

**MLA'S MORTON N. COHEN AWARD TO BE PRESENTED TO *THE LETTERS OF SAMUEL BECKETT, VOLUME 1: 1929-1940*; EDITORS MARTHA DOW FEHSENFELD, LOIS MORE OVERBECK, GEORGE CRAIG, AND DAN GUNN WILL SHARE AWARD; LEO JANSEN, HANS LUIJTEN, AND NIENKE BAKKER RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTION FOR *VINCENT VAN GOGH—THE LETTERS: THE COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED AND ANNOTATED EDITION***

New York, NY – 5 December 2011 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it will award the eleventh Morton N. Cohen Award for a Distinguished Edition of Letters. The winning edition is *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume 1: 1929–1940*, edited by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld (Emory Univ.), Lois More Overbeck (Emory Univ.), George Craig (Univ. of Sussex), and Dan Gunn (American Univ. of Paris), and published by Cambridge University Press in 2009. The editors will share a cash award, and each will receive a certificate containing the text of the selection committee's citation. Receiving honorable mention in the competition is *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*, edited by Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, and published by the Van Gogh Museum, the Huygens Institute, and Mercatorfonds in 2009. The Cohen Award was established in 1989 by a gift from Morton N. Cohen, professor emeritus of English at the City University of New York.

The Cohen Award is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 7 January 2012 during the association's annual convention, to be held in Seattle. The members of the selection committee were Jane Everett (McGill Univ.); Susan Imbarrato (Minnesota State Univ., Moorhead); and Virginia Jackson (Tufts Univ.), chair. The committee's citation for the winning edition reads:

What distinguishes the correspondence in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929–1940* from other great literary correspondence is the surprise of this rich and previously unpublished material. The introduction, editorial process, extensive footnotes, and overall scholarly apparatus are exemplary for their detail and breadth. For the editor of literary correspondence, this edition offers an excellent model not only in its thoroughness but also in its awareness of ethical considerations, in the quality and appropriateness of annotations and editorial procedures, and in the abundance of scholarly material that the editors, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck, George Craig, and Dan Gunn, manage to present while still making these amazing letters thoroughly readable.

Martha Dow Fehsenfeld received her BA from Bennington College and her MA from the University of North Carolina and did doctoral work at the University of Illinois, Urbana. She was authorized by Samuel Beckett to edit his correspondence in 1985 and is the coauthor of *Beckett in the Theatre*. She observed and recorded Beckett's direction of *Footfalls*, *Happy Days*, *Endgame*

and his supervision of *Waiting for Godot*. She was the production assistant for *Endgame*, directed by Samuel Beckett, and the assistant to the director Alan Schneider for the world premiere of *Ohio Impromptu*. In addition, she has performed in Beckett's *Happy Days*, *Footfalls*, and *Rockaby*—the latter directed by Walter Asmus. Originator of The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays, broadcast on PBS and CBS, she served as project director for the first production *All That Fall*. She has served on the advisory committee of The Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading, England, and the board of the Alan Schneider Memorial Fund Theatre Communications Group, New York.

Lois More Overbeck has been a research associate at the Graduate School, Emory University, since 1990, and is a visiting lecturer in the Department of Theatre Studies, Emory University. She was authorized by Samuel Beckett as associate editor and is now coeditor of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, and she directs the project at Emory University. She received her BA from Beloit College, her MA from the University of Chicago, and her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. She edited *The Beckett Circle* of the Samuel Beckett Society and has published widely on Beckett and modern drama. She was a consultant for the Beckett Festival of Radio Plays; project director of a citywide festival, Beckett/Atlanta; and a coordinator of the Year of Beckett—2006, Atlanta, a festival of performances, lectures, and workshops celebrating Beckett's centennial year. She was coeditor of *Intersecting Margins*, a collection of essays and interviews on the plays of Adrienne Kennedy.

George Craig is an honorary research fellow at the University of Sussex and was formerly reader in French at the School of European Studies, University of Sussex. His distinguished scholarship includes a critical edition of Marguerite Duras's *Des journées entières dans les arbres* and *Moy qui me voy: The Writer and the Self from Montaigne to Leiris*, which he coedited. He has published essays on Hugo, Mallarmé, and Proust and on reading. He was for many years a regular contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*. He brings unique personal credentials to his role as French translator: born and educated in Ireland, he followed Beckett's own academic pathway from Trinity College Dublin to the École Normale Supérieure in Paris.

Dan Gunn is a professor of comparative literature and English at the American University of Paris. He is a novelist, critic, and translator with interests in twentieth-century European literature. His critical works include *Psychoanalysis and Fiction: An Exploration of Literary and Psychoanalytic Borders* and *Wool-gathering; or, How I Ended Analysis*. His works of fiction include *Almost You* and *Body Language*. He is the director of the center's publications (the Cahiers series 1–16). He regularly reviews European fiction for the *Times Literary Supplement*. His forthcoming publication "Beckett and Shakespeare" will appear in the Great Shakespearians series, published by Continuum.

The committee's citation for the honorable mention reads:

*Vincent van Gogh—The Letters*, edited by Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, is a work of art in itself and is an extension and consolidation of a long history of editions of Van Gogh's letters. Even the publication information (Amsterdam, Brussels, The Hague) about this monumentally gorgeous edition gives some idea of its scope (all the more breathtaking because published in three languages). This six-volume publication, remarkable in its scope, overall production, and power of the narrative, is part of the Van Gogh Letters Project and is supplemented by an equally elaborate Web edition (<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/>). This rich new edition is in every way a treasure to behold.

Leo Jansen is curator of paintings at the Van Gogh Museum. He received his PhD from the Constantijn Huygens Institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Science. He is the author of

*Van Gogh and His Letters*, editor of *Wiekslag om de kim*, and coeditor of *Altijd maar bijeen blijven*, *Brief Happiness*, and *Painted with Words: The Letters to Emile Bernard*. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Van Gogh Museum Journal*, the chief editor of the editorial board of the Willem Witsen Foundation, and a member of the editorial board of *De negentiende eeuw*.

Nienke Bakker is a curator of exhibitions at the Van Gogh Museum. She studied at the Universiteit Leiden, the Université Charles-de-Gaulle–Université Lille III, and the Universiteit Utrecht.

Hans Luijten is a senior researcher at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. He studied at Utrecht University and taught Dutch Renaissance literature there. He is the cowriter of *Minne-en zinnebeelden*, an anthology of Dutch emblems from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. His current project is a biography of Jo Bongers (1862–1925), the widow of Theo Van Gogh.

The Modern Language Association of America and its 30,000 members in 100 countries work to strengthen the study and teaching of languages and literature. Founded in 1883, the MLA provides opportunities for its members to share their scholarly findings and teaching experiences with colleagues and to discuss trends in the academy. The MLA sustains one of the finest publication programs in the humanities, producing a variety of publications for language and literature professionals and for the general public. The association publishes the *MLA International Bibliography*, the only comprehensive bibliography in language and literature, available online. The MLA Annual Convention features meetings on a wide variety of subjects; this year's convention in Seattle is expected to draw 8,000 attendees. More information on MLA programs is available at [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org).

The Morton N. Cohen Award is presented biennially, in odd-numbered years. The winners of the first Cohen Award, presented in 1991, were Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith. Other winning editors are Georges Lubin; Paul Mattheisen, Arthur Young, and Pierre Coustillas; Clyde de L. Ryals and Kenneth J. Fielding; Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley; Albert J. Devlin and Nancy Marie Patterson Tischler; Michael B. Frank and Harriet Elinor Smith; Robert J. Bertholf and Albert Gelpi; John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard; and William G. Holzberger.

The Morton N. Cohen Award is awarded under the auspices of the MLA's Committee on Honors and Awards. Other awards sponsored by the committee are the William Riley Parker Prize; the James Russell Lowell Prize; the MLA Prize for a First Book; the Howard R. Marraro Prize; the Kenneth W. Mildener Prize; the Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize; the MLA Prize for Independent Scholars; the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize; the MLA Prizes for a Distinguished Scholarly Edition and for a Distinguished Bibliography; the Lois Roth Award; the William Sanders Scarborough Prize; the Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize in Yiddish Studies; the MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies; the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prizes for Comparative Literary Studies, for French and Francophone Studies, for Italian Studies, for Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures, for Studies in Slavic Languages and Literatures, for a Translation of a Literary Work, for a Translation of a Scholarly Study of Literature; and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Publication Award for a Manuscript in Italian Literary Studies.

The donor of the award, Morton Norton Cohen, was born in Calgary, Alberta, and received his bachelor's degree from Tufts University and his MA and PhD from Columbia University. From 1952 until his retirement in 1980 he taught at City College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. During this time he received research grants from the American Philosophical Society, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. His two-volume edition of *The Letters of Lewis Carroll* was published in 1979; his book *Lewis Carroll and Alice* and his edition of *The Selected*

*Letters of Lewis Carroll* appeared in 1982. His *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* was published in 1995. Cohen is a member of the PEN Club, the Kipling Society, and the Lewis Carroll Society. He resides in New York City and in Puerto Rico.