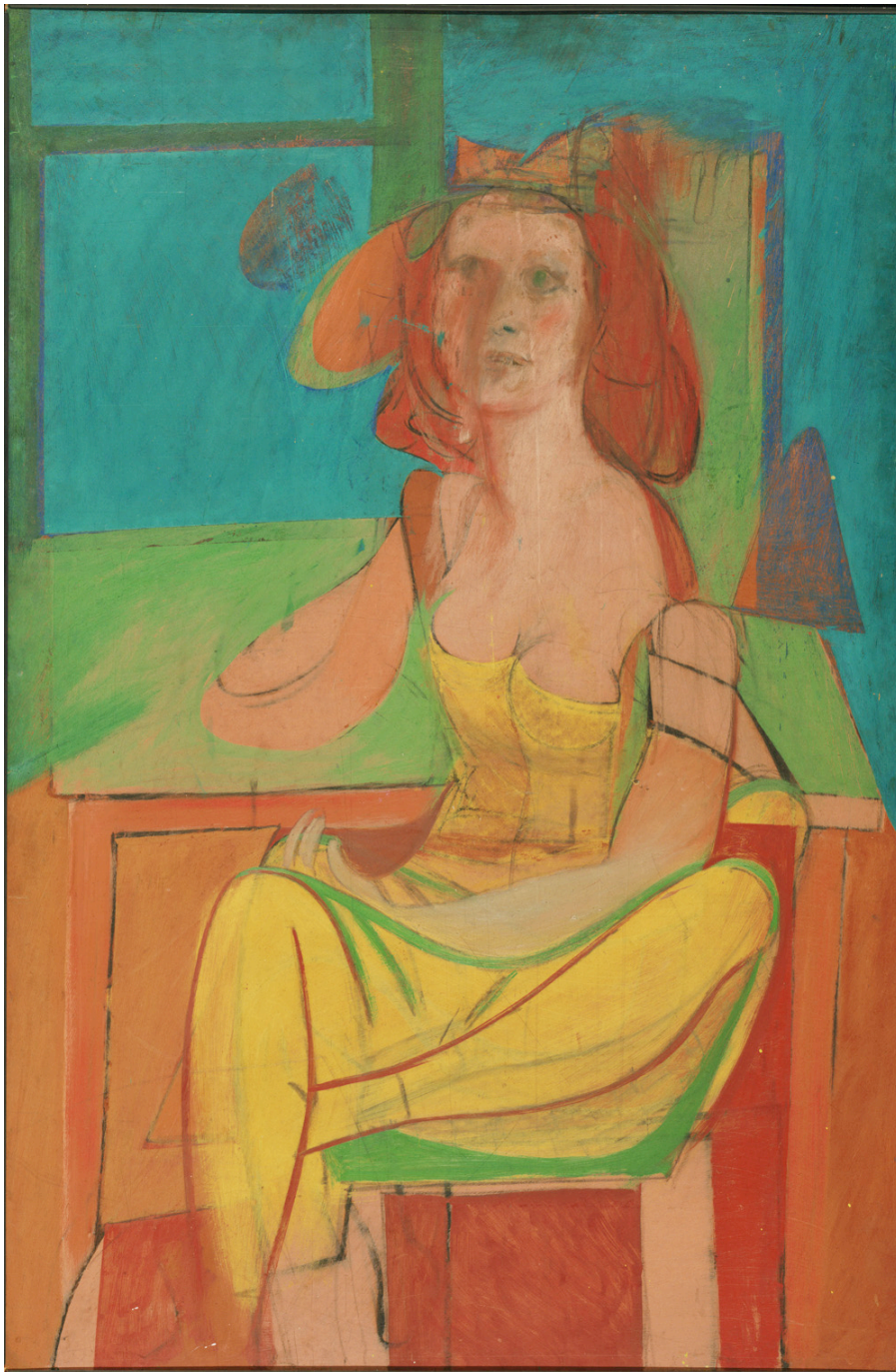


Wracked and God Help Me

by Jeffrey Burghauer (April 2018)



Seated Woman, Willem de Kooning, 1940

Wracked

Her hair, like golden threads, played with her breath:

*O modest wantons, wanton modesty!
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,
And death's dim look in life's mortality.
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify
As if between them twain there were no strife,
But that life lived in death, and death in life.
—Shakespeare, The Rape of Lucrece, lines 400-406*

It's Lucrece's white, specific flesh,
Rather than Beauty in the abstract,
That reconciles, always afresh,
The lush contradictions packed
Into one who wracks, though never wracked.
The pain of her beauty is the pain
Of a question, answered—of cool rain.

Sylvan beauty never was a great
Provocative full of angry play,
But a fact that terminates debate.
That's why those attempts at self-display
Underpropped alone by everyday
Vanity (false, too intently . . . meant)
Offend like a mal-built argument.



Mother Son, Hyatt Moore

God Help Me

Sobbing of a baby is
Like Fascism: one cannot
Ever coexist with it.
Loathsome thought? It maybe is.

Any real religion should
Quietly explain to us
Life is too miraculous

To be cute, or even good.

Jeffrey Burghauser is an English teacher in Columbus, OH. He was educated at SUNY-Buffalo, the University of Leeds, and currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have previously appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Lehrhaus*, *New English Review*, and *Iceview* (Iceland).

More by Jeffrey Burghauser [here](#).

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