

The Size of Our Bed by Jacqueline Derner Tchakalian (Red Hen Press, 2015)

reviewed by Nick Sanchez

The Size of Our Bed is a monumentally quaint book of poetry. Focusing on hardship of loss and love of another, this collection of poems drives into the reader's soul and pulls out intimacy from its depths. Written by Jacqueline Derner Tchakalian, the book was published by Red Hen Press of Pasadena, California, and released in September 2015. Tchakalian is a visual artist as well as a poet with works in ink drawings and paintings.

In The Size of Our Bed, Tchakalian uses everything from couplets to prose form poetry. She echoes words from the likes of T.S. Elliot and Nathaniel Le Torrenne, touching on themes such as illness, fond memories of a husband since passed, the strains that come with the slow decline of life, and the grave nature of war and its endlessness. While some stanzas follow a vertical pattern they are suddenly jilted to the right in "Wickets of Light" and set back again in the next poem, "In The Dark," which also serves as an example of poetic prowess in simply reading Tchakalian's titles throughout the book.

Just when the heartache of losing a loved one resonates and wrecks the core in constructs softly painted images of red-tailed hawks and "soft, silky, soothing...declarations of love" to bring the reader back to emotional continence. Tchakalian uses her syntax and enjambment to create a fluid rhythm throughout the book: "swollen bosom, / aroused skin, / hooked areola, sucked, / swallowed, took me in." The poems contained in The Size of Our Bed are both intimate and profound. Context is not required to enjoy the distinct sound and word choice that Tchakalian uses, and The Size of Our Bed is recommended to all poetry enthusiasts and readers of all strata.