Abstract: British author Charles Morgan first wrote to Edith Koch regarding her proposed translation of his 1932 novel *The Fountain*, but continued a conversation regarding the political situation developing in Germany through an additional four letters.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 099, F891
Title: Charles Morgan letters to Edith Koch
Inclusive Dates: 1933
Extent: 5 items (27 p.)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 099, F891, Charles Morgan letters to Edith Koch, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 61, F891: Shelved in SPEC MSS 099 manuscript boxes

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Biographical Notes

Charles Morgan

British writer Charles Langbridge Morgan wrote several plays, eleven novels, and numerous essays.

Charles Langbridge Morgan was born on January 22, 1894, in Bromley, Kent. He was a cadet in the Royal Navy and later attended naval colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth. From 1911-1913 he served in the Atlantic and China before resigning to pursue a literary career. However, at the outbreak of World War I Morgan volunteered for re-enlistment in the Royal Navy, joining the Naval Brigade forces at Antwerp. In the fall of 1914 Morgan was taken prisoner in Holland, where during his internment Morgan began writing his first novel, *The Gunroom* (1919) in which he was critical of the British Navy. Morgan again volunteered for service during World War II, and he served in the British Admiralty from 1939-1944.

After studying at Oxford, beginning in 1921 Morgan worked as a drama critic for *The Times of London*. In 1926 he became the paper’s principal drama critic, a post he held until 1939.

In the 1930s and 1940s, when Morgan’s success as a writer was at its peak, he won three important literary prizes for his novels: the Prix Fémina-Vie Heureuse (1929); the Hawthornden Prize (1932); and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (1940).

Morgan was one of the few foreigners to become an Académicien in the Institut de France. He also received honorary doctorates from St. Andrews University (LL.D., 1947), Université de Caen (1948), and Université de Toulouse (1948). Morgan died in London, on February 6, 1958.

Edith Koch

Edith Koch, a resident of Berlin, Germany, initially wrote to Charles Morgan regarding her potential translation of his 1932 novel *The Fountain*.

Sources:


Information regarding Edith Koch was derived from the letters.
Charles Morgan first wrote to Edith Koch regarding her proposed translation of his 1932 novel *The Fountain*, but continued a conversation regarding the political situation developing in Germany through an additional four letters.

In his first letter Morgan informed Koch that Herr Herlitschka was already preparing a German translation of *The Fountain* and wondered if recent political developments in Germany would interfere with that publication. In the letters to follow Morgan and Koch continued an exchange concerning the current political events in Germany. In response to a letter from Koch, Morgan suggested that the "double root" of the English distrust of Hitlerism, was namely, "the English love of toleration and hatred of all the extremes of violence, and, secondly, a fear that any movement as fiercely emotional as this will lead inevitably to aggression and to another European war. He also said, "The atmosphere of the world is too like that of July 1914 to be very easy to breathe."

In a seven-page third letter, Morgan responded to the idea that the Jewish persecution in Germany was "all lies" (his quotation marks). Morgan suggested that was impossible, noting that British newspapers tended to neutrality on Jewish issues and further pointed to the exiles of Einstein, Reinhardt and Bruno Walter. Morgan elaborated on the fear that Hitlerism was producing in Europe. He disagreed with Koch that the German persecution could be compared with the treatment of the Boers, and noted the differences in Hitlerism from the Mussolini regime in Italy. He mentioned the persecution of Catholics in Germany, and noted that the military preparations, threats and violence was "driving England into the arms of France and isolating Germany in Europe. The isolation of any great country is the way to war." Finally Morgan argued that any war, no matter who wins, would only result in ruin and communism.

In the extensive fourth letter, Morgan began by suggesting that he and Koch "not be at cross-purposes" because, as he stated, "I care nothing for politics except in so far as they affect art." Morgan wrote of his preference for "an ancient, traditional, aristocratic and benevolent rule...above all, preserving order and peace." In his letter Morgan defended Hitlerism as "probably the only alternative to Communism." However, Morgan felt there were dangers in Hitler's success, comparing it to the failure of Cromwell's revolution in England. In his letter Morgan continued to convey his perspective on Hitlerism and his fear that Europe was nearing war, mentioning Goering, a Hohenzollern restoration, and the appearance of aggression by Germany. He offered his belief that if war didn't ruin everything a "great romantic revival is coming...a romantic & spiritual revival." He concluded, "The statesman and the nations will perish, but one line of poetry or one sentence of prose will live on, and we shall be judged by our art...."

In the fifth and final letter, written from The Castle Builth, Breconshire, Morgan noted the serenity of the country and that politics "seem far away." The content of this letter focused on other topics, including Morgan's books, *The Fountain* and *Portrait in a Mirror*, on having received the Hawthornden Prize, and his current writing projects. Morgan referenced the growing European threat only once, saying "Better to go on working while there is yet time, for I think that Europe's truce is short."
Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Morgan, Charles, 1894-1958--Correspondence.
Koch, Edith--Correspondence.

**Topical Terms**

Authors, British--20th century--Correspondence.
Germany--Foreign public opinion--History--20th century.
Germany--Politics and government--1933-1945--Public opinion.
National socialism--Public opinion.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Correspondence.

**Personal Contributors**

Koch, Edith, correspondent.

Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 099 Miscellaneous Literary and Historical Manuscripts.
MSS 397, Charles Morgan letters to Ronald Armstrong
MSS 099, F850, Charles Morgan letters to Mrs. Hotson
MSS 099 F889, Charles Morgan letter to unidentified recipient
MSS 099, F890, Charles Morgan letter to Miss Christian
Arrangement

The letters are arranged chronologically.
Detailed Description of the Collection

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1933 May 23 [Box 61 F891]
1 item (3 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1933 [June 7] [Box 61 F891]
1 item (2 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1933 June 18 [Box 61 F891]
1 item (7 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1933 June 28 [Box 61 F891]
1 item (11 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1933 August 17 [Box 61 F891]
1 item (4 p.)