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# Mass Humanities

A Publication of the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities — Spring 2003

## A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

The board and staff of the MFH are extremely grateful for the response from our readers to our **Urgent Appeal** in the previous issue of *Mass Humanities*. We received more individual donations, and more total dollars, than we ever have before. Thank you.

Many of you sent notes with your checks, like this one from the member of a library reading and discussion group in a small town in Worcester County:

*In the spring of 2001 our library took advantage of the opportunity to participate in the reading series titled "[The Ends of Civilization:] Taking Stock on the Eve of the Millennium" sponsored by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. Approximately fifteen readers participated and when the series ended we decided to continue meeting. We have done so on a monthly basis ever since and have attracted several new area readers.*

*Your recent newsletter emphasized the sorry state of affairs regarding funding for arts and humanities programs in Massachusetts. Please accept a small contribution with our thanks for the important role you play in making such programs as "Taking Stock" available to groups like ours throughout the state.*

A money order for \$85 and a personal check for \$20 were enclosed with the letter. Needless to say, this one made our day.

**Unfortunately, however, the crisis continues.** We are still a long way from closing the gap caused by the devastating cuts in our state funding this year — and the likelihood of further reductions in the coming year is high. The public humanities program in Massachusetts is suffering. **We need more of you to step up and show your support.**

We are unable to meet the demand for our newest reading and discussion program, *Understanding Islam*, due to insufficient funds. Clearly this kind of program is needed now more than ever. You can help.

Our Clemente Course in the Humanities — free, college level humanities courses for adults living in or near poverty — is running a \$35,000 deficit, and the future of this truly transformative humanities program is in jeopardy. You can help.

Our grant program has been cut back drastically, but the need for grant funds for everything from oral history projects

## Understanding Islam

An Interview with Historian of Islam Keith Lewinstein

by David Tebaldi

Shortly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the Foundation began receiving calls from libraries asking whether we had any programs on Islam they could offer their patrons. The answer was "no," but we immediately realized it should be "yes." MFH Executive Director David Tebaldi began meeting with scholars of Islam and the Middle East. With their advice and assistance, "Understanding Islam," a four-part reading and discussion program, was developed and piloted at the Middleborough Public Library in the spring of 2002. Beginning last September, a grant from the United Way of Massachusetts Bay's Unity Fund enabled twelve public libraries in the Greater Boston area to offer the series. The public response has been greater than that to any other reading and discussion series developed by the Foundation. We are currently seeking additional funds to expand the program to libraries in other parts of the state.

The chief architect of "Understanding Islam" is Keith Lewinstein, a specialist in the early history of Islam and currently a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. A gifted teacher, Keith is one of our most active and popular discussion leaders for the program. He studied at Berkeley and then at Princeton, where he received a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies in 1990. He has been awarded numerous prizes and fellowships, including (most recently) a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship. Keith has taught at Brown University and Smith College. He has lived and traveled extensively in the Middle East, and now lives in Newton with his wife Sylvia and son Daniel.

David Tebaldi interviewed Keith for Mass Humanities by e-mail.

**David Tebaldi:** The Foundation has received some criticism for offering a program about the Muslim world at this time. The critics seem to think that by promoting a program called "Understanding Islam" we are implying that the United States is somehow responsible for what happened on September 11, 2001 —

that if only we understood Islam better, such a horrible event wouldn't have happened. What would you say to these critics?

**Keith Lewinstein:** I think that such people assume that when we use the word "understanding" in our title, what we really mean is "excusing" or "apologizing for." This is not at all what the program is aiming at. What we're trying to do is promote knowledgeable discussion rather than polemical attack or apologetic defense. Our approach is critical in the best sense of the word: we look beyond pat answers and assertions about Islam ("Islam is a religion of peace", or "Islam is a religion of war"; "Islam oppresses women", or "Islam offers the best means to liberate women") and try to understand the variety of ways in which Islamic teachings have been interpreted and used over the centuries.

**DT:** Why is this an important and worthwhile program to be offering at this time?

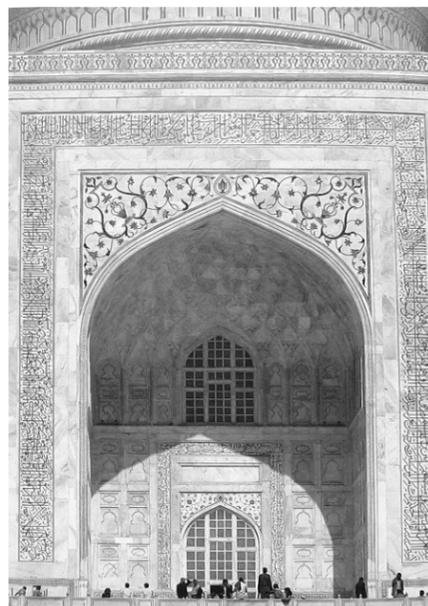
**KL:** Since 9/11 there has been an ongoing public discussion in this country about Islam, and the microphone is often held by polemicists or apologists. My own hope is that the people who have participated in our program are more prepared to resist simplistic judgments for or against, and better able to take a critical look at blanket assertions made by Islam's detractors and defenders alike. Going back to

fering at this time?

Interview continued on page 4



Historian of Islam Keith Lewinstein



The south arch of the Taj Mahal, displaying verses of the Koran done in calligraphy in marble inlay, the work of Amanat Khan, a prominent scholar from Shiraz.

*Letter continued from page 1*

to museum exhibitions to documentary films continues unabated. You can help.

You understand the importance of the work we do. Please help us continue to do it. If you haven't yet sent a contribution, please send one today. **We need your support.**

And remember, every dollar of your tax-deductible contribution goes directly into programs that increase the understanding and influence of the humanities in Massachusetts and enrich individual and community life across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



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## The Crisis Continues — Please Help!

The threat of additional state budget cuts leaves  
many of our programs — and the individuals  
who benefit from them — at grave risk.

Please help. Please send a personally significant  
gift in the enclosed envelope.

As always, every cent you contribute will be  
used to secure and restore programs that benefit  
the people and communities of Massachusetts.

Ideas matter. Please give us your support.

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### THE HUMANITIES...

Are what we do when we reflect upon our lives,  
when we ask fundamental questions of value,  
purpose and meaning. The Massachusetts Foundation  
for the Humanities promotes the use of history, literature,  
philosophy and the other humanities disciplines to deepen  
our understanding of the issues of the day, strengthen our  
sense of common purpose, and enrich individual and  
community life. We take the humanities out of the  
classroom and into the community.

The Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities,  
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Humanities; the Massachusetts Cultural Council,  
a state agency; and from private sources.



# MEETING the MUMMY

## Springfield Museums Showcase Ancient Egypt

Why does the public flock to museum exhibitions of artifacts from ancient Egypt? The archaeological remains from this oldest of civilizations — virtually all of which come from graves and represent some aspect of the Egyptian cult of the afterlife — exert an extraordinary power on our imaginations. Often amazing us with their beauty, they also touch us on a primal level. Artifacts like miniature tomb figures and painted caskets, along with the mummified remains of human beings and animals from thousands of years in the past, evoke both the mystery of death and the yearning to transcend it.

Visitors to the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum in Springfield are encountering the exoticism of this world in an exhibition that opened in January and will be on view until at least January 2004. Funded in part by a grant from MFH, *Ancient Egypt* embodies the efforts of a wide array of contributors — high school and college students, artists, and scholars and curators — and combines precious antiquities with vibrant reproductions that display the brilliant color and narrative richness of Egyptian art in its original state. Fascinating in itself, it is the center of a collaborative project that will engage thousands of museumgoers, schoolchildren, music lovers, and public television viewers.

Museumgoers enter the exhibition space through a pair of white obelisks covered with gold hieroglyphs, the work of students at Springfield's Roger Putnam Vocational Technical High School. Centered in the gallery is a reconstruction of a small temple, its walls covered inside and out with paintings of gods, royal figures, plants and animals, and hieroglyphic inscriptions, all done by University of Massachusetts students working with professional artists. Flanking this room-within-a-room are two areas, one painted from floor to ceiling with murals based on those of a tomb near Thebes. This room and its counterpart on the other side of the gallery hold imposing painted replicas of ancient animal sculptures and handsome Plexiglas cases displaying antiquities.

The centerpiece of the show is a three-part burial ensemble: the mummy of a stonecutter named Padihershef, who lived in Thebes during the 26th dynasty (664-525 B.C.), and the two elaborately



*Fourth graders from Swift River School in Belchertown view the mummy of Padihershef.*



*Docent Liz Stahl shows Belchertown students the hieroglyphic inscriptions in the murals from the tomb of Sennedjem, recreated on the gallery walls.*

painted caskets that held his body. The outer casket belongs to the museum. The inner casket and the mummy itself have been lent by Massachusetts General Hospital, which acquired them as a gift in 1823. Complementing these spectacular pieces are a selection of everyday items and works of art reflecting aspects of Padihershef's world: a bronze spike of the kind he would have used in his work, jewelry, a finely carved figure of a pharaoh, and mummified small animals, which were sold to pilgrims as temple offerings.

The exhibition also examines the role of Padihershef's burial ensemble in nineteenth-century American popular culture and science. Soon

after its arrival in the United States, the trustees of Massachusetts General Hospital sent it on a commercial tour of East Coast cities, where it attracted large crowds and wide press coverage. Later, it was autopsied by John C. Warren, M.D., the first of several medical examiners of the body. His portrait and an x-ray of the skull are on view near the gallery entrance, where visitors can also pick up a witty account of Victorian "mummy mania" by historian S. J. Wolfe.

The museum's weekend attendance figures have spiked noticeably since the show opened, and the galleries are *really* crowded during the week, when they are thronged with schoolchildren, mostly fourth graders. In small groups, they follow docents from one case to another, gazing wide-eyed at Padihershef's leathery face, eagerly shooting up hands to answer questions, and exchanging grimaces and delighted exclamations of "Eeee-ew!" at the ancient dried fleas on the teeth of a comb. After their tour, they try on belted tunics that approximate Egyptian costume and learn to write their names in hieroglyphs. The schedule for school visits is filling up rapidly; nearly 5,000 students had been booked by late January. A four-day teacher-training institute on ancient Egypt, offered last summer at the museum and featuring scholars from Springfield and Boston, was oversubscribed and received overwhelmingly positive ratings.

This educational programming is only one of the institutional collaborations linking *Ancient Egypt* with the city and the regional community served by the museum. On May 10, the Springfield Symphony will present a semi-staged performance of Verdi's *Aida*, which will be simulcast on public television station WGBY and recorded for future broadcast by radio station WFCR. Information on The Aida Project, encompassing the exhibition, the performance, and other events, can be found at the project website, [www.aidaproject.org](http://www.aidaproject.org), along with background information, materials for teachers, and projects for children. All of these activities, linked by technology that would have been inconceivable to Padihershef, are making the ancient Egyptians vivid presences in the twenty-first century. They have, after all, achieved a kind of immortality.

your previous question, I don't think that having more knowledge about Islam would have prevented the September 11 attacks; I do think, though, that the more informed about Islam Americans become, the better our chances of making wise public policy decisions in the future. Beyond that, though, Islam is an intrinsically interesting and valuable part of world civilization, and it would be worth knowing about even if events were not what they are at the moment.

**DT:** Based on your experience with this program, or other experience for that matter, what would you say is the most common misconception about Islam?

**KL:** That would have to be the idea that Islam as a religious tradition is exotic, non-Western, and utterly different from Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Islam is best seen as one variant of the Abrahamic-monotheist religious tradition, from which Judaism and Christianity also stem. This makes it very familiar to westerners who begin to study it. Structurally, it's especially close to Judaism, in that both are oriented around a sacred Law worked out by scholars, a Law which is meant to shape every aspect of one's life. Christianity, not Islam, is really the odd man out here, with its emphasis on personal salvation through Jesus rather than communal redemption through the Law.

**DT:** Yes. I've seen Islam (and Marxism) described as a Judeo-Christian heresy. Tell me, what it is that drew you to Islam as a subject of study?

**KL:** I began studying Islamic history as an undergraduate at Berkeley in 1979, when the Iranian Revolution was in the news and there were lots of Iranian students demonstrating on campus. That year I took two Middle East-related courses, one on modern politics and the other on medieval Islamic history. The second one really grabbed me: it was a subject I knew absolutely nothing about — I couldn't have told you when Muhammad lived or even who he was — and as I took more courses and read more books, it was exciting to be able to gauge just how much I was learning. Once I started studying Arabic and Persian, I was hooked.

**DT:** What is it that keeps you engaged? Are there particular questions that you want answered?

**KL:** One of the things that keeps me around is the fact that in the end, our questions are never really answered — there always seem to be new ways of thinking about something or explaining something, so I never feel that I'm ready to close the book on the subject. This is especially true in the early Islam field — my own area — where there are a lot of interesting debates just at the moment.

**DT:** Can you give us an example of one such debate? A new or different way of thinking about a question or an answer in the field of Islamic studies?

**KL:** In early Islamic studies, one new trend is to look a little more critically at traditional explanations of where Islam came from. For the past 25 years a small number of scholars have been challenging the Muslim tradition's own account of the origins of the Koran, arguing that the text remained in flux for perhaps a century or more after Muhammad's death in 632. (The tradition itself sees the text as fixed from Muhammad's death, or shortly thereafter, and most western scholars have taken that assertion as fact) This newer view is still held by only a small minority in the field of Islamic Studies, but it opens up some exciting possibilities, and it has implications for how we understand the origins of Islamic law and theology. For example, it might well help explain certain breaks or apparent contradictions between Islamic law and the language of the Koran.



Keith Lewinstein, leading a discussion at the Acton Public Library on February 5, 2003.

**DT:** What would you say is the biggest difference between the typical reading and discussion group and a typical class of undergraduates?

**KL:** The reading groups have a much wider range of people in them than a typical undergraduate class. We have college-age students, recent graduates, middle-aged people, and older, retired people as well. It's a good mix, and there are a lot of different life experiences in the room. Most people are extremely motivated: they've come out in the evening because they really want to learn, and aren't shy about pushing you for more if you're so unwise as to fob off a quick and easy answer on them.

**DT:** One of the techniques you use in your discussion of the Koran in these sessions is to distribute and ask participants to compare passages from the Koran and the Bible. Can you explain which passages you use and what you are hop-



Postcard of the Arlington Historical Society of 1913 dressed to resemble "Spectators of 1867" participating in a town pageant. (In 1867 Arlington's name was changed to Arlington from West Cambridge). The Pageant of 1913 was held in honor of the dedication of the Arlington Town Hall.

## One Hundred Years of Local History

One hundred years ago, in February of 1903, John F. Ayer, President of the Somerville Historical Society, sent a letter to the heads of similar institutions in neighboring towns. He suggested forming an organization of representatives from local historical societies in Essex and Middlesex Counties. In April of that year, 13 delegates representing 12 institutions drew up by-laws for a statewide organization they called The Bay State Historical League. Today, the League is a non-profit association of individuals and organizations including history museums, historical societies and commissions, historic houses and sites. By the time of its 50th anniversary, the League counted 125 member organizations from across the Commonwealth. In this its centennial year, BSHL has 229 organizational and 121 individual members.

From its inception, the League has relied on both programs and publications to accomplish its goals. In the mid 1990s, the League's programming changed from quarterly meetings on weekends to weekday workshops and multi-day seminars. This shift reflected a significant change among member organizations, as many began to hire professional staff. Since hiring its first paid director in 1989, the League has steadily increased the variety and sophistication of its services. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities supported a series of content-based seminars in 1992, 1993, 1995 and 1997. In partnership with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the League created the Scholar in Residence and Research Inventory Grant programs. Since 1993, 40 SIRs and 16 RIGs have been awarded to historical organizations to improve the care and interpretation of their collections. In honor of its centennial, in the fall of 2003 the League will offer a new seminar series, funded by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, "Massachusetts History: The View from the 21st Century."

The League has long used publications to disseminate information and foster a sense of community among members; in 2001, it added a website — [www.masshistory.org](http://www.masshistory.org). From its founding, the League published an informational newsletter. In 1993, the name of the newsletter was changed to *Common Wealth* and made a quarterly publication. Over the years, BSHL has sponsored other publications, as well, most recently, in 1998, *Painting Historic Exteriors: Colors, Application, and Regulation* (with the Cambridge Historical Commission) and in 1999, *Going Public: Community Program and Project Ideas for Historical Organizations* by Cynthia Robinson and Gretchen S. Sorin.

In 2003, after a century of service to the history organizations of Massachusetts, The Bay State Historical League continues to promote the preservation, interpretation, presentation, and enjoyment of history.

**The League's Annual Meeting, "Local History in the New Economy," will be held at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell on Monday, June 9, 2003. Beverly Sheppard, CEO of Old Sturbridge Village, will deliver the keynote address. For more information, please call (781) 899-3920 or go to [www.masshistory.org](http://www.masshistory.org).**

### Wanted

The Foundation is actively seeking nominations of qualified individuals to serve on its board of directors. Candidates must be residents of Massachusetts who believe in the importance of the humanities and their relevance to contemporary life. If you would like to nominate someone, or are interested yourself, please visit our website [www.mfh.org/foundation/wanted/](http://www.mfh.org/foundation/wanted/) for more information and a description of board member responsibilities.

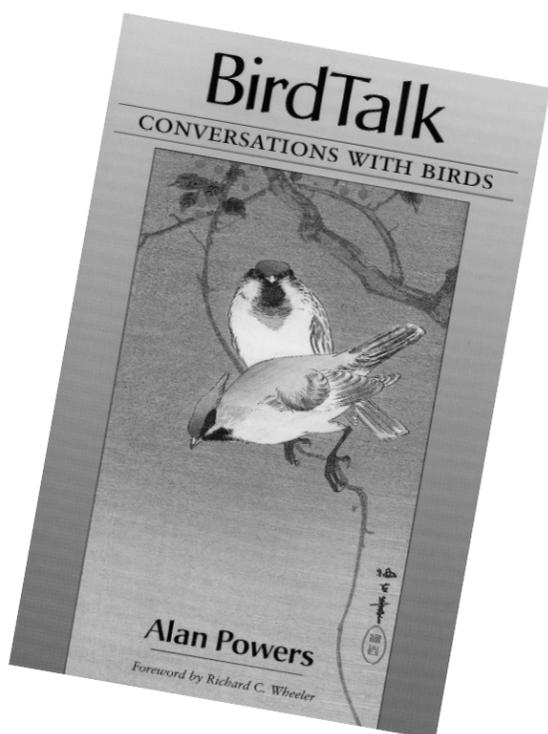
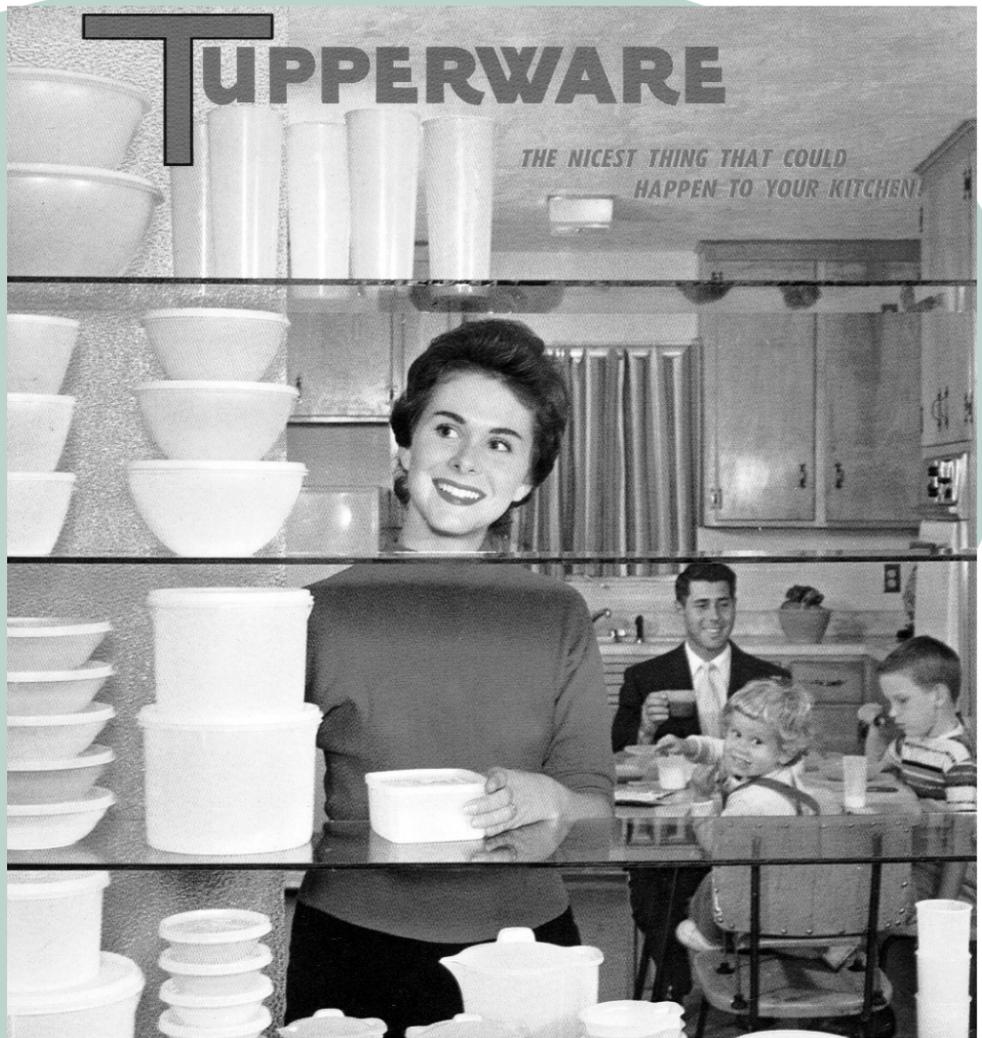
## Tupperware!

The Foundation and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston will co-sponsor the world premier of *Tupperware!*, a new film by Laurie Kahn-Leavitt, at the Museum's Remis Auditorium, on a date to be announced. Funded in part by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the 62-minute film tells the remarkable story of Earl Silas Tupper, an ambitious but reclusive inventor from Massachusetts, and Brownie Wise, a single mother with a genius for marketing. It was Brownie Wise who recruited and trained the small army of Tupperware Ladies who built an international business out of bowls that "burped." Narrated by Kathy Bates, the film includes an entertaining and thought-provoking mélange of interviews with Tupperware veterans, color home movies, footage of the company's annual Jubilees, and ads and television excerpts from the 1950s.

For screening dates and to purchase tickets on line, go to <http://www.mfa.org/film/> or call (617) 369-3306.

Producer, Director: Laurie Kahn-Leavitt  
 Co-Producer: Robin Hessman  
 Editor: William A. Anderson  
 Director of Photography: Peter Stein  
 Production Assistant, Assistant Editor: Julie Golia  
 Music Researcher, Intern: Barbara Rotundo

Photo courtesy of *Tupperware Home Parties, Inc.*



## BirdTalk

"Talking to birds makes one see their lives and their struggles." So says Alan Powers, former MFH board member and current professor of English at Bristol Community College, in his new publication, *BirdTalk: Conversations with Birds* (Frog, Ltd., Berkeley, CA), a collection of essays on birds, their songs, and Powers' auditory journey into their world. By way of a delighted, conversational tone, *BirdTalk* combines Powers' meditations on his experiences as he learns birdsongs (some dozen a year), and even tries to "teach" Beethoven to an Oriole, with referential musings on St. Francis and the symbolism of birds in literature, as well as speculation on the meanings and mysteries behind how birds use their "language." Making the distinction between what humans project onto birds and the importance of birds' songs in terms of their fierce struggles for territorial survival, Powers mindfully extends a scholar's insight into an area of "the unfamiliar," and the result is a lively addition to the existing body of bird studies, scientific, literary and compassionate. When he learned of Powers' new book, MFH Executive Director, David Tebaldi, commented, "We always knew Alan was a little batty, but we didn't know he talks to birds."

## We the People

In his FY 2004 budget request for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), President Bush has requested funding of \$152 million, including \$25 million for the agency's *We the People* initiative, designed to encourage and strengthen the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture.

"Democracy is not self-sustaining. Americans must understand the principles and practices on which our democratic nation is built so that they can pass the ideals of freedom down from one generation to the next," said NEH Chairman Bruce Cole. "The President's request recognizes the Endowment's efforts to increase our citizens' understanding of who we are as a nation, and it affirms his desire to make sure that understanding reaches all Americans."

The new funding will support a variety of *We the People* special projects, such as the following:

- Major expansion of NEH's Seminars and Institutes program to provide humanities teachers additional opportunities to study significant texts on American history and culture;
- Support for model curriculum projects to help schools establish or improve course offerings in American history, culture and civics;
- Support for local and statewide projects on American history, culture and civics sponsored by the 56 state humanities councils;
- Funding to inaugurate an annual National History Bee focused on *We the People* themes;
- Enhanced support for American Editions and Reference Works, fundamental scholarly resources for understanding who we are as a nation; and
- Special exhibitions in museums and historical organizations and reading and lecture programs in libraries for out-of-school audiences keyed to *We the People* themes.

The FY 2004 budget will continue support for previously announced *We the People* programs, including an annual national essay contest for high school students on the theme of "The Idea of America" and an annual "Heroes of History" lecture, in which an acclaimed humanities scholar tells the story of heroic figures in American life and history.

For more information, please go to [www.wethepeople.gov](http://www.wethepeople.gov).

## Congratulations

to Patricia MacLaughlan of Williamsburg, MA, author of the 1986 Newberry Medal winner *Sarah Plain and Tall*, who received the National Humanities Medal this year. The National Humanities Medal, first awarded in 1988 as the Charles Frankel Prize, honors individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation's understanding of the humanities, broadened citizens' engagement with the humanities, or helped preserve and expand Americans' access to important resources in the humanities.

A map of the world, from an encyclopedic work by the Arab al-Idrisi (1100-66). Geography emerged as a subject of study in the Islamic world due to economic and social expansion via transcontinental trade and travel routes through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, as well as voyages across the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean.



Though women largely disappear from biographical dictionaries after the 16th century, this picture of a woman writing a letter, painted around 1600 in the desert city of Isfahan, implies how highly some women in the 14th and 15th centuries were regarded, both as teachers and as calligraphers.



#### Interview, continued from page 4

ing readers will see when they compare them? What kinds of responses does this exercise evoke from participants?

**KL:** The Bible and the Koran share a lot of material, even if they treat it in somewhat different ways. If you look through the Koran you'll find Adam, Noah, Moses, and a host of other characters familiar from the Bible, all of them associated with well-known biblical events (the Flood, exodus from Egypt, and so forth). At the same time, there are some interesting differences in how the two scriptures treat these figures. I want people to understand how these differences work, and why they're important. Where some people might otherwise be tempted to see the Koran as a badly plagiarized version of the Bible, I'd like them to understand that the Muslim scripture, like the Jewish and Christian interpretive traditions, offers its own twist on the biblical material. It reflects the way a new monotheist community in the Near East put to use older biblical stories. In the *Understanding Islam* program we generally look at the Biblical and Koranic versions of the story of Noah and the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son (Isaac in the Bible). The first gives us a sense of how figures such as Noah, whom the Muslim tradition regards as a prophet, are seen in the Koran to have had careers similar to Muhammad's; the second is a beautiful example of how apparent differences between the Bible and the Koran can sometimes seem less arbitrary when we take into account how Jews and Christians had come to understand the story before Muhammad's own time.

I usually get a pretty good response from people when we do this exercise. Some are surprised, others reassured; in general, it gives them a way of making sense of the Koran if they choose to read it on their own in the future.

**DT:** You mentioned earlier the similarity between Islam and Judaism — the fact that both are centered around the notion of communal salvation through the Law. In each case, the Law is based on revealed scripture. Does this emphasis on the written word account for the crucial role of a particular language in the two religions — Arabic in Islam and Hebrew in Judaism?

**KL:** Hebrew and Arabic do indeed have a sacred status that New Testament Greek never enjoyed, and this has contributed to the centrality of these languages in Judaism and Islam. Muslims recite the Koran in Arabic and Jews recite the Torah in Hebrew; Jesus never preached in Greek, and Christians in the West have never felt a need to study it. I would say that the status of Arabic is even greater in Islam than Hebrew is in Judaism — almost all Islamic learning was carried out in Arabic, while the central texts of Jewish law were composed in Aramaic, not Hebrew. Muslims know that God Himself speaks in the Koran, and he speaks in Arabic. A translation of the Koran is no longer the Koran; it no longer has ritual use. (That's why a Latin translation of the text appeared in Europe before Muslims themselves produced any independent translations from Arabic into other Muslim languages.) There's one other factor which has contributed to the ongoing importance of Arabic in Islamic culture: in its earliest form, Islam had a strong ethnic component (all Muslims were Arabs, and most Arabs were Muslims), and there was a sense that Islam was an "Arab" monotheism. This ethnic component was soon eroded in Islam, as more and more non-Arabs became Muslims from

the 8th century on. The Arabic foundation was never lost, though, thanks to the fact that Muslims all over the world have an Arabic scripture, an Arab prophet, and a sanctuary (Mecca) in the Arabian peninsula. Even though the vast majority of Muslims are not Arabs — they don't speak Arabic as a native language — Arabic continues to have a special place in Islamic culture. That's why, for example, non-Arab converts to Islam so often choose Arabic names for themselves.

**DT:** You have had some Muslims in a number of your library groups. Do you find yourself doing anything differently when there are Muslims present?

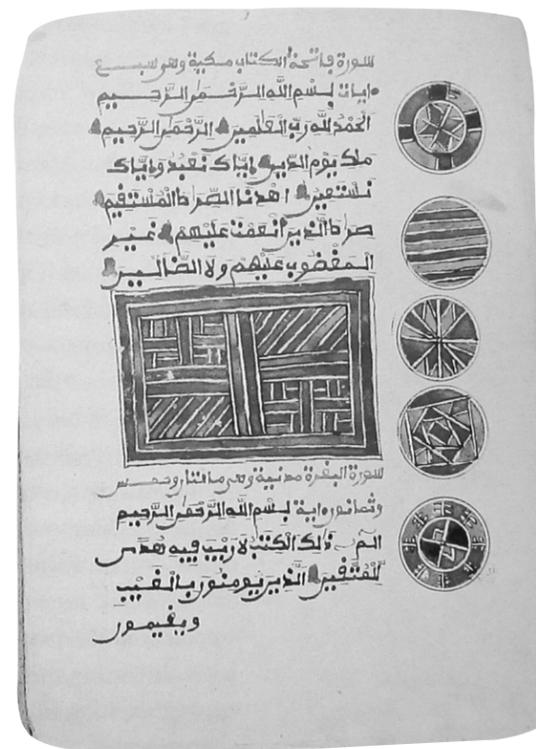
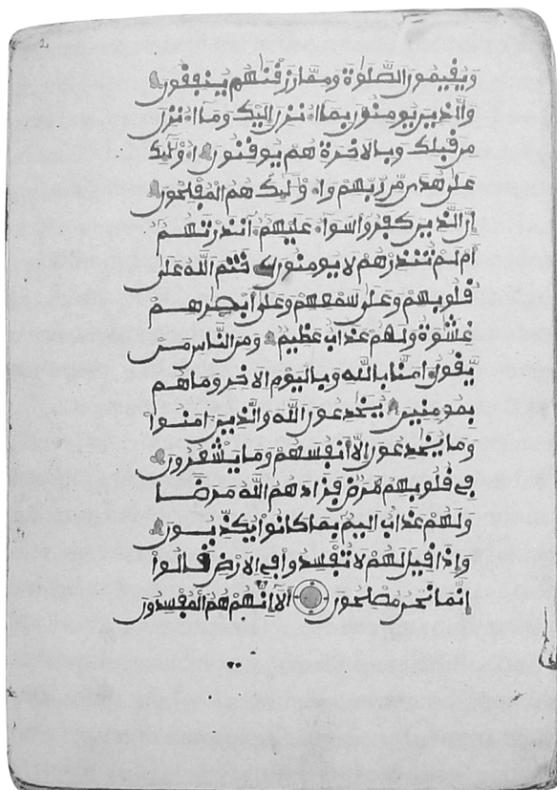
**KL:** Most participants are not Muslims, but we have had a few for some of the sessions, and no, I don't do anything special when Muslims are in the room. On certain issues, though, I try to take advantage of insights that they might have to offer from having grown up in a Muslim culture. Particularly when we've talked about how Islam is lived or experienced in different parts of the world, it's been good to have people share personal anecdotes and stories with us. It can be especially exciting when they disagree with each other, or at least have stories to tell which reflect very different personal experiences. This reminds us all that the Islamic world is not monolithic, and that we ought to take care before making vast generalizations. I remember quite fondly the session in Quincy devoted to Muslim women: We had three Muslim women, two from Lebanon and one from South Asia. When we talked about marriage practices, they were surprisingly open about a good many issues, and at least one of them voiced strongly different opinions from the other two. I was happy to let them take center stage, and to watch the participants question them. It does sometimes happen that when Muslims talk about Islam to non-Muslims, they feel a need to defend their religion against perceived slights and criticism. Given the history here, that may be understandable; but it's much more interesting when we get past that stage and have an open discussion about things, as I think ultimately happened in Quincy.

**DT:** Could you tell us a little about the work you are currently doing with your fellowship award from the National Endowment for the Humanities?

**KL:** Right now I'm finishing a book entitled *Heresy and Dissent in Early Islam*. It's an attempt to do two things: First, to understand how and why certain ideas came to be considered heretical as Islam evolved over the first four or five centuries of its history; and second, to understand how such ideas were transmitted in different Muslim environments.

**DT:** Speaking of heretical ideas, do you agree with those who assert that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with liberal democracy?

**KL:** That's a very big question, and of course it



Two folios from a 19th century Koran from West Africa. Islamic art's primary source is the Koran, which Muslims believe to be the word of God. The duty to spread the word led to the primacy of writing.

depends on what one means by “Islam” and by “liberal democracy.” I don’t think that Islam is, by its very nature, incompatible with open, pluralist societies on the Western model; nor do I think that an Islamic political movement is by definition antithetical to democracy. But it does seem to me that many of the fundamentalist Islamic movements, once having achieved power, would be unlikely to tolerate a diversity of opinions — and I would say the same thing, by the way, about fundamentalist Christianity. People who already have all the answers from God’s lips, and believe that these answers should govern modern political and social life, are not generally shy about imposing their values on others, even if those others constitute a majority. The problem is less with Islam per se than with modern fundamentalism, which tends to be totalitarian and to conceive of religion as a political ideology.

**DT:** As you know, the Foundation developed “Understanding Islam” in response to calls we received from libraries in the wake of the events. I’m sure you have thought a good deal about the horror of that day and the role of Islam in it. In closing, would you care to share some of those thoughts with our readers?

**KL:** I think that the 9/11 attacks really did thrust Islam into people’s faces in a way that had never happened before. In that context, it was important for Americans to understand that suicide attacks on innocents — what are euphemistically termed “martyrdom operations” in some circles — are hardly representative of Islamic teachings. At the same time, I often heard apologetic claims that what had happened was either a distortion of Islam, or had nothing at all to do with it. But the fact is, political struggle was a central feature of Muhammad’s career in the 7th century, and it’s always had a

prominent place in the thinking of certain groups of Muslims. Bin Laden’s rhetoric (though not his terrorism) is consistent with a stream of Islamic activism whose modern history goes back to the 1960s, but whose antecedents are much older, and are based on a perfectly plausible reading of Muhammad’s career. It’s not the reading that most Muslims have traditionally inclined to — it’s extremely critical both of the Muslim tradition and of Muslim societies, in fact — but to see it as an idiosyncratic corruption of Islam is simply wrong, in my opinion. If we want to understand the battle of ideas going on in the Muslim world — and I think it’s imperative that we do try to do so — we ought not assume that Bin Laden’s ideological framework is entirely a marginal phenomenon with no potential to appeal to reasonable, educated people in Muslim countries who might nonetheless be repulsed by his terrorism.

## Understanding Islam: Scholars Share their Experiences



One of the most memorable details of the “Understanding Islam” program is the genuine curiosity about the faith I felt in an overwhelming number of participants.

It warmed my heart to see people from all walks of life determined to step away from distortion and cliché, working together to gain a better understanding of what might seem an enigma to many of them.

— Shakir Mustafa

**Shakir M. Mustafa** is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Boston University in the department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures. He earned his Ph.D. from Indiana University, and his M.A. and B.A. degrees from Baghdad University in Iraq. Shakir has published many articles, translations, and book reviews in both Arabic and English.



The Mayor of Malden attended the book discussion of Leila Ahmed’s book on gender and Islam and was an active participant in the lively exchange that included several Muslims in the

group of about 25 people. As in other such sessions where I have been a discussion leader, I found those in attendance to be eager for knowledge and open to a humanistic understanding of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East and Muslim worlds. The group came prepared to discuss; they had clearly read the book, and although I was the “expert,” I thoroughly enjoyed the time that I spent with the good people of Malden in their marvelous public library.

— Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

**Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban** is the author of *Islamic Society in Practice* and *Against Islamic Extremism: the Writings of Muhammad Sa’id al-Ashmawy*. She earned her Ph.D. in Anthropology at Northwestern University and is currently a visiting professor of the Humanities at Colgate University.

While the overwhelming majority of people claim ignorance of Islam, they are amazed to learn of the similarities between basic, normative Islam and their own Western religious values. . . . I am amazed at the number of people who have worked in the Middle East and attend the sessions to let others know that the peo-

ple are good and that a minority form of radical, militant Islam should not cloud Americans’ perceptions of all Arabs and Muslims. The number of participants shows that people are not willing to accept television and popular media reports, but, when provided with the opportunity, prefer to listen to specialists give their views and then converse with them. This is the best form of education, because information is shared in an interactive format.

Perhaps the most interesting question I have had so far is from a person who, Muslim himself, asked, ‘If the Qur’an says that each nation and each people has had a prophet sent unto it, then why has the conversion of non-Arabic speaking peoples become such a large movement, to the point where the majority of Muslims are non-Arabs?’ I am still struggling to find an answer.

— Khaleel Mohammed



**Khaleel Mohammed** received his Ph.D. in Islamic Law at McGill University and earned his M.A. in History and Philosophy of Religion at Concordia University. He also has B.A. degrees from Imam Muhammed bin Saud University in Saudi Arabia, and Universidad Interamericana in Mexico. He is currently a Professor in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department of Brandeis University.

I have been participating in the MFH “Understanding Islam” series since last fall, mostly leading discussions of Leila Ahmed’s *Women and Gender in Islam*. Though the book is challenging, participants are committed to understanding as much as they can, and are willing to question their own basic assumptions about controversial issues such as veiling, polygamy, and women’s social roles in Muslim societies. I speak on this topic frequently, and the library audiences have been among the most enthusiastic and energetic that I have encountered. The “Understanding Islam” series is a vital way of reaching interested and open-minded Americans who otherwise would not have the opportunity to discuss Islam and Muslims with specialists from a variety of disciplines, perspectives, and personal backgrounds. I have relished being involved in such a worthwhile endeavor.

— Kecia Ali

**Kecia Ali** received her doctorate in Islamic

Studies (Religion) from Duke University and currently serves as the Senior Research Analyst responsible for Islam with the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project at Brandeis University. She has contributed articles to two recently published anthologies, *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (One-world Publications, 2003) and *Taking Back Islam: American Muslims Reclaim Their Faith* (Rodale Press, 2002).

John Adams wrote, in his Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, that “. . . liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right from the frame of their nature, to knowledge, as their great Creator who does nothing in vain, has given them understandings and a desire to know . . . .” The participants at Medford exhibited a strong desire for knowledge, to understand Islam. Obviously, this is largely a post-September 11 factor. But, as the sovereign citizens of a democracy, we must be informed and be able to make competent judgments about a religion which had been virtually ignored in this country. “Understanding Islam,” thus, is a sophisticated response to Adams’ concern that the citizens be able to support liberty by developing knowledge, in this case understanding, of Islam.”

— John Hill



**John Hill** received his Ph.D. from the University of Denver and is Professor of Politics and History at Curry College in Milton, where he has been a member of the faculty since 1969. His most recent book is *Revolutionary Values for a New Millennium: John Adams, Adam Smith, and Social Virtue*, published by Lexington Books in 2000.

### Understanding Islam books:

*Muhammed and The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*, Michael A. Cook

*Children of the Alley*, Naguib Mahfouz

*Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Leila Ahmed

*The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Roy Mottahedeh

# Humanities Calendar

All programs are open to the public free of charge unless otherwise noted.

## Statewide

### **Cambodian Humanities Internet Curriculum**

On-line curriculum materials that use Cambodian traditional arts to promote understanding of Khmer culture in schools and communities across the state.

**Web:** [www.cambodianmasters.org](http://www.cambodianmasters.org)

### **Imagining Robert**

A film and dialogue series developed by The Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities in collaboration with Florentine Films/Hott Productions. The film, based on the book by Jay Neugeboren, tells the story of two brothers, Jay, a prize-winning writer and former UMass writing professor, and his brother, Robert, who has been in and out of mental institutions for 38 years. It is the centerpiece of a series of public screenings meant to foster dialogue about mental illness and its impact on families. Each public screening is designed to bring people from different backgrounds — patients, families, police, social workers, lawyers, health-care providers — together in a non-crisis situation. See [www.imaginingrobert.org](http://www.imaginingrobert.org) for event updates.

**When:** Program dates and times TBA

**Phone:** (413) 584-8440 (Contact: Hayley Wood)

### **Talking to the Wall: The Story of an American Bargain**

Screening of a documentary that examines, over a five-year period, the struggles of two rural New England towns that have confronted large-scale retail developments. The film examines the underlying clash of values that throughout American history has been at the heart of the debate between national corporate interests and community needs.

**When:** Premieres April 2003; date, time, and venue TBA

**Phone:** (413) 773-9029

### **Loaded Gun: Life, and Death, and Dickinson**

Screening of a documentary about a filmmaker's semi-comical search for an actress to play Emily Dickinson in his film. *Loaded Gun* takes a playful look at Dickinson's fame and is designed to appeal to a wide audience.

**When:** Tuesday, May 13, 2003, time TBA

**Where:** Jones Library, Amherst

**Phone:** (413) 256-4090

### **Murder at Harvard**

A one-hour production for public television that uses drama and documentary to retell the story of one of the most famous American crimes of the 19th century — the murder of Dr. George Parkman. The story also illuminates the how and why historian Simon Schama, author of "Death of A Harvard Man," chose to explore this compelling case.

**When:** Monday, July 14, 2003, 9:00 pm

**Where:** *American Experience*, PBS Television Stations

### **Scribbling Women**

On-line materials related to radio dramatizations of short stories by 19th and 20th century American women writers, including "Afterward," by Edith Wharton and "The Flight of Betsey Lane," by Sarah Orne Jewett. Curriculum, lesson plans, and dramatizations in Real-Audio format are now available on the website.

**Web:** [www.scribblingwomen.org](http://www.scribblingwomen.org)

## Greater Boston

### **The Trial of Anthony Burns**

A play commissioned by the James D. St. Clair Court Education Project as part of their ongoing *Arts and the Law* series. Designed for student audiences, the drama commemorates the 1854 trial of fugitive slave Anthony Burns — an historical event that challenged America's justice system and fueled the Abolitionist movement in Massachusetts.

**When:** Alternate Tuesdays, January 14–April 8, 2003; Tuesdays, April 29, May 13, May 20, June 3, 2003, 10:30 am (pre-performance tours begin at 9:30 am)

**Where:** John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse, Boston

**Phone:** (617) 748-4185 (Contact: Beth Dunakin)

### **Long Road to Justice**

An exhibition exploring the experiences of African Americans in the courts of Massachusetts over three centuries. Sources include court records, historical artifacts and archives. Through text, image, object, graphic design and videotapes, the viewing public will learn how our courts shaped — and were shaped by — the African American experience in Massachusetts. An accompanying free Teacher's Guide developed by Primary Source is available on request (see website for more details: [www.atweb.nyu.edu/longroad/](http://www.atweb.nyu.edu/longroad/)).

**When:** Friday, January 17–Sunday, April 13, 2003

**Where:** Adams Gallery, Suffolk University Law School, Boston

**Phone:** (617) 573-8447

### **Understanding Islam**

A reading and discussion program developed by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities which offers the general reader an opportunity to explore the roots of Islam and some of the most important issues facing Muslims today. Through four meetings devoted to a range of topics, the program presents a picture of the Muslim world and its intellectual, cultural and religious dimensions.

### **Danvers**

**When:** Monday, February 3, Thursday, February 20, Mondays, March 3 & 17, 2003, 7:00–9:00 pm

**Where:** Peabody Institute Library, Danvers

**Phone:** (978) 774-0554

### **Acton**

**When:** Alternate Wednesdays, February 5–March 19, 2003, 7:30–9:30 pm

**Where:** Acton Memorial Library

**Phone:** (978) 264-9642

### **Boston**

**When:** Alternate Saturdays, February 8–March 22, 2003, noon–2:00 pm

**Where:** Boston Public Library, North End Branch

**Phone:** (617) 227-8135

### **Dante Fest**

A day-long event at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum celebrating Dante's *Inferno*, and featuring readings and theatrical interpretations of selected cantos and a culminating lecture and performance focusing on Dante's description of the final circle of Hell.

**When:** Saturday, April 26, 2003, 11:30 am–4:00 pm

**Where:** Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston

**Phone:** (617) 566-1401

**Cost:** Free with admission to the Museum

### **Lost Theatres of Somerville**

Exhibit and lecture series on the movie theatres that once anchored Somerville's many neighborhoods. Oral histories, photographs, and memorabilia bring to life the theatres — only one of 14 survives — that created a sense of community in this and other working-class American cities.

#### **Exhibit Opening**

**When:** Saturday, March 29, 2003

*Kathryn Fuller, Virginia Commonwealth University* — "The Movie-going Experience: Community and the Culture of Promotion"

**When:** Thursday, April 3, 2003, 7:00–9:00 pm

*Garen Daley, Former Manager of the Somerville Theatre and Don King, Theatre Historian* — "The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Neighborhood Theatre"

**When:** Thursday, April 10, 2003, 7:00–9:00 pm

#### **Tour of Exhibition with Curator David Guss**

**When:** Thursday, April 24, 2003, 7:00–9:00 pm

**Where:** Somerville Museum

**Phone:** (617) 666-9810

### **Schools and Society: The Current Debate on Education Reform**

A four-part series of public forums on issues of education reform. Topics of discussion include high-stakes testing, college preparation, teacher education, teaching in the 21st century, and school reform.

*Dr. Jo Ann Gora* — "Educating for College"

**When:** Wednesday, March 19, 2003, 7:30 pm

*Margaret McKenna* — "Educating Educators"

**When:** Wednesday, March 26, 2003, 7:30 pm

*Paul Reville* — "Assessing Success"

**When:** Wednesday, April 9, 2003, 7:30 pm

*Jay Kaufman* — "Reinventing Public Education"

**When:** Wednesday, April 23, 2003, 7:30 pm

**Where:** First Parish in Cambridge

**Phone:** (617) 495-2727

### **Structure and Design: Three Centuries of Framingham Architecture**

An exhibition and related programming that survey four centuries of Framingham architecture and its relationship to the social, economic and cultural history of the town. Programs include a symposium, walking tour, and lecture by noted architectural historian Cynthia Zaitzevsky.

#### **Exhibit**

**When:** Sunday, April 27–Saturday, August 16, 2003

**Where:** Framingham Historical Society and Museum, 16 Vernon Street

*Cynthia Zaitzevsky* — "Framingham Architecture: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"

**When:** Thursday, May 8, 2003, 7:30 pm

**Where:** Framingham Historical Society and Museum, 2 Oak Street

#### **Walking Tour of Framingham Centre**

**When:** Saturday, June 7, 2003 10:30 am

**Rain date:** Sunday June 8, 2003, 1:30 pm

**Where:** Tour begins at Museum, Old Academy Building, 16 Vernon Street

#### **Walking Tour of Downtown Framingham**

**When:** Saturday, June 14, 2003, 10:30 am

**Rain date:** Sunday, June 15, 2003, 1:30 pm

**Where:** Tour begins at the Park Street Church, Downtown Common

**Phone:** (508) 872-3780

### **The Price of Freedom: Anthony Burns and the Fugitive Slave Act**

An exhibit on the life of fugitive slave Anthony Burns and the historical period that gave rise to the Fugitive Slave Act and the rise of abolitionism in Massachusetts. Historical artifacts and educational material tell the story of Boston in the 1850s and the case of Anthony Burns.

**When:** September 2002–September 2003

**Where:** John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse, Boston

**Phone:** (617) 748-4185

## Western Massachusetts

### **Ancient Egypt**

An exhibition of artifacts from 25th and 26th dynasty Egypt, centering on the mummy case of a stone mason named Padiherchef.

**When:** Wednesday, January 15, 2003–Sunday, January 4, 2004

**Where:** George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield

**Phone:** (413) 263-6800

**Cost:** Free with admission to the Springfield Museums

### **The World Beyond the Hill: The Life and Times of W.E.B. DuBois**

Performances of a theater piece based on the writings of W.E.B. DuBois, taking the form of a dialogue between DuBois and present-day young people. The piece, which honors the 100th anniversary of the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*, is the culmination of Berkshire Country Day School's year-long study of DuBois.

#### **Performances for Students**

**When:** Tuesday, May 13 & Thursday, May 15, 2003, 10:00 am & 1:00 pm

**Where:** Berkshire Theatre Festival Mainstage, Stockbridge

**Phone:** (413) 298-5536 x22

**Cost:** Free, Open to High School Students Only

#### **Performances for the General Public**

**When:** Fridays, May 16 & May 23, Saturday, May 24, 2003, 7:30 pm; Sunday, May 18, 2003, 2:00 pm.

**Where:** Berkshire Theatre Festival Mainstage, Stockbridge

**Phone:** (413) 298-5536 x22

**Cost:** \$45/\$25 with discount (please call for more information)

## Central Massachusetts

### **Desperate Journeys: True Stories of Endurance and Survival**

This four-part reading and discussion program focuses on three accounts of physical and moral testing under extreme circumstances — narratives that both grip the imagination and raise intriguing questions.

**When:** Mondays, March 24, April 28, May 19, and June 16, 2003, 7:00–9:00 pm

**Where:** Leominster Public Library

**Phone:** (978) 534-7522

## Southeastern Massachusetts

### **Perspectives on "the Ave"**

An interdisciplinary exhibition exploring the character of Acushnet Avenue in New Bedford's North End, a thoroughfare that has changed little over the last several decades. The exhibition features works by artist Carolyn Swiszczy and includes historical photographs, planning documents, and oral histories of "the Ave" over time.

**When:** Friday, February 28, 2003–Friday, May 2, 2003

**Where:** ArtWorks! at Dover Street

**Phone:** 508-984-1588

### **Thanksgiving: Memory, Myth & Meaning**

A major exhibition that explores the history of Thanksgiving, from present-day celebrations and traditions to those past. As it peels back layers of popular culture, observance, meaning and myth, the exhibit reveals the true history of the holiday.

**When:** March 29–November 30, 2003, 9:00 am–5:00 pm, daily.

**Where:** Plimoth Plantation

**Phone:** 508-746-1622 x8281

**Cost:** Adult \$22.00/ Seniors & College Students (with ID) \$20.00/ Children 6-12 \$14.00/ Under 6 Free

## Northeastern Massachusetts

### **Celebrating History: Anniversaries to Educate, Promote and Preserve History**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board, and the Essex National Heritage Commission are co-sponsoring the Sixth Annual Community Forum on Historical Records. The

forum will offer a full day of speakers and sessions to examine the practical ways historical records and archival materials can be utilized in the celebration of histories, anniversaries and commemorative activities.

**When:** Friday, May 9, 2003

**Where:** Merrimack College, North Andover

**Phone:** (617) 727-2816 x257 (Contact: Bill Milhomme)

## THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A Multi-Site, Festival evoked by the  
70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Book Burnings in Berlin

# WORDS ON FIRE™

An eight-week multi-site festival of art exhibits, films, lectures and special events ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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MARCH 27 – MAY 11, 2003

The following humanities programs will be held in Rabb Lecture Hall at the Boston Public Library. Admission is free. Times vary. For more information call (617) 558-6593.

### **Women Writers, Women's Voices: Cross Cultural Perspectives**

Three authors will read from their work and discuss how gender and cultural identity influence their choice of language, subjects and themes. Speakers: Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust* and *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History*; Indira Ganesan, Granta finalist for "Best Young American Novelist" for *The Journey*; Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt*. Joyce Antler, Professor of American Jewish History and Culture, Brandeis University, moderator.

**When:** Thursday, March 27th at 7:00 pm

### **William Styron Talks with Robert Brustein**

American Repertory Theater founder Robert Brustein and Pulitzer Prize winning author William Styron discuss the acclaimed novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, and the controversy it created.

**When:** Sunday, March 30th at 3:00 pm

### **Jewish Culture and The Book: An Intimate Relationship**

Panelists will explore the importance of the written word in Jewish culture. Speakers: Judith R. Baskin, Professor of Humanities, University of Oregon; Marc Z. Brettler, Professor of Biblical Studies, Brandeis University; Ellen Frankel, CEO and Editor-in-Chief, The Jewish Publication Society. Steven T. Katz, Director, Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies, Boston University, moderator.

**When:** Thursday, April 3rd at 7:00 pm

### **Tony Kushner and Craig Lucas Talk with Robert Brustein**

Pulitzer Prize and Tony-award winning playwright Tony Kushner and Craig Lucas, celebrated playwright and screenwriter, discuss social, political and sexual issues in contemporary playwrighting with Robert Brustein.

**When:** Thursday, April 6th at 3:00 pm

**Black Books: The First African American Authors**, curated by the Museum of Afro American History. Distinguished scholars discuss influential works written and published by African Americans, including the first African American newspapers, early plays written for and performed by African American theatre companies, and other examples of groundbreaking African American print culture. Speakers: Dr. Lois Brown, Assistant Professor, Mount Holyoke College. Additional Speakers TBA.

**When:** Thursday, April 10th at 7:00 pm

### **Freedom of Expression in a Digital Age: Reading, Writing and Cyberspace**

This program will explore existing and potential threats to the "cyber-liberties" of citizens in democratic and authoritarian societies and discuss the most pressing "cyber-liberty" issues in the U.S. today. Speakers: John Palfrey, Executive Director, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School; Andrew Tarsy, Anti-Defamation League; Marnie Warner, Co-Chair, Committee on Intellectual Freedom, Massachusetts Library Association. Jonathan Zittrain, Co-Director, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Assistant Professor, Harvard Law School, moderator.

**When:** Thursday, May 1st at 7:00 pm

### **An Evening with the Words on Fire Artists**

A provocative evening featuring artists and curators of the *Words on Fire* exhibits. They will explore underlying themes of *Words on Fire* in relation to their work.

**When:** Thursday, May 8th at 7:00 pm

### **Reclaiming the Voices, Reclaiming the Square**

On May 10, 1933, books were burned in Bebelplatz Square in Berlin. On May 11, 2003, we will reclaim the square and reclaim the voices of those authors whose books were burned in the Berlin bonfires. Fifteen noted authors will participate in reading from the burned books. Event co-chairs Anne Bernays and Justin Kaplan will be joined by James Carroll, Samantha Chang, Anita Diamant, Leslie Epstein, Allegra Goodman, Alice Hoffman, Dennis Lehane, Steve McCauley, Jill McCorkle, Pamela Painter, Jayne Anne Phillips, David Slavitt and Larry Tye.

**Where:** Boston Public Library/Copley Square

**When:** May 11th 2:00 – 5:30 pm

The *Words on Fire* festival is also sponsoring a series of films and art exhibits related to freedom of expression. For a complete schedule, go to [www.wordsonfireboston.com](http://www.wordsonfireboston.com).

## Teaching Teachers about Islam

In the months after September 11, Massachusetts's educators began actively looking for information on Islamic culture and religion. One of the first groups to respond was Primary Source, a professional development organization dedicated to accurate and inclusive social studies and humanities teaching. In January 2002, Primary Source presented its first programs on Islam — a six-part lecture series for K-12 teachers entitled *The U.S., Islam and the Afghan Conflict*.

This fall, Primary Source offered a second series of lectures entitled *Central Asia: Islamic Diversity from the Mongols to the Present* in cooperation with the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies Outreach Center at Harvard, the Center For Middle Eastern Studies Teacher Resource Center at Harvard, and the Burlington Public Schools. Seventy-five educators from the Boston area heard five distinguished scholars speak on different aspects of Central Asia's role in the development of Islamic practice and culture. Supported in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the lectures were professionally videotaped and edited. The finished product will be a video featuring lectures by Laura Adams, Thomas Barfield, Ali Asani, Beatrice Manz and Wheeler Thackston that will be distributed to Primary Source's 20 partnership school districts as well as to university outreach centers, libraries, and community groups.

For more information please contact Tova at (617) 923-9933.



## Golda's Balcony

The Foundation hosted a performance of *Golda's Balcony* on February 12th at the Tremont Theatre in Boston. Fifteen women who serve in the Massachusetts Legislature were the special guests. The critically acclaimed one-act play, written by William Gibson (best known for *The Miracle Worker*) and based on the autobiography of Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister, moved to the Tremont Theatre after four months of sold-out performances at Shakespeare & Company. *Golda's Balcony*, a one-woman show, stars MFH board member Annette Miller in what the *Boston Globe* called a "tour-de-force performance." The play was followed by a discussion with Annette Miller, Director Daniel Gidron, and Brandeis University historian and former Foundation president Joyce Antler.

*Above: Annette Miller in Golda's Balcony at the Tremont Theatre in Boston*

## Congratulations

Congratulations to the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, which has received a \$300,000 grant from the federal Save America's Treasures Fund for the renovation of four historic buildings in Old Deerfield. In the fall 2002 issue of *MassHumanities*, PVMA's Executive Director Tim Neumann explained that "like a Greek Acropolis, this cluster of buildings represents the soul of an entire American age."

## Recent Grants

### Greater Boston Area

**\$5,000 to the Cambridge Forum** to support a series of public forums on education reform.

**\$4,740 to the Framingham Historical Society and Museum** for an exhibition on Framingham architecture, a catalogue, and related programming.

**Edgell Memorial Library**, from collodion or gelatin photograph by Leland Eugene Gray (Framingham), c. 1930. Designed in 1873 by Framingham architects W. Frank Hurd and William A. Rice as a war memorial in Victorian Gothic style. Framingham Historical Society and Museum Collection. ▶

**\$5,000 to Primary Source in Watertown** to support editing and distribution of high-quality videotapes of lectures on various aspects of Islamic culture in Afghanistan and other parts of Central Asia.

**Tile in a mosque in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.** Photo by Pamelas Kachurin ▼



**\$5,000 to the Center for Independent Documentary** in Sharon and filmmaker Marc Fields for a pre-production grant to complete a treatment and fundraising sample for a one-hour documentary about the social history of the banjo.

**Cardboard embossed sign advertising Haynes Bay State products.** From the collection of James F. Bollman. ▼



**\$2,500 to the Nichols House Museum, Inc. in Boston** for a Scholar in Residence project to explore the political and social activities of the landscape architect, author, and reformer Rose Standish Nichols (1872-1960), with scholar Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello.

**\$5,000 to the Somerville Museum** to support the programming and outreach phase of an exhibit funded in part by a \$10,000 grant from the Foundation in 2001.

**\$2,500 to the Center for Independent Documentary in Sharon and filmmakers Steve Gentile and Jim Wolpaw of Boston** to support screenings, panels, and a study guide for a recently completed film on Emily Dickinson, funded in part by a major grant from MFH (in 1997). *Loaded Gun* premiered at the MFA in April and has since been shown at several film festivals in the region.

**Director/producer Jim Wolpaw (right) and Camera person/producer Steve Gentile interview an actress for *Loaded Gun*.** ▶



### Northeastern Massachusetts

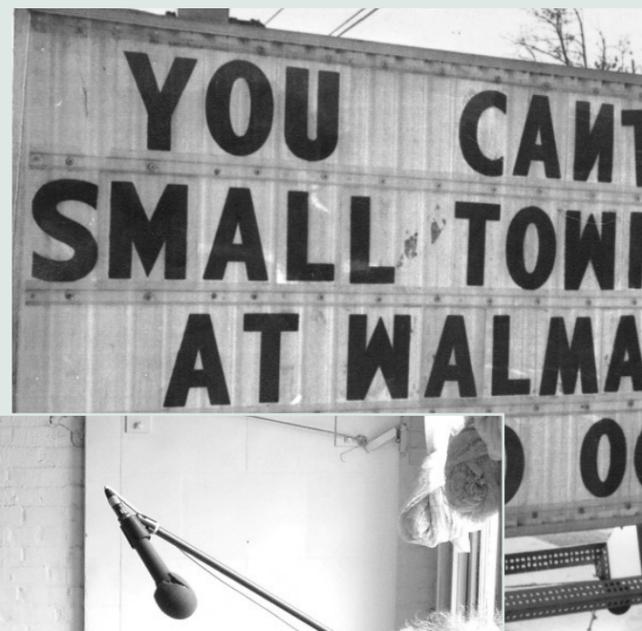
**\$2,500 to the Nahant Historical Society** for a Scholar in Residence project to examine the evolution of Nahant from fishing and farming village to summer community, with scholar Carolyn Hughes.



### Southeastern Massachusetts

**\$2,500 to the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society in Edgartown** to underwrite the costs of videotaping, logging, and editing oral history interviews with eight elderly Vineyard residents and combining one interview with archival and other footage to complete a trailer for a one-hour documentary film.

◀ **Craig Kingsbury (1912-2002)** — Island selectman, naturalist, gardener, shellfish warden — a colorful man of all trades and tales. One produced segment of *Vineyard Voices* features Kingsbury speaking about Prohibition and rum running on the Vineyard. Photo by Linsey Lee, Martha's Vineyard Historical Society





▲ Acushnet Avenue, New Bedford c. 1960. One of several documentary photos of Acushnet Avenue to be displayed in ArtWorks! galleries as part of the multi-disciplinary examination of this neighborhood in New Bedford's North End. Courtesy Spinner Publications. Photo by Richard Fortin.

**\$5,000 to ArtWorks! Partners for the Arts & Community, Inc. in New Bedford** to provide architectural, historical, and social context for an exhibition of work by New Bedford native and artist-in-residence Carolyn Swiszc.

#### Central Massachusetts

**\$300 to AfterSchool Partners in Newton** in support of a one-woman show, *Meet Lucy Stone*, featuring Judith Black.

**\$250 to the Leominster Public Library** for a reading and discussion series focusing on three accounts of physical and moral testing under extreme circumstances.

#### Western Massachusetts

**\$2,500 to the Sheffield Historical Society** for a Scholar in Residence project to examine the growth of tourism in Sheffield and South Berkshire County during the early railroad era, with scholar Bernard Drew.

**\$5,000 to Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in Deerfield and filmmaker Steve Alves of Greenfield** to support distribution of an hour-long documentary that places the stories of two Massachusetts communities and their decisions to permit — or not to permit — the construction of Wal-Mart stores on their outskirts, in the context of the historical conflict between the growing power of national retail corporations and small towns' efforts to protect local economies based on small businesses.



▲ Photograph from the documentary film *Talking to the Wall*. Gary Smith, Assistant Manager of Tire Warehouse on Federal Street, makes his feelings clear on the October 19, 1993 vote deciding whether Wal-Mart can build in the town. Smith originally supported Wal-Mart, but changed his mind because he came to see it as likely to divide the residents of Greenfield and decimate local businesses. Photo courtesy of *Springfield Union-News*.

#### Out of State

**\$5,000 to the New York Foundation for the Arts and filmmaker Peter Miller** to support production of a one-hour film on Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the Italian immigrant anarchists who were at the center of an international *cause celebre* and the most famous legal case in modern Massachusetts history.

- I have a friend who should know about the Foundation. Please add her/his name to your mailing list.
- Please send me Project Grant Guidelines.
- Please send me information about the following:
  - Reading & Discussion Programs
  - Scholar in Residence Program
  - Research Inventory Program
- I am a humanities scholar and would like to participate in Foundation-supported public humanities programs. Please contact me.

Name

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Title

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Organization

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Address

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City

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State

Zip

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Telephone (H)

(W)

E-mail

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**Mail this form to:** Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, 66 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA 01060 or fax to: (413) 584-8454

### Grant Categories

New guidelines and applications for the following grant programs are available by returning the response form above, telephoning the Foundation, or downloading materials from our website.

Northampton: (413) 584-8440/ Metro Boston: (617) 923-1678/ [www.mfh.org](http://www.mfh.org)

You must be a nonprofit organization, or have a nonprofit fiscal sponsor, to qualify for support.

#### Regular grants

Due to the 62% cut in state funding for the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which supports the Foundation's grantmaking program, the maximum MFH award in Fiscal Year 2003 (November 2002 – October 2003) will be \$5,000. Most grants will be in the \$2,000-\$3,000 range. Proposals are due on or before the first business day of November, February, May and August. Drafts are required. Draft proposals are due at least two weeks before the final deadline. Applicants must consult with Ellen Rothman in the Metro Boston office before submitting a draft. Drafts and final proposals (signed original and eight copies) should be sent to Ellen Rothman in the Metro Boston Office. Notification is within 90 days of submission.

#### Reading & Discussion Programs

These grants are awarded for up to \$1,000. A catalogue of program themes and a directory of experienced discussion leaders are available from the Foundation.

#### Scholar in Residence Program

This collaborative program with the Bay State Historical League enables scholars to conduct original research that advances the interpretation and presentation of history in historical societies, museums, historical commissions, and libraries. Funding for the Scholar in Residence Program has been suspended at least until October 2003. Call Bay State Historic League at (781) 899-3920 for updated information in late summer.

#### Research Inventory Grants

Small historical organizations may apply for a Research Inventory Grant (maximum of \$1,000) to support the costs of conducting inventory projects designed with specific research questions in mind. Funding for Research Inventory Grants has been suspended at least until October 2003. Call BSHL at (781) 899-3920 for updated information in late summer.

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## The Crisis Continues — Please Help!

(see page 2)

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# Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Healthcare



At the heart of the relationship between a patient and a doctor, nurse, or other caregiver is a story — the context of experience and emotion that makes every case unique. But it has become increasingly difficult for health care workers to listen to patients' stories. Faced with mounting pressure to contain costs, to master rapidly changing technology, and to perform flawlessly under the threat of lawsuits, today's health care provider is forced to focus on the body of the patient, rather than on the patient as a whole human being.

*Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Healthcare™* brings the humanities into the hospital, allowing health care workers to step back and reflect on their complex responsibilities and their relationships with patients and with one another. This innovative workplace program was developed by the Maine Humanities Council, which has offered the program at 25 hospitals in that state. At each location, a diverse group of health care workers meets with a trained facilitator for six monthly discussions of readings that illuminate issues central to caring for people who are well, sick, or dying. Participants include nurses, doctors, case managers, therapists, chaplains, social workers, administrators, and allied staff. They address each other by their first names, without professional titles. Maine participants have testified that these conversations have helped them listen to their patients with greater understanding, strengthened their relationships with colleagues — especially colleagues in different professional roles — and deepened their pleasure and satisfaction in their work.

*Literature & Medicine* is being offered this spring at five Massachusetts sites: Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, UMass Memorial Hospital in Worcester,

Newton-Wellesley Hospital in Newton, Faulkner Hospital in Jamaica Plain, and Children's Hospital in Boston. The Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities is sponsoring and coordinating the project. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities covers most of the costs for this initial year. The Foundation hopes to raise funds to continue the program and expand it to other sites in 2004.

In preparation for the January launch of the seminars, MFH staff worked with the facilitators and representatives from the hospitals to create a syllabus for each site. Drawing from a vast and rich bibliography, each team selected readings representing a range of genres — drama, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction — and a diversity of viewpoints, with texts that focus on the experience of patients, their family members, doctors, nurses, and others. Among the readings are Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych" and Albert Camus' *The Plague*, stories by William Carlos Williams and Raymond Carver, Audre Lorde's *Cancer Journals*, poems by Siegfried Sassoon and Donald Hall, and Anne Fadiman's nonfiction account of the experience of Hmong immigrants with the American health care system, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*.

The Massachusetts programs filled up quickly and are receiving an enthusiastic reception. Dr. Joseph Dorsey, a member of the group at Faulkner Hospital, believes that the seminars will help participants deliver better care. He observes, "Participation in the discussion series reminds us of our own humanity and how it can influence how we react to that of patients under our care. Insights into our reactions enable us to better understand our own vulnerabilities and avoid letting them get in the way of doing the right thing for our patients and their families."