Faith
Ed Falco (VT Creative Writing Faculty)

In the dark in the no-light at the field’s center. Cows. Two cows. This is about what I believe. There are two cows in the center of a field that I can not see. Two cows in the dark. I attribute my belief to a small part of the soul where knowledge resides and informs faith. That in the field there are two cows I can not see. Not-cows which I can not see. I know the cows are there because I know the owner of the field. He lives in town. He sold off the herd he said except two cows. These two cows. I know the cows are here because I can hear them. I hear them here making cow sounds which are mostly munching and chomping sounds. Moo. Moo. That’s me. I say Moo, Moo. I don’t know why. Sometimes I talk to myself. I tell myself to have faith. Here in the center of this dark field where I can’t see a blessed thing, this seems like a good time. How did I get here? I don’t know. I don’t have the faintest idea. I wouldn’t even swear that I’m here, it’s so dark, except I hear the cows munching and I started out to cross the field. I was bored. That was before I got scared. Now I’m not bored. I’m scared because I can’t see. I’m completely in the dark. It’s exciting. I’m lost. Here I go. I’m walking toward what I’m sure are two cows. Moo, I say. So they know I’m coming.

- from The Mississippi Review

Your Pinterest Board Called Wedding
Lisa Summe (VT CW MFA ‘16)

I swear that’s your actual finger: so you want an oval engagement ring: my grief circling around: coming back as a bird: as a wing: fragile as the inner ear: my alabaster heart: you: lace everything: sleeves of your dress: lingerie: twitch of my thigh: now you will marry a boy: I don’t know his name: twitch of my thigh: when we were together: we made words: getting married: our idea of save the dates: Scrabble tiles: getting married: back of your dress wide open: your finch tattoo busting through: my grief flying out the window of you: what you like about the finch: it always returns home.

The Harvest of Motes
Jeff Mann (VT Creative Writing Faculty)

Brushing crumbs to the edge of the plate,
moistening a finger,
drawing them up.

Every lifespan will know this harvest of motes,
when a handshake, a word,
another’s leavings,
when not enough must be
enough, and the sigh of thanks for
this much, this much, this much.

Poem 42
Thomas Meyer (VT Math & CDMA Major ‘17)

Question: Answer
Question: Answer
Our whole lives
Question: Answer
Habitually trained to
Question: Answer
But what if
Question:
Orogeny
Lucinda Roy (VT Creative Writing Faculty)

Beyond the field behind the house, beyond North Main and all around this old New River Valley the Appalachians rise, seismic’s two-hundred-and-fifty-million-year-old tectonic odometers. Ridged molars take their usual bite out of the blue. Before roads, before maps, before landscape ushered in perspective, before sentience instilled pathetic fallacy, these mountains stood. Once taller than the Rockies, their peaks eroded from majesty to modesty. As far as we know, Earth is the only place in the entire solar system with linear mountain ranges. Before sight was tempered by new-found relativity, the first men and women saw them—these ranges helped define omniscience, encouraged us to shed our first-person limited point of view. Gods are found on mountain tops. Without these peaks, horizons are bound to soil; with them, the giddy splendor of escalation, the faith-engendering topography of always.

- from North American Review

Proposal
Matt Prater (VT CW MFA ’18)

I would kiss you on a graffitied bus. I would kiss you with unmitigating lust. I’d eat lunch with you uncomplaining in a restaurant with a bad health rating. And I would write you doggerel as if I were a mongrel, if we could touch the terror of true love. And yet Tristan and Isolde? Contemplate it. It’s revolting. Give us rather the cathode grace of sitcom arbitrations. I’m happy to take the standard roles: me putzy, you loquacious. You can cook the omelets and I can wash the dishes, and we can both deny the weight of outstanding ambitions.

Old Dog
Aileen Murphy (VT Creative Writing Faculty)

From mailbox to porch
Old Dog moves impossibly clown-like in near-balance

She’s thicker up top
Star Wars “Imperial Walker” style swaying spindly legs

Neurological problem with back right side, juts old peg-leg forward

Old Dog still climbs up fourteen stairs, a nudge to start, clicking toenails all the way

Old Dog stopped eating.
New kibble topped with carrots gets her attention

Old Dog cuddles with Emergency Back-Up Dog hip to hip Rorschach

Terra Nullius
Erika Meitner (VT Creative Writing Faculty)

When we were done, all the buses had stopped running. When we were done, the moon was painted large and low-slung on the horizon. We sat like that a long time, listening to each other exhale blue plumes of smoke which tucked themselves through checkered screens. It was near-morning and we were in our underwear. It was near-dark and we were in our underwear, my legs draped across his lap. Gentle curvature of smoke—our bodies were looted, were broke. Outside, invisible wires held up water towers and busted street lamps. The sides of semis turned the highway to gold threads. We had hallelujah billboards. We had industrial rust. He put his finger to my lips and I became the wreckage so we could find our way back. We sat like that a long time.

- from Copia (BOA Editions, 2014)
Meditation In Motion  
Baker Neenan (VT General Engineering Major ‘19)  

Concentration is a boulder.  
At first glance it seems unbreakable,  
But the constant chipping of distractions  
Erodes it like the wind over time  
Until it withers away to nothing.  
And in my case,  
It was really only a pebble to begin with.  
So when the last flecks of gravel blow away  
I turn to meditation to regain my focus,  
But not in the traditional style.  
I have no firm, idle, cross-legged pose,  
Only seamless motion through tree-lined trails  
Like water moving along a riverbed.  
My mantra is the marshalling of my body  
_knees high chin low steady pace breathe_  
And my nirvana is an adrenaline hush:  
_knees high chin low, steady pace. breathe_  
A time when distractions fade to my subconscious  
_knees high, chin low. steady pace. breathe_  
And for a few perfect miles I just think.

Both Ways  
Mariana Sierra (VT CW MFA ‘17)  

Burden some night has fallen—  
what shapes these shadows take!  
Buddhist beads wrap his left wrist—  
freckled breasts, glimpsed as she bends—  
I let them keep me from sleep:  
both breaths swirl sweet-hot on my neck,  
baritone groans, wrinkled blouse,  
her labret mint-cold on my tongue.  
He stirs, disturbed by my sighs;  
awakened fingers burrow in folds,  
finding me compliant; I yield  
as he moves like a wave above me—  
I take my lovers between my legs  
and we slide back into liquid dreams.

Possible Cemetery  
Kaitlen Whitt (VT CW MFA ‘17)  

The tractor pulled the tiller slow behind.  
Its teeth bit down into the hill and bled bone,  
yellow and splintered, brittle like cracked corn.  
Because there was no skull my father said  
we ought to let them lie. My mother said  
they were much too small to have been human  
so we folded them back into the Earth.  
But haunted by our own uncertainty  
we treated the burial ground as holy.  
The land reclaimed itself and has grown up  
in mulberry bushes that bud red flesh  
that is torn every spring by robin’s teeth.

Postscript  
Anuradha Bhowmik (VT CW MFA ‘18)  

Memory would reveal  
the soft fibers  
of the white crochet blanket  
on top of the green couch  
in your basement, where we’d drink  
Layer Cake red wine  
out of cracked, clear plastic cups.  
I’d wear your sweater  
that we picked out at Goodwill  
with green and brown squares  
all over it; you’d pull my bracelets  
up my wrists to see the tan lines  
beneath them, and trace  
the outline of my lips  
as they parted ever so slightly;  
and when we’d sit crossed-legged  
on the beige carpet,  
our noses and foreheads  
pressed against each other—  
I could feel you laugh.
The Dead Fly
Molly Ryan (VT Creative Writing Major '17)

The dentist strutted into the room
With a wink and a smile
Too tall and too tan
And proceeded to ask you questions
About yourself
Easily slipping on that mask,
The one that makes it seem like he gives a fuck.
As if this were a date
But instead of pretending to share interests
Over coffee,
We would share them over pulling infected, rotten wisdom teeth.

You wish you could have kept them.

When he asked about your major,
And you told him,
He laughed in your face.

You lay back,
And look for something to think of
Other than the needles in your mouth.
Trapped under the fluorescent light,
Is a dead fly.
You wonder how it got there.
Your eyes prick with tears
When the needle goes through the roof of your mouth.
The plastic cover over the light
Is divided into a million little scales
Like a fly’s eye.

When you were young,
The ceiling of the dentist’s office
Was always covered in those posters of fluffy animals
Sometimes with catchy sayings
Like an orangutan smiling with the phrase
‘Don’t forget to floss, kids!’
Or drawings from happy children,
Purple and pink stick-girls holding crayon flowers.
But today,
It’s just you,
And the damn dead fly.