

# Bricks

by Beate Sigriddaughter

Silence.

There are things we must not say.

There was a time when the law said  
a woman who speaks out  
against a man shall have her mouth  
crushed with fire bricks.

There was a time when the law said  
adulterers must be bound  
and thrown in the river, even  
a woman who was raped.  
Her husband could pull her out  
of the river, if he so desired,  
while the king himself  
could save a man he valued.

I am tired and heavy with things  
I must not say. This silence slides  
like grains of broken brick  
between my teeth.

Arthur, with affectionate regret,  
did not choose Guinevere  
over law or flames. Would you  
pull me from the river  
if they tossed me there  
against my will?  
That is the question.

Oh, I remember: I am not  
supposed to take things personally.  
But I am the daughter of daughters

of women who were miraculously  
neither drowned nor burned.

They have trained me with such memory  
that you no longer have to crush  
my mouth with bricks. All you have  
to do is look at me a certain way.

This silence is not easy to undo.  
How I hate this silence.

