay \$200 for each poem it publishes? On its “[Facts About Us](#)” webpage, there is no mention at all where all the money comes from. According to “Cause IQ,” *Rattle* was founded by a lawyer and real-estate mogul, Alan C. Fox, Editor-in-Chief. The Rattle Foundation has over [\\$7 million in assets](#)! Would Timothy Green, who receives over a \$100,000 annual salary as its editor, publish this essay and accompanying poem in the name of “poets who rebel against the literary establishment in some way”?

After all, I am one of very few “poets who rebel against the literary establishment” on a regular basis. Ah, any way but that way! Will Green deign to even respond to it intelligently, point by point, as opposed to ad hominem? Well, his response has been one of non-response.

Perhaps I digress or perhaps not. MONEY is key to control. MONEY is key to censoring/ostracizing outliers, real outliers, not the fake outlaw poet types highlighted in, for example, *Outlaw Poetry*. And of course the quandary: one cannot possibly be an outlaw poet if one dares criticize outlaw poets, including those like high-school English teacher Todd Moore, now deceased, founder of *Outlaw Poetry*.

Dear Mr. Slone:

I spoke to my father, the co-editor of our magazine, and have mutually agreed to retract the offer of accepting an essay by you for print in the next issue. We’re also requesting that future e-mail exchanges between you and myself, and my father and you be terminated as well. Thank you for your time. Best of luck with AD.

Sincerely,

Theron Moore [son of Todd Moore]

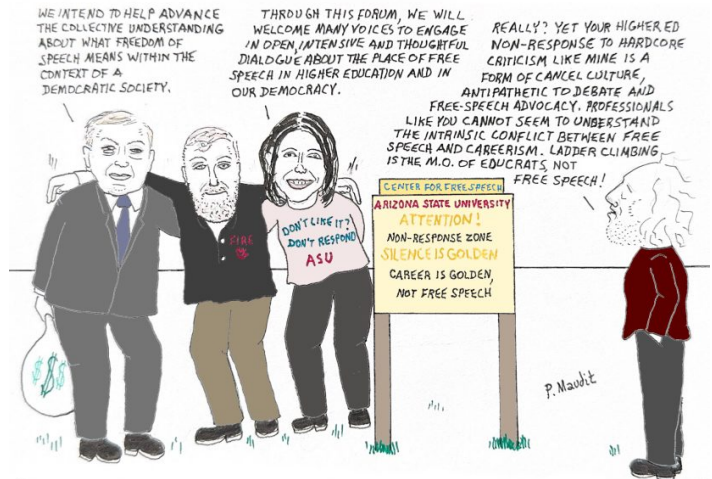
Co-editor St. Vitus’s Dance

Yes, sometimes a rare response like that one is perfect! For the brief correspondence I'd had with Moore, see [here](#). The following Todd Moore quote is featured on the *Outlaw Poetry* website today, incarnating hard-core hypocrisy, for Moore's reality was encapsulated by the response of his son above (see [outlawpoetry.com/](http://outlawpoetry.com/))?

**Non-Response – Antithesis of Debate and Free-Speech Advocacy**  
 At the Helms of Power: The Backslappers

Featuring 1.1 Million-Dollar, Salaried President Michael Crow and Executive VP/Provost Nancy Gonzales, Arizona State University; and Greg Lukianoff, President, Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression

It's kind of a strange, backslapping ritual that we go through in this town where you get awards for almost everything. [...] Everybody walks around bent-backed from slapping each other on the backs so much.  
 —Rod Serling



NB: When university leaders profess to be for free speech, a thinking individual ought to openly question and challenge that anomaly. Ladder-climbing careerists inevitably must turn a blind eye to reach the top rungs, be they tenure, provost or president. That is the egregious achilles heel of leaders claiming to be free-speech advocates! Unwanted criticism is likely the best criticism, right to the heart criticism, which is why it will tend to be ignored via non-response. ASU faculty and Gonzales chose non-response to my criticisms, as did Lukianoff. Ignoring a critic is not free-speech advocacy? The latter on paper and/or verbal proclamations are not always the same as free speech in reality.

I want a poem that threatens the reader with psychic damage the way that a 45 auto could take out the eyes. I want a poem to be so dangerous that just the simple reading of it could take you right to the existential brink of whoever or whatever you are or could ever hope to be. I want a book of poetry to be as lethal as a razor to the jugular. This time a nick, the next a slash. I want to see a book of *Outlaw Poetry* to be so dangerous it might bear this warning: Reading this book could be dangerous to your mental health.

My essay and illustrations regarding *Outlaw Poetry* must have been even more dangerous than “so dangerous.” Recently, a writer, Carl Nelson, responded to one of my essays, “[Above Criticism: NCAC, PEN America, NEA et al](#),” published in *New English Review*:

Well argued. But, of course, arguing with these people is useless. Best to let the art do it for you.

That got me thinking, which is always a plus. My response inevitably veered toward the non-response concept.

Thanks Carl. But of course we disagree ... or sort of. Criticism is not really "arguing." Criticism is in a sense an "art." Non-response is not "arguing." One can not fully perceive reality when one does not actively test the waters of democracy, which is precisely why I do test those waters...

On the same note, I was working on a satirical cartoon on a professor at the University of Arizona, so was doing a little research as to its free-speech rating, which veered me to Arizona State University, which I'd criticized over the years via a few cartoons... to which non-response was always the response (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). And so, I was surprised that ASU (not UA) had [established](#) a Center for Free Speech, which was going to hold annual free-speech forums. ASU Executive Vice President and University Provost Nancy Gonzales noted with that regard:

Through this forum, we will welcome many voices to engage in open, intensive and thoughtful dialogue about the place of free speech in higher education and in our democracy. Through presentations, brainstorming, keynote speakers and panel discussions led by a rotating free speech faculty fellow, we will maintain focus on this important topic and encourage deeper and broader community engagement.

And so I wrote Gonzales:

Please consider inviting me to speak at your Center for Free Speech spring forum. Without a doubt, I would have something quite different to bring to the table, including

the many free-speech experiences personally encountered by testing the waters of democracy.

Non-response, for example, has been the overwhelming response of college professors, poets, artists, and cultural curators, whom I've criticized over the years. Yet non-response is a clear indication of disdain for vigorous debate, an essential component of free speech. At the moment, I am writing an essay on that subject. As an example, a handful of ASU professors, who I've criticized over the years, chose not to respond. And from that dross, I created cartoons, poems, etc.. Hopefully, you will prove not to be an adherent of that very common higher ed m.o. of non-response.

My Curriculum Mortae is on my blog for your perusal: [https://www.theamericandissident.org/g\\_tod\\_slone\\_curriculum\\_mortae.html](https://www.theamericandissident.org/g_tod_slone_curriculum_mortae.html). Over the years I have published many essays, poems, plays, nonfiction novels, cartoons, aquarelles, and journal issues.

Finally, until professors in general not only brook hardcore criticism with their regard, but also encourage it, how can they expect their students to do that? How can real vigorous debate exist? As a long-time editor of a literary journal devoted to literature, democracy, and dissidence, I encourage such criticism with my regard, publish the harshest received in each and every issue, and never close the doors on those daring to send their criticisms.

Free speech must also include the voices of rare dissidents.

Later, I sent her the following:

NO RESPONSE FROM YOU! Can it get any more hypocritical for a higher-ed careerist to hold a free-speech forum? And so, I shall begin working on a satirical cartoon with your regard and will send it to the ivory-tower void, as well as the FIRE void, when finished. That is what I do and will continue to do until death do I part.

A bit harsh? Well, *ainsi soit-il*. How dare you ... speak to a provost like that, eh! Well, no cuss words. Unsurprisingly, Gonzales' response was once again non-response. Over the years, I'd also been critical of FIRE (i.e., the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression [formerly Education]) in a few satirical cartoons and non-response was also its free-speech response (see [here](#)). In essence, criticism (i.e., free speech) seems to be fine and even encouraged, unless of course the targets are those at the free-speech helms, including those of NCAC and PEN, which deigned not to respond to my criticisms ... and thus provoked me to write and cartoon with their regard. FIRE had [praised](#) ASU and no doubt will be involved in those forums.

FIRE ought to examine the concept of non-response. How does ignoring a critic, for example, constitute free-speech advocacy? FIRE ought to respond to that question. The fundamental problem it has not really addressed is quite simple: free-speech advocacy on paper and via the voice of a provost—or someone else at the helm—is not always the same as free-speech reality. How many real free-speech advocates, who've dared question and challenge free-speech advocates at the helm, have been ostracized into oblivion by the latter? Well, we'll never know.

Finally, I have never really been a professional. A real critic and free-speech advocate cannot be a professional. As noted above, a professional critic, at least in the realm of the "literary establishment" is really nothing more than a

professional publicist. My decades of experience criticizing so-called/self-proclaimed professionals has led me to conclude that to be such a professional poet, artist, journalist, professor, or even cartoonist is not such a positive thing after all. Team-playing tends to be a prime requisite of professionals. Team-playing demands a certain turning a blind eye. Professional is simply a euphemism for careerist—someone who places career first, certainly not truth and overt rude-truth telling. Most, if not all, professional poets and writers flaunt their “literary establishment” awards and publications. Tim Green does precisely that on his website. Not a single word about rebelling against the “literary establishment”! Not a damn word. And so, I sent him the following poem as a submission. Well, are you going to laugh???

### **Rattling the *Rattle***

(A Poem of Rebellion, Strictly Prohibited by a Poetry Magazine Seeking ... Poems of Rebellion)

—For Timothy Green, editor of *Rattle*

How not to rage against the venomous rattle of Money  
—its control over political elections, and even more so  
its domination and subjection of poetry and poets?  
Money, Big Money, serves to highlight bards of conformity,  
who never dare criticize the hands that feed royally!

How not to think of inaugural poets like Amanda Gorman,  
reading in front of hacks of the political establishment?  
How not to scorn Big Money’s censoring and ostracizing  
of poet outliers—real outliers—, not *faux* rebels  
like the so-called outlaw poets of *Outlaw Poetry*?

Money—poetic incongruity!—is embodied by Poetry Foundation  
—its \$200,000,000 Big Pharma endowment, which incarnates

the very *summum malum* of the grasp of the pull of cash. Other such illustrations in the realm of verse sadly flourish; perhaps one of the most aberrant to date, highlighted in an ad on the “literary establishment” website of P&W, Inc.: *Rattle* “seeks submissions from Rebel Poets [...], who rebel against the literary establishment in some way...”

*Rattle*, after all, constitutes an integral part of Big Money with its own \$7,000,000 endowed foundation, created by its editor-in-chief lawyer and real-estate mogul Alan C. Fox. Add to that its \$400,000 revenues, its \$100,000 salaried editor, \$15,000 prize, and \$200 enticement for each published poem!

The monetization of verse certainly makes wannabe poets of the machine drool heartily, greedily, but should it be accepted?

Does it not serve to muzzle and control such writers of febrility?

Insanity rules, as often I’ve stated, and hypocrites certainly reign

at the diverse helms of the dubious “literary establishment”!

And so, how to digest that entrenched status quo and push out a poetic blast of veritable rebellion, apt to please “in some way”

a coopted, castrated, and corralled editor of the poetry machine?

Might this poem do the trick? Or might its scent be far too rebellious for that he/him/his poet to possibly endure?

And so, ever a cynic and dog of Diogenes, I and hopefully others

shall mourn the dismal, gloom and *miserere* of poetry’s reality.

But we shall criticize and create, then burst into harmonious hilarity!

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**G. Tod Slone**, PhD, lives on Cape Cod, where he was permanently banned in 2012 without warning or due process from Sturgis Library, one of the very oldest in the country. His civil rights were being denied because he was not permitted to attend any cultural or political events held at his neighborhood library. The only stated reason for the banning was “for the safety of the staff and public,” yet he has no criminal record and has never made a threat. His real crime was that he challenged, in writing, the library’s “collection development” mission that stated “libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view.” His point of view was somehow not part of “all points of view.” In November 2022, he requested the library [rescind its banning decree](#), which it finally did. He is a dissident poet/writer/cartoonist and editor of [The American Dissident](#).

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