

For the Love of the Word By Jessica Halliday

When you think of the top literary magazines, a few names might come to mind: *The Paris Review*. *Ploughshares*. *Willow Springs*.

Willow Springs?

It's ironic that Eastern Washington University's 31-year-old graduate literary magazine – litmag, as these journals are more commonly called – is better known in New York than in the Inland Northwest. But under the leadership of current faculty editor Sam Ligon, that's changing.

"While we're a national magazine that publishes writers from around the nation, we want to bring the national art scene to Spokane and also bring Spokane's art scene to the nation." In that spirit, the magazine features not only the best regional and national talent – Marilynne Robinson, Sherman Alexie, Robert Bly, Jess Walter, to name a few – but publishes up-and-coming writers as well. "We're interested in making Spokane a part of the discussion," Ligon says, "about the arts, about what matters, about what it means to be human."

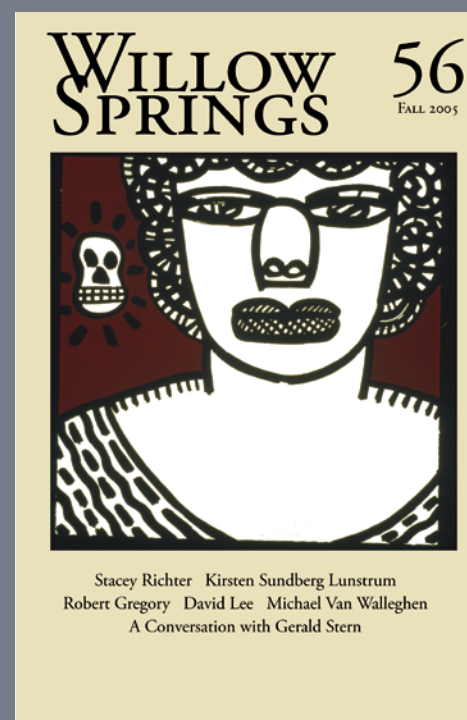
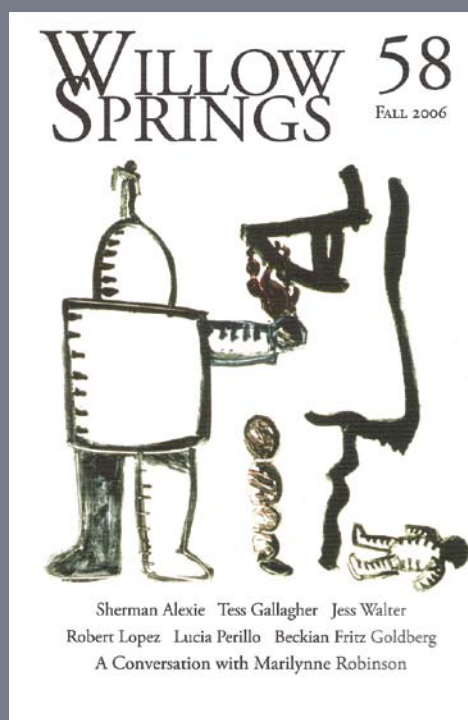
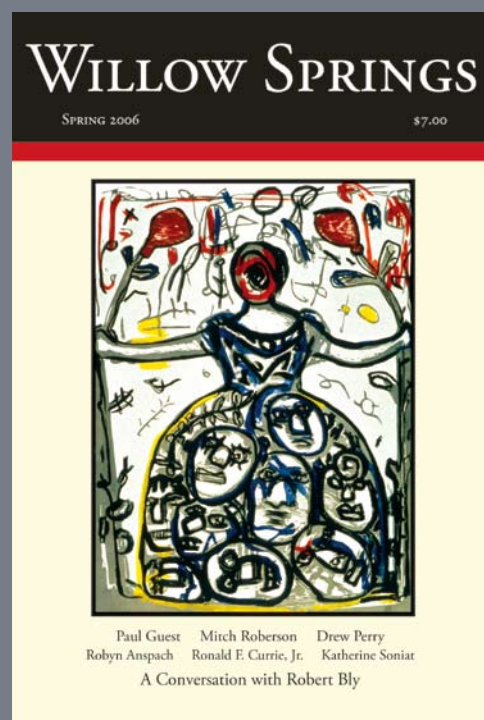
This commitment to heralding the arts is initiated in each edition's cover. "One way to engage people is through our cover art," says Ligon. "We try to use regional art on our covers. The next four issues will feature art by (local artist) Mel McCuddin, and Spokane painter Dan Spalding's work was on the last two covers."

"In the realm of litmags, there are either nonacademic journals like *The Paris Review* or *Tin House* or those tied to universities like *Ploughshares*, *The Georgia Review*, us," says

Ligon. "Obviously, the nonacademic journals have a paid editorial staff – students aren't part of the equation. But of those associated with universities, with the exception of *Black Warrior Review*, all are faculty edited. They might use grad students as interns, but they aren't part of the staff. The cool thing about *Willow Springs* is it's both faculty and student edited. Besides me, the staff is made up of graduate students. At *Willow Springs*, students are not on the periphery of the publishing process. They're the editors."

The work graduate students (who earn school credit for internships) do as interns translates directly into the job market. Former managing editor Adam O'Connor Rodriguez found work even before he defended his thesis. "The professional experience I gained at *Willow Springs* helped me get a job right out of graduate school as associate editor at Hawthorne Books in Portland, Ore., beating out more than 75 applicants for the position. When I asked my bosses why I got the job, they said my time at *Willow Springs* really stood out. I use what I learned at *Willow Springs* in my job every day, and while we are a very busy office, it seems low-stress compared to my days at *Willow Springs*."

Writers who are published in the magazine know they're in good company. Eastern alum and National Book Award finalist Jess Walter published a short story in a recent issue of





Willow Springs faculty editor Sam Ligon and managing editor Gretchen Jensen review a recent issue

Willow Springs. "To have this magazine where you can read an interview with Marilynne Robinson and poetry by Robert Bly and short fiction by Stuart Dybek – just to get your name in there is amazing," says Walter. "When my heroes were young, they published short fiction in the big magazines. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Kurt Vonnegut were in *McCall's* and *Redbook*, and these were great places to sell a story. Most of these markets have disappeared, so the litmags are really the only place for writers to go. To have one in Spokane that has risen to the level of national journals and publications is such a great treat." **E**

Check out the *Willow Springs* Interview Series:

Willow Springs publishes two interviews per issue (plus two more online) with established and emerging writers. The complete body of interviews is available for viewing in the online archive.

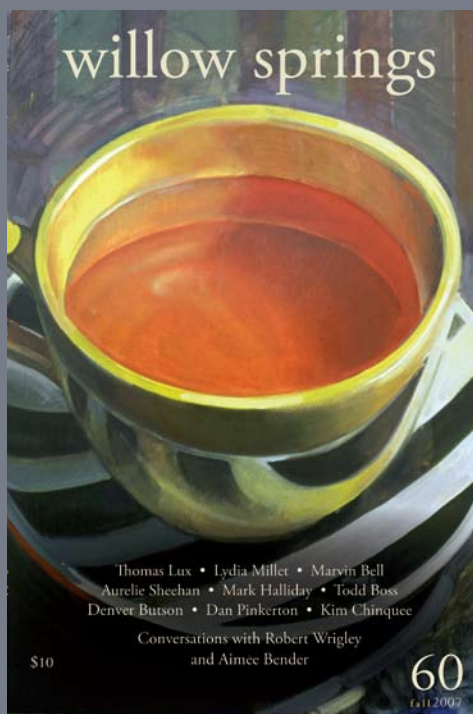
The magazine is available at Auntie's and Hastings in Spokane, and its (student-designed) website features excerpts at: <http://willowsprings.ewu.edu>. To subscribe or support EWU's award-winning literary magazine, visit the website or contact: **Willow Springs, 501 N. Riverpoint Blvd., Ste. 425, Spokane, WA 99202, 509.359.7435**

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Ray Amorosi • Diana Joseph • Derek White
Jim Daniels • Kathleen Flenniken • John Hodgen

Conversations with Marvin Bell
and Stuart Dybek



Thomas Lux • Lydia Miller • Marvin Bell
Aurelie Sheehan • Mark Halliday • Todd Boss
Denver Butson • Dan Pinkerton • Kim Chinquee

Conversations with Robert Wrigley
and Aimee Bender

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Willow Springs was recently asked to be part of the Washington State Library in Olympia. Patrons can now access all 60 issues of *Willow Springs* in print. In addition, the Washington State Library has purchased a subscription to the magazine.

Within the past three years, *Willow Springs* has won two Pushcart Prizes, which honor the best work from small presses. We have published Pulitzer Prize winners W.S. Merwin and Yusef Komunyakaa; U.S. Poet Laureates William Stafford and Robert Hass; as well as current and recent National Book Award nominees Jess Walter and Sherman Alexie. I hope you enjoy this good news; another accomplishment EWU can be proud of.

– **Gretchen Jensen**, 2007-2008 managing editor, *Willow Springs*