

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.