

## Cotton Looms

white blossoms  
turn crimson and fall—  
green pods swell    plump    burst

Cuffee plucks white fluffy balls—  
black-seed rolled clean  
green-seed ginned

cupped fingers  
scoop scarlet clay—  
he swallows mouthfuls of mud

it's Friday—  
just as good as any other day  
for dying

iron mask singeing  
his cheeks    his lips    his chin  
iron bit holding  
his tongue—  
iron collared  
in searing sun

just eyes—  
squinting beyond  
woven baskets  
bales and rows  
of women  
picking    cleaning    combing  
roving

Cuffee curses Eli  
and prays for plagues:  
red spider    green stinkbug    pink bullworm

card-silver ready to spin  
into thread  
lace    voiles  
silk-muslin tea bags  
eyelet strewn tablecloth  
pressed white shirt  
heavy velvet  
sails  
rope

Tammy L. Brown