

# TOTEM AT MIRROR LAKE

MATT SUMPTER

—after Matthew Zapruder

Squat and prehistoric, turkey-faced,  
the Muscovy duck preens its greasy wings  
then spreads them, sloughing off rain,  
encompassing the air like crude oil

leeching into water. I offer breadcrumbs  
to this creature evolution left, reliable  
and unchanged, like a bed post in a dark room,  
at ease with its only possible life.

Around me, the lakeside keeps on shifting.  
Fountains sway above the water's corrugations,  
sewer grates revise the wind, and power lines  
sift sunlight like a threadbare ceiling

I can't sleep under. I am never at ease. Not with  
my shadow morphing beneath streetlights,  
or my skin roughening, helplessly, over time.  
I want my life to conquer its circumstance,

like horses trampling a man. I want  
the Muscovy's mud-clotted feathers,  
gemmed with algae, a self that will not  
leave the earth when I have left.