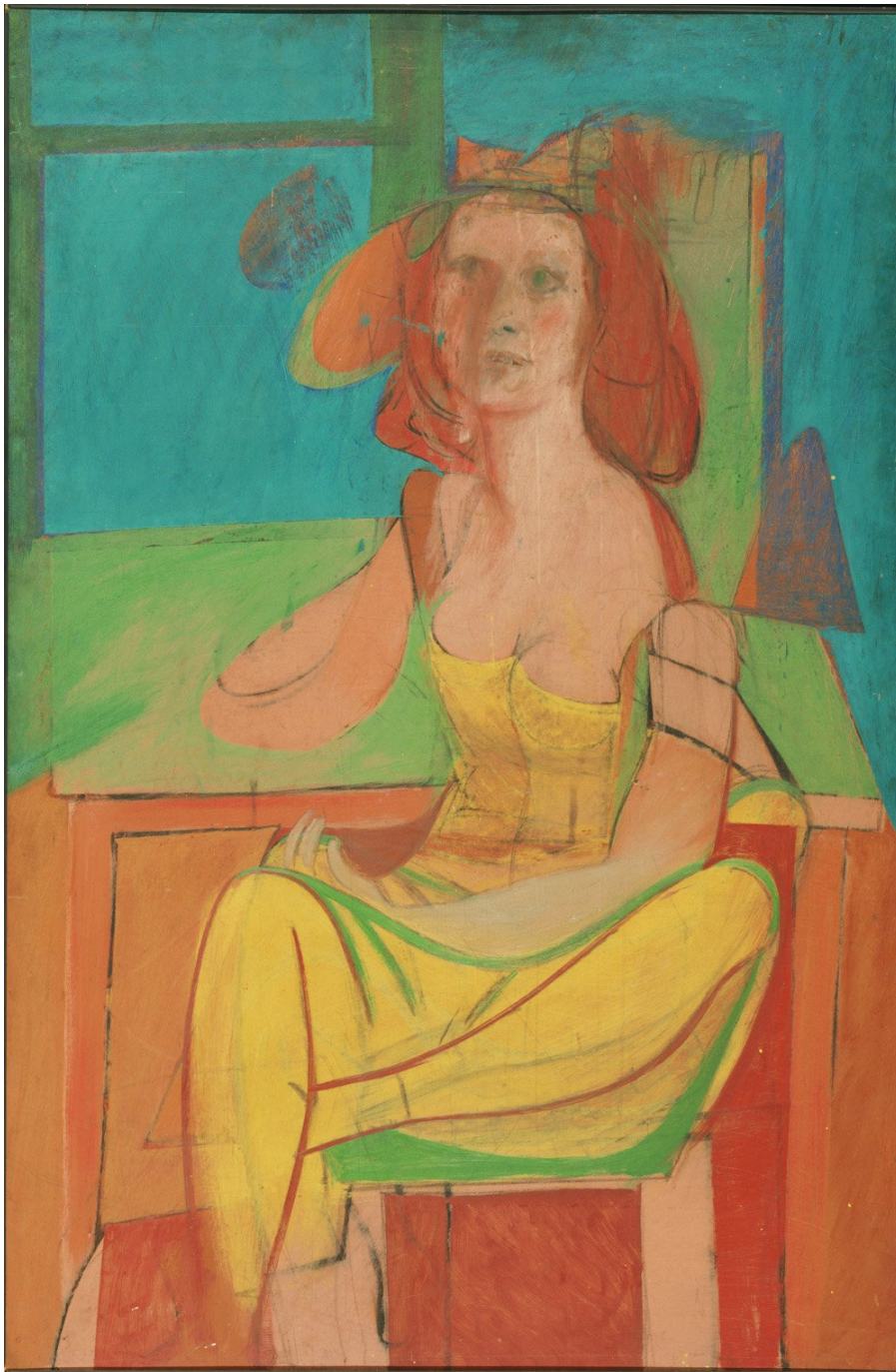


# Wracked and God Help Me

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*

**I**t'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

**S**obbing 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.

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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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