

## **John at the Afters**

by J. Adam Collins

Is this what we thought we'd become  
when the dance started? Fluffed feathers

floating down a hall, loaded sloppy  
seesaw up some stairs, door to door

to the only one left open to us. Skin  
of men bedridden, belabored, and beaten

until the chem trails out of them. In-  
candescent organisms shimmering in

our own secretions. Listen, do you still  
hear the thrum of the staccato beats or

is that someone moaning for their rapture?  
Mercy is like a pretty pair of lips, begging

for the finger or a fist, flaccid as a jaw  
milk-drowned, clenched bone to your bone,

slick with sweet sweet heat then sick.  
Had we always been so gullible? So naked

in naivety? Or are we just giggling and glee-  
fully full to the gills, a guzzling glutton

for poison? And when you finally come too,  
it's as if you see for the very first time

this red-lit room, all its red limp bodies, taste  
the vinegar-taxed air, tongue twisting for water.