

Death Songs: Requiem for the First Cut

A Literary and Emotional Dissertation by Walter Red

Compiled Master Edition – June 02, 2025

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A Literary and Emotional Study of Walter Red's First Collection

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Introduction – The Boy and the Typewriter

Before Walter Red was a name, it was an attempt. A name spoken back to grief. Death Songs was not a debut — it was an exorcism. Born from the isolation of Alaska and the shadowy hinterlands of Portland, the earliest versions of these poems were typed in half-light on a manual typewriter beside bottles, cigarette ash, and open windows.

These poems are not aesthetic. They are cries, scratched into the void with trembling fingers. But their rawness is not a weakness — it is evidence. Proof that someone was there. Someone was trying. Someone was choosing to speak instead of disappear.

This dissertation treats Death Songs as both a literary artifact and a survival document. It is elegy, yes — but also resurrection.

Chapter 1 – 'Too Emotional'

Poem (Full Text):

you looked at me and said "you're just so emotional,
and it's unbearable to be around you any more."

and walked away for the final time,
leaving me in the winter storm beginning
to trickle down.

you wouldn't be able to tell,
if it was the rain,

or tears.
falling down my face.

i wear my heart on the outside of my pale flesh,
not on my sleeve.

i wear my emotions on my face and undergo
surgery daily,
attempting to rediscover myself
each time.

creating a new version of myself
a different variant of the same dead person.

you killed me in the rain,
and all it could do was wash away my tears.

not the fears and feelings of love you gave me,
but the fact that i could ever be loved.

pooling in the sewer drains,
flowing into the ocean.

the sea is a great place to think about the future,
but when your future walks away,
the sea sounds more like your final grave.

a thousand vast miles of tears,
unclaimed and wasted,
because you thought i was just

"too emotional."

Chapter 2 – 'birds aching in my chest'

Poem (Full Text):

have you ever fallen in love?

i mean truly fallen head over
heels for someone,

where it feels like their are
birds in your chest aching
to break free.

butterflies are for children.

there are sparrows that cry
sad songs fluttering around my lungs,
creating each breath that makes me
so captivated by you.

will you open the cage when
we meet, will their sad
songs make you run or
stay by my side?

i'm in love,

and it's unexpected.

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Chapter 3 – Love Songs for the End

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Poem:

why does falling in love hurt so bad?

it's like drinking a fine wine that
you know is poison.

but it tastes just like heaven,
so you take another sip.
and another.
and another.

until you are drunk on
what you knew would kill you.

Literary Analysis

This poem operates like a toxin-laced sonnet: it's brief, sharp, intoxicating. Walter Red frames love not as longing, but as slow consent to emotional extinction. By comparing affection to poison and desire to intoxication, the poem becomes a haunting metaphor for relationships that feel inevitable, even as they are destructive.

The enjambment mimics the slow descent into romantic chaos. Each 'sip' is a stanza, a choice, and a surrender. It's not a warning—it's an admission.

The reader becomes complicit. And that is the poem's brilliance.

Zine Marginalia

💬 'He kissed me like I wouldn't survive it. I didn't.'

💬 'This poem is a confession written while smiling through tears.'

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Chapter 4 – Ghosts Who Write Back

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Poem: For Andrew

you didn't ask why I was breaking.
you just said,
'i think you're still here for a reason.'

and that reason became
the sound of your voice,
the way you stood in the doorway,
holding a book you didn't know
would save me.

you handed me belief
and a way back into my own body.

and in that moment,
you became the softest thing
i ever called home.

Literary Analysis – A Flower in the Ash

This is a rare kind of poem in Walter Red's early work — not a cry, but a sigh. It is not a love poem in the traditional sense. It's a thank-you note stitched in lyric form, offered to

someone whose presence interrupted a downward spiral.

The poem uses absence to its advantage: there are no excessive metaphors or flourishes. Instead, it relies on tone and sparseness, mirroring the quiet grace of Andrew's role.

In a book where grief howls, this poem whispers. And that whisper is what saves the reader, too.

Reflections on the Suicide Notes

Scattered throughout the original manuscript drafts of Death Songs were fragments — unsent notes, unfinished goodbyes, and lines that were never meant to be read. These were not poems. They were relics of an emotional collapse. But they are not included here to romanticize that collapse.

They are acknowledged here to remind us: the person who wrote this book did not expect to survive it. These poems, then, are not just art — they are aftermath. Evidence. Ghost stories that end with a breath.

Zine Marginalia

💬 'You handed me belief.'

💬 'Sunflowers bloomed the day I didn't die.'

💬 'Some ghosts hand you pens instead of chains.'

🖼 Visual Placeholder: 'Andrew in the Garden' – warm light, sunflowers, and memory

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Chapter 5 – The Song That Wasn't a Goodbye

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Epilogue

Some books are written for readers.
This one was written for a ghost.

But the ghost didn't stay. It left.
And in its place was a boy — bruised but breathing — sitting beside an old typewriter and a half-drunk cup of coffee.

He didn't know anyone would ever read these poems.
He just knew that if he didn't write them,

he might never wake up again.

This book is not a funeral.

It's the scream you let out after you survive one.

Literary Reflection – Still Alive, Still Singing

The epilogue is not meant to tie things up neatly. Walter Red's early work resists resolution — it thrives in the ache. But this final chapter gestures at the possibility that ache can be sacred. These poems — raw, disjointed, sometimes unfinished — don't seek closure. They seek continuity.

Like all great confessional poetry, *Death Songs* survives because it never pretended not to be bleeding. And in that honesty, it becomes a lighthouse for others still drifting.

To survive is to be haunted. But also, to haunt back.

Zine Marginalia

💬 'You are not your pain, but you are allowed to sing it.'

💬 'If I made it out, maybe you can too.'

💬 'I wrote this instead of dying. That counts for something.'