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The Painter

He divided her into eight equal parts
as any artist would, into architecture

and scale. Everything grew from the face,
descended into a pattern of pores.

He spent an hour in yellow, stirring
her eyelids into fire-consciousness.

He wanted to make her see something
outside the picture or beyond

his grey cracked window, hazardously
painted shut. He studied her, surfaced

the drowned anxieties of her skin,
the infant wrinkles. When she spoke

he could feel the image slip
from its solid monument

into division and when her voice
stopped he could assemble the pieces

again, the way a man would see her
without ever knowing her, as if beauty

was a need he could make.

Donna Lewis Cowan

Donna Lewis Cowan attended the MFA Creative Writing program at George Mason University and currently lives in Falls Church, Virginia. Her poetry most recently appeared in the *Worcester Review* and *Fickle Muses*.