

ONE STONE TO CARRY HOME

An old woman peddles her stones
from a plastic bucket filled with the Yangtze,
stones magnified in water like full-blown blossoms.

She scours the river bank,
selects ones small enough to cup in two hands.
Gongshi, stones for contemplation,

stones for *ch'i*—with more to convey,
more life force than the monster dam's
electro-breath dishonoring this great river—

so much water displaced,
the Three-Gorges Dam
might even slow the earth's rotation.

I want them all—speckled grey,
pure moss green, the silvered smooth,
but choose just one—

polished yellow ringed in brown bracelets
of runoff and woods, river and shore—
ochre-eons chalice in my hands.

—Pamela Ahlen