

# On Not Needing a Lecture

By Elizabeth Johnston

*"I'm not asking for your mercy. Just give me the 20. I don't need a lecture," 31-year-old Zachary Gross said. — "Kentucky man who scalped ex-girlfriend tells judge: 'I don't need a lecture.'" Fox News, March 19, 2017.*

My student refuses to attend the keynote on masculinity:

*He doesn't need a lecture. He already knows everything about it.*

*He's a man, after all.*

And though we should not think of teaching as

peeling back the lids of heads—

instead perform the patient push and pull: dialogue, reflection—

how tempting still the scalpel.

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**Elizabeth Johnston** is an associate professor of English at Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York, where she teaches writing, literature, and gender studies courses. She wrote this poem after overhearing a student complaining about going to a lecture by Jackson Katz on masculinity. Her poetry and prose appear widely, most recently in *The Atlantic*, *Feminist Formations*, *New Verse News*, and the 2017 collection *Bad Girls and Transgressive Women* in *Popular Television, Fiction, and Film*. To read more of her poetry and other publications, please visit her website at <http://strawmatwriters.weebly.com>.