**Steatoda** *by Mark Totterdell*

The kitchen window mortise, under the nose

of the cast iron rat tail handle, is her bolt-hole.

She’s extruded a pale miracle of architecture,

fixed by fine struts to pane and painted wood.

She appears each evening, pendent, motionless,

neat as a button on a sheer silk sleeve,

awaiting a suitor, or supper. She could live for years,

a small dark grape with eight tapered stalks.

The only time we saw her shift was when

the big wasp fuzzed in and enmeshed itself.

We witnessed the bloodless kill, the tight shroud,

saw how she served us as she served herself.

We’ll live with her, unless one careless opening

of the casement in spring should make a squidge

of spider guts, a stain of wasted venom.