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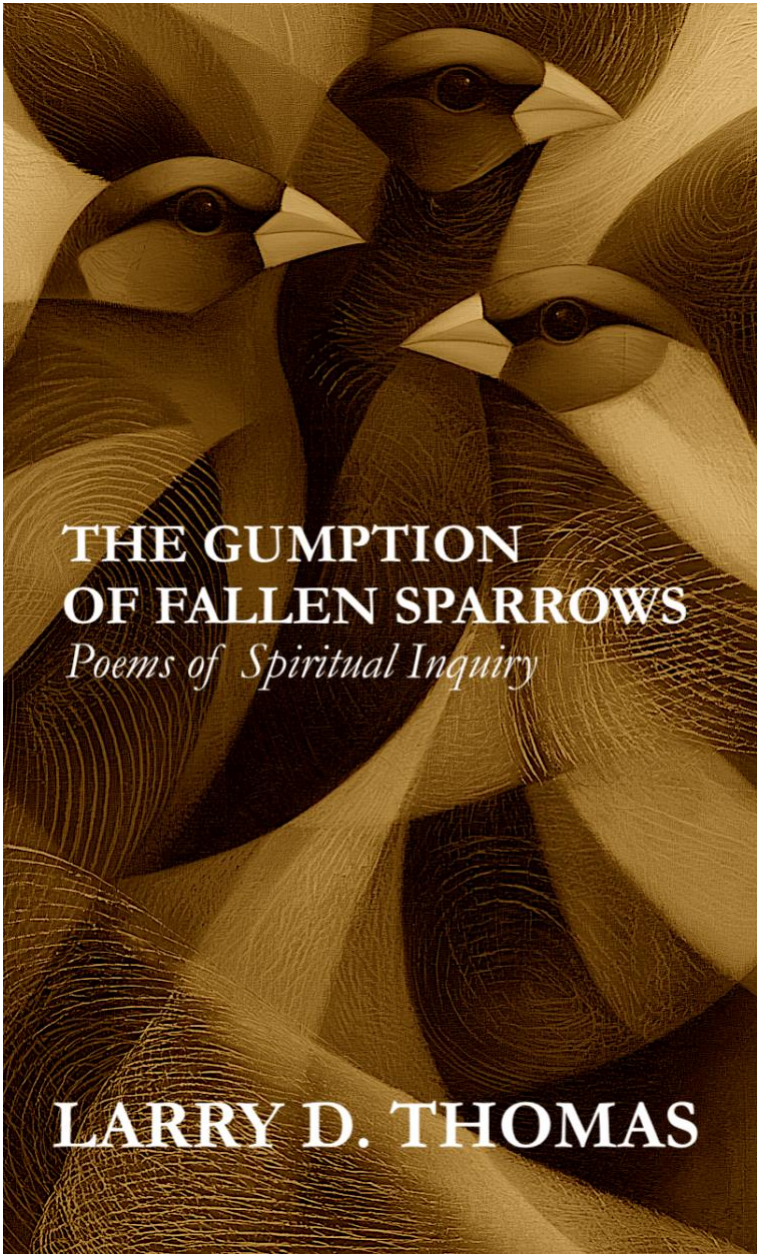

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Made available online and/or printed in the USA and elsewhere as a novelty and commemorative document celebrating the poetic works of Larry D. Thomas.

Image: *"Even Thine Altars…" (*AI-assisted digital image) by O:JA&L staff creative. 2026. Public domain via Midjourney AI.

THE GUMPTION OF FALLEN SPARROWS

Poems of Spiritual Inquiry

LARRY D. THOMAS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Amethyst Review

Saint Austin Review

Taos Journal of Poetry

War, Literature and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities

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AUBADE
(*winter solstice*)

The sun, with gloved, raspberry fingers,
fondles the blood-red Chinese tallow leaves
like the blind tracing features of a face.

A sparrow's nestled there,
enjoying her raspberry massage,
dancing while sitting still

to the drumbeat of her jack-hammer heart,
her teeny brain just big enough
to execute her trembling.

CLARITAS

The rising sun this morning is wild,
striking everything it touches into fire.

It's as if each pellucid piece
of the wind-bell were scrubbed

for hours on end with Windex,
to give each tinkling of glass

against glass a savage purity:
each pellucid piece pendulous

in the early breeze and clear
as the interior of diamonds:

this morning a tapestry
stitched with strands of glass

dazzling the lead crystal
chalices of our eyes.

MOURNING DOVES

In a cactus pot one-third full of dirt
and goodness knows what else, with only
a pittance of sticks woven with the skill
of a Navajo weaver, the soon-to-be parents

crafted their nest. The female laid
two perfect eggs. She and her mate
warmed the eggs with only feathers
and the pulsing heat of their blood,

he during the day and she at night.
The eggs hatched into two perfect,
trembling babies. The parents nourished
and guarded them till they could make it

on their own. Day and night the four
birds worked, the little ones with only
little feathers and hope: the parents
with only slightly bigger feathers.

And hope, too.

MATCH

I found it in a matchbox
made of tin, undisturbed
for God knows how long.
It lay on a back corner

of the closet shelf,
hidden beneath a blanket
of dust. When I nudged
the box open, exposing it

to the light, it rolled over
like a sleeping monk
who'd fasted years before
to skin and bone, secluded

in the plainness of his room,
his red skullcap pulled taut
over his head, swaddling
his dream of flame.

ALTAR

For decades, hordes
of significant others
castigated and mocked her
for saying she had never
been to church.

Hence, she lived in
quiet confusion, relishing
her cherished solitude,
preferring birdsong
and the vivid rising

and setting of the sun
to the callous company
of the bookless and the cruel.
Deep inside the sanctuary
of her truest self,

with the certainty
of her pulse and breath,
she knew she couldn't "go"
to a place she already held
in the deepest reaches

of her soul: a sacred
"church" whose cathedral
was her very own rib cage
and whose altar
was her throbbing heart.

OF BELIEF

Though he's blind,
his arguments are solid
as the molecules of diamonds.
He probes, even in his sleep,

the nuanced depths of philosophy
and highest science.
When bothered by his somber,
respectful colleagues

as to how, with the net
of his nimble Nobel mind,
he's somehow managed
to snag the naive

butterfly of belief,
he says he's opened
his eyes to the darkness.
Just the darkness.

OF MATINAL BLESSING

The thin rain clouds
diffuse first light
illuming

new cottonwood leaves
as if from within,
leaving the tree

a candelabra
of chartreuse flames.
The light is silvery,

indiscriminate, pouring
through the panes of windows,
tightening the tourniquets

of pupils, silent
as the laying on
of hands.

WINTER TREES

As if etched on glass, they loom
against the bright, bluish-white light
in bold relief. Their angular limbs
meander this way and that,

knobby and gnarled from having borne
the fickle machinations of the seasons.
The stark flesh of their trunks
is blotched with the badges

of survival. In the hard repose
of men who've been through war,
draped with the ill-fitting
cotton of a hospital gown,

each waits till his name is called
when he'll climb the tarnished
pole of his cane and shuffle
unattended to his x-ray.

HOSPICE

Loosed from the talons of denial
to a way station for timeless energy,
they drift through doorways
with no sentient exit to rooms
warm with the ambience of lamps
and wood-paneled studies.

They feel, dissolving on their tongues,
morphine tablets of blue, pink,
green, purple, brown, orange or grey,
whiling away the hours
cocooned in sheaths of clean cotton
beneath the oscillating wands of sprites

blanketing their bodies
with the stardust-rapture of dreams.
The nurses conduct themselves
with the dignity of scholars
holding with quiet confidence
their Ph.D.'s in *Passage*.

Even the bathrooms are celestial,
gleaming with the soft radiance
of eggshell tile and linoleum,
wafting subtle fumes of ammonia
like otherworldly cologne
pulsed from the throats of angels.

PRAYERS

In evening shadows
she finds them
in the gumption
of fallen sparrows

too young to fly,
scrambling for cover,
seeking in the spasm
of their terror

the stillness of a stone.
She finds them
gleaming in the garnet
eyes of gargoyles.

She muses about
their stirring
subtle as a pulse,
occurring for no

apparent reason,
their stirring
deep within the ink-
black darkness

of the rosebud,
their stirring of pink,
pink at first so pale
it's hardly pink at all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LARRY D. THOMAS, the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate and a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, has published twenty-five print books of poetry and numerous poetry chapbooks, both in print and online. His most recently published poetry collection, *Singing a Hymn to the Sea: Poems of the Gulf Coast*, was published online in the Buttonhook Press Chapbook Series (*Open: Journal of Art & Letters*) in 2026. Thomas has published two other chapbooks in the series in addition to several pamphlets in the Pamphlet Series of Buttonhook Press.

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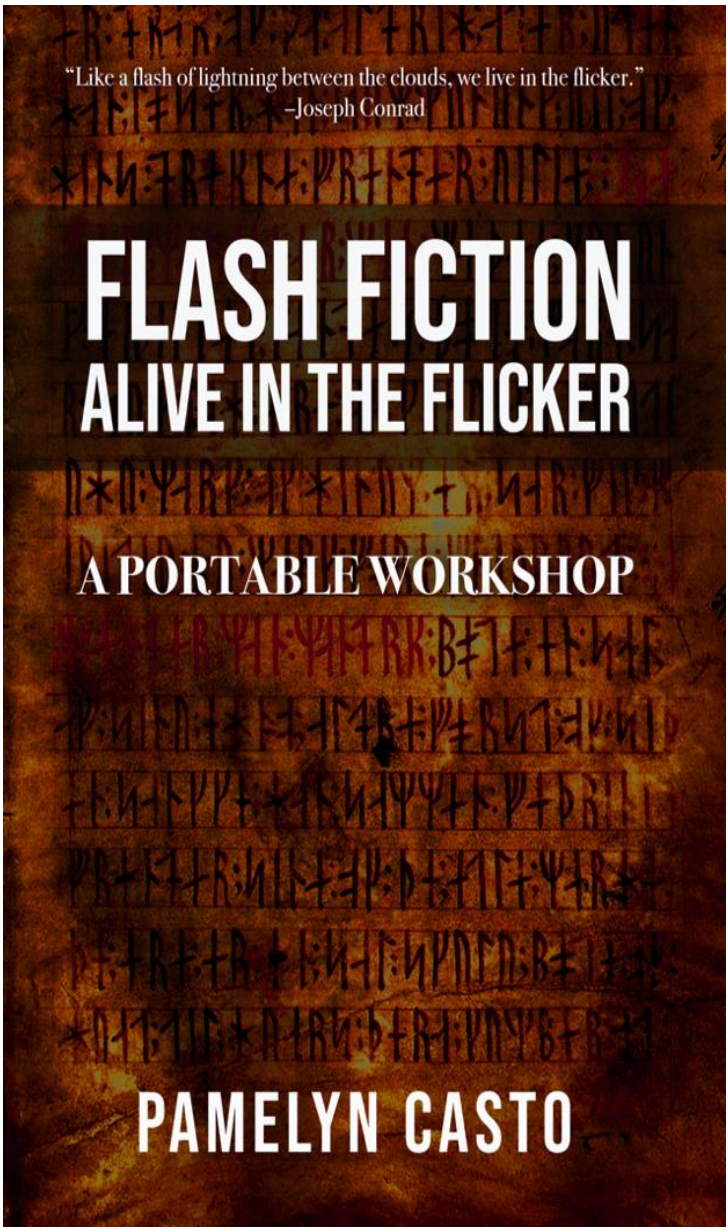

AMAZON REVIEWS

for Pamelyn Castos's *FLASH FICTION: Alive in the Flicker*

Daniel J. Nicholas
Reviewed in the United States on August 26, 2024
Verified Purchase

If I were to teach a class, this book would be required reading or a course outline for discussion. Bravo, Pamelyn! In addition, I look forward to your monthly blog to start up again.

David Lignell
Reviewed in the United States on November 23, 2022
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Pamela Casto's new text, Flash Fiction: Alive in the Flicker, is a must have "portable workshop" workbook for anyone who desires to learn and practice the many forms of flash fiction.

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