

FAILING HEAVEN by Charles Behlen. Lamar UP, 2014.
103 pp. \$15.00. ISBN 9780991107452

Reviewed by Michael G. Rather, Jr.

Charles Behlen's third full-length collection of sense of breathlessness. It factsylik
War generation. It isn't nostalgia. We move from the
lungs that are both "life-giving" and "coffin-shaped s
father smoking and the stereotypical rides of the Cour
circuit. This evolves into an awareness of Sputnik II a
dog Laika/Strapped inside" (19-20), and then we find
with the speaker at school thinking of the older boys
war. We end with Krushchev and barking dogs and b
television snow. I am moved by all this although I am
what I experlo21(r)-5 brI32f.7(ng)o]TJ0 Tc 0 Tw 7.54
Behlen's speakers. I know these experiences are profound
altering even when they are as common as watching a dog
across a vinyl floor. But I am uncertain of the unity of thi
the collection bewildered. Bewilderment is not necessarily
emotion to be avoided. I often tell my students that to be
by poetry does not mean you enjoy the movement. Somet
a struggle. But Behlen's collection is worth the struggle.

Its poems are collected into groups, sub-sections that
organized around a theme. The poems in the section "The
Grow out of the Weather" are informed by seasons and w
An example is "The Pimps Must Be Breaking Arms on Br

And that could be what the whole collection is about. *Failing Heaven* is the returning to experiences, pivotal moments, narratives that become reshaped with time. *Failing Heaven* is a terrible beauty of a book. A book that will call you back to its darkness over and over again to reshape it.