



THE GREAT LEAD KIDS. THE VOW OF VENGEANCE  
Drawn for 'The Daily Chronicle' by Frank Brangwyn ARA



# GERMAN AT LEEDS – THEN AND NOW

THE TRUTH  
6. 1915.  
ABOUT  
GERMAN  
ATROCITIES



*The Taking and Murder of Hostages.*



*Souvenir of the European*

HOLLY PERRIL & DR  
CORINNE PAINTER 2022





What is the  
German at Leeds  
Project and why  
is it important?

# 1. What is German at Leeds?

- At the core of the project stand two archival collections, the Liddle Collection and the Department of German collection
- The Liddle Collection concerns global crises such as WWI and WW2.
- The Department of German and the University of Leeds archive concern the changing pedagogy, curriculum and attitudes within German Studies at the University of Leeds
- Archival collections have been analysed in dialogue to develop an understanding of how German language teaching and learning has been politicised by changing relations between Britain and Germany.





## 1. What is German at Leeds?

- Analyses how German language teaching and learning has been affected by significant world crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, such as WWI and WWII, and how this has cultivated an image of the German language within Britain that serves a political function
- Investigates how images of other cultures are constructed, and what purpose they serve for the country perpetuating such ideas
- Explores the role of universities in dealing with international crisis





## Aims

- To develop understanding of how German teaching and learning within Britain has changed over time
- To analyse the function of the changing portrayal of the German culture and language within university education in Britain
- To gain an understanding of how universities deal with international crises and emphasise the role of undergraduate language teaching within the decolonisation of the British curriculum



## 2. Why is it important?

- Builds on the core principles of movements such as *Black Lives Matter* and *Why is my Curriculum White?* in seeking to address engrained biases towards foreign cultures within British education
- Stresses the centrality of modern foreign language teaching in strategies to decolonize the curriculum
- Investigates the role of universities in dealing with international crisis – can universities respond to global conflict without succumbing to xenophobic bias?



# Pre WWI - Germany in the British Consciousness Before 1914

- 1884 – establishment of ‘Modern Languages Tripos’ at the University of Cambridge, required study German of language and literature.
- Increasing interest in German culture, literature and language within Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- University of Cambridge requiring study of ‘die Entwicklung des deutschen Schriftums von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart’ (‘the development of German literature from the oldest times to the present’).

*‘If any one in the present day can be called cultivated who dispenses with a knowledge of German, it is because the two other greatest literatures of the world are now impregnated with the results of German labour and German genius.’*

**– George Eliot**

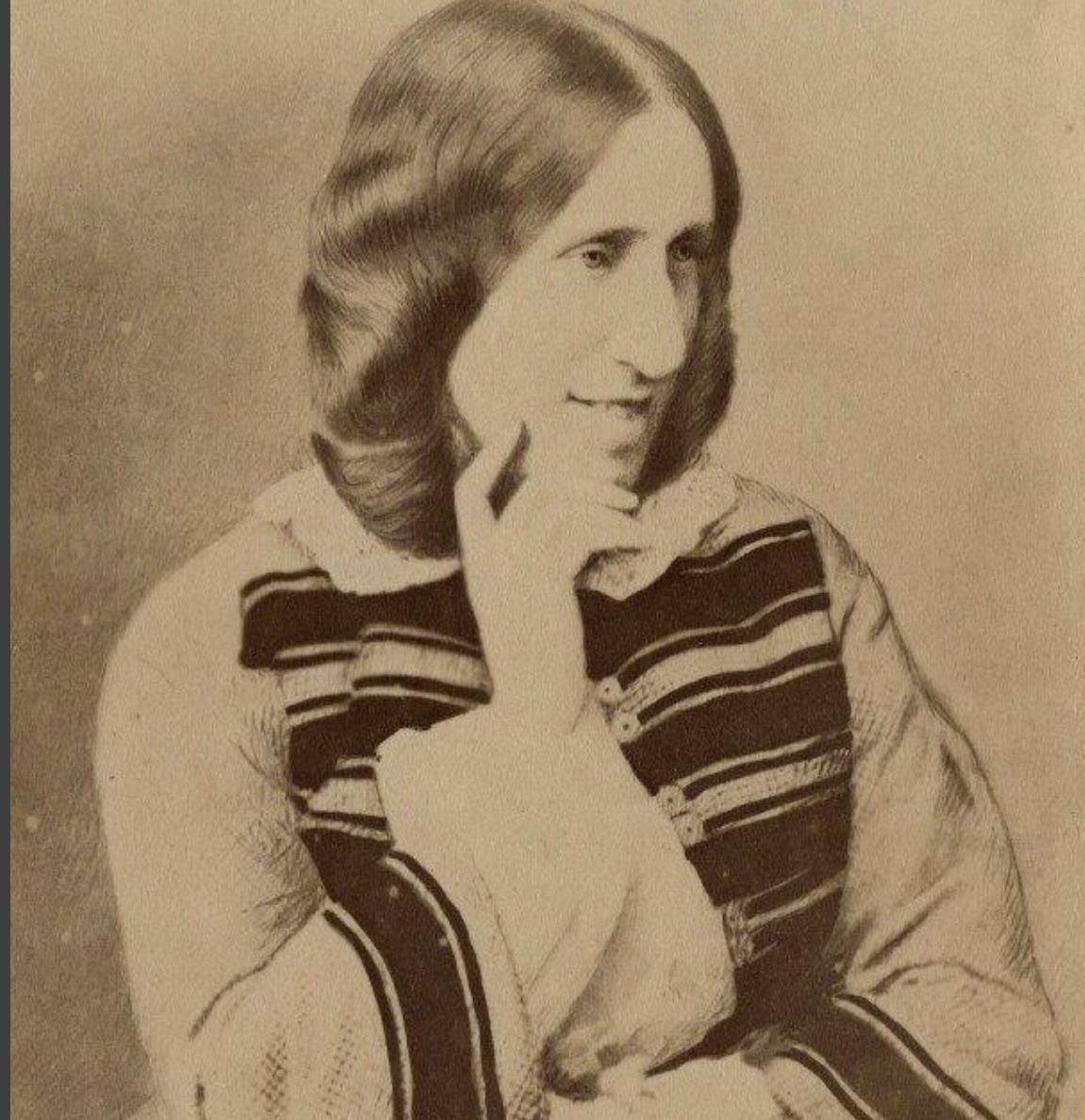
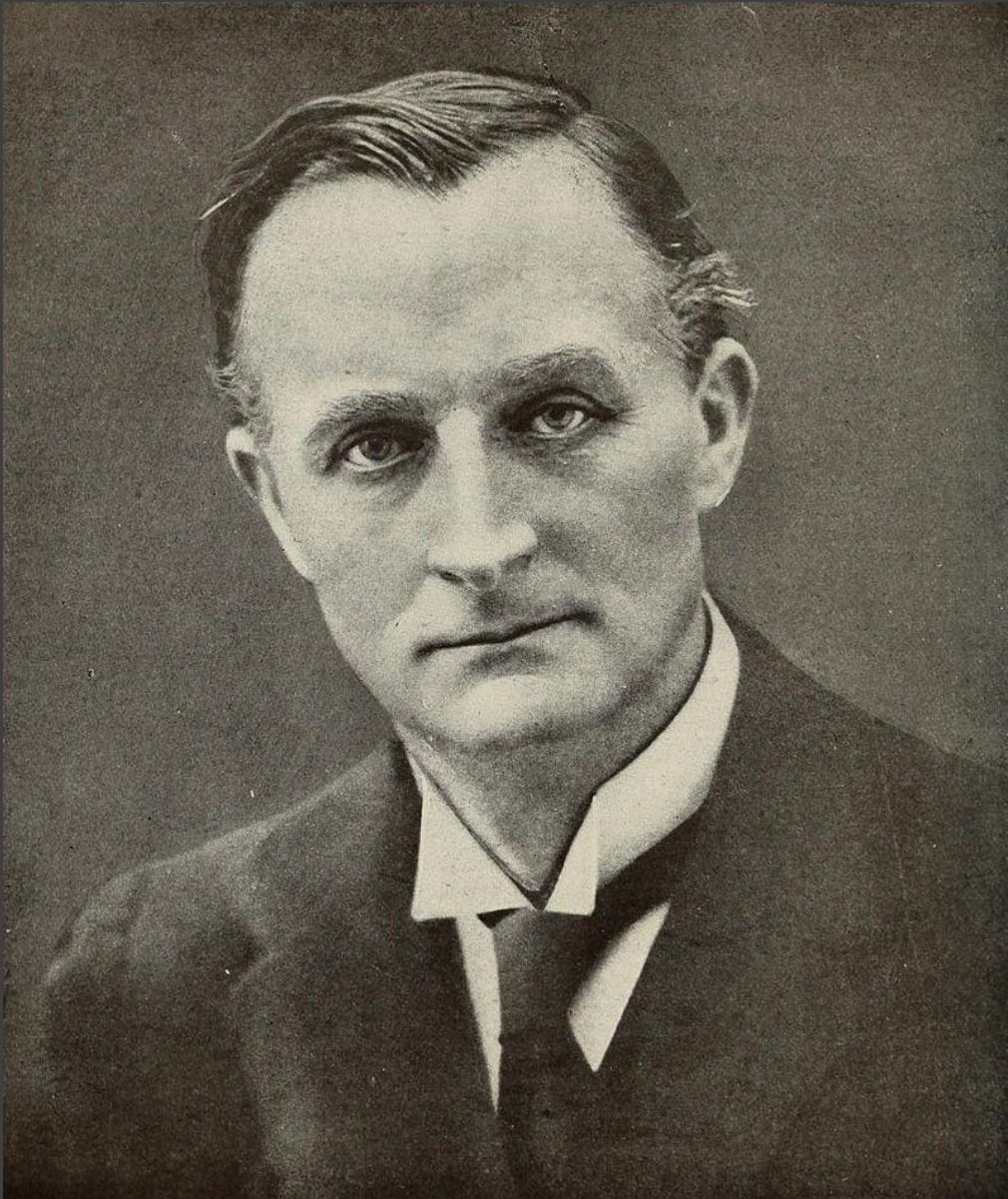


Figure 1: Portrait of George Eliot. London Stereoscopic & Photographic Company, ‘George Eliot’, online image, *The National Portrait Gallery*, 1881, [cited August 3 2022]. Available from National Portrait Gallery Website.



## Pre WWI - The Beginnings of Anti-German Sentiment in Britain Post-1890

- Nathan N. Orgill stresses a sinister edge to this admiration of German culture and literature within the mid-1880s, which culminated in a sense of threat
- Germany's cultural precedence on the world stage + increasing economic power considered a threat
- Sir Edward Grey (Figure 3), the Viscount of Falloden and later Foreign Secretary of Britain, perceived a '**dark and dangerous current**' in German policy from his work in Foreign Office from 1892-1895
- 1890s – dissemination of German language teaching to London universities



# RED CROSS OR IRON CROSS



WOUNDED AND A PRISONER  
OUR SOLDIER CRIES FOR WATER.

**THE GERMAN "SISTER"**  
POURS IT ON THE GROUND BEFORE HIS EYES.

THERE IS NO WOMAN IN BRITAIN  
WHO WOULD DO IT.

THERE IS NO WOMAN IN BRITAIN  
WHO WILL FORGET IT.

## WWI - German at Leeds during World War I

- 1919 - Dramatic shifts to the content of exam papers within the field of German Studies as works of Schiller and Goethe are replaced by the ancient Greek classical texts, such as those of Homer.
- epic narratives of voyage, battle and heroism revive narrative of 'the empire on which the sun never sets', evoking the memory of British imperial glory. Celebration of foreign literatures substituted with narratives that reference Britain's colonial prowess
- German considered 'the language of the enemy', leading to the dramatic side-lining of German literature from academic discourse.
- W.H.D Rouse - discussion of German culture was considered 'unwholesome' due to having 'low ideals'.

# The Second World War

## Anti-German Sentiment in Popular British Discourse during World War II

- Churchill described 'our unrelenting struggle against the vile, dark, criminal forces which have laid their foul grip on Western Europe and on Christian civilisation'.
- Contrast between the 'vile', 'dark', 'criminal' and 'foul' and morality in 'Christian civilisation' juxtaposes the heroism of Britain and the barbarity of the 'savage' German nation; evoking vocabulary of colonial exploit

## Changes to the Curriculum

- Major changes to the curriculum, namely the complete removal of all Old High German texts from the literature section of the course, Scheme A.
- It is thought that these sections were removed due to their focus on the Germanic roots shared by both English and German, demonstrating a the need to separate British and German culture to maintain Self-Other distinction



# Post WWII: German Studies during the GDR



**‘international culture’**

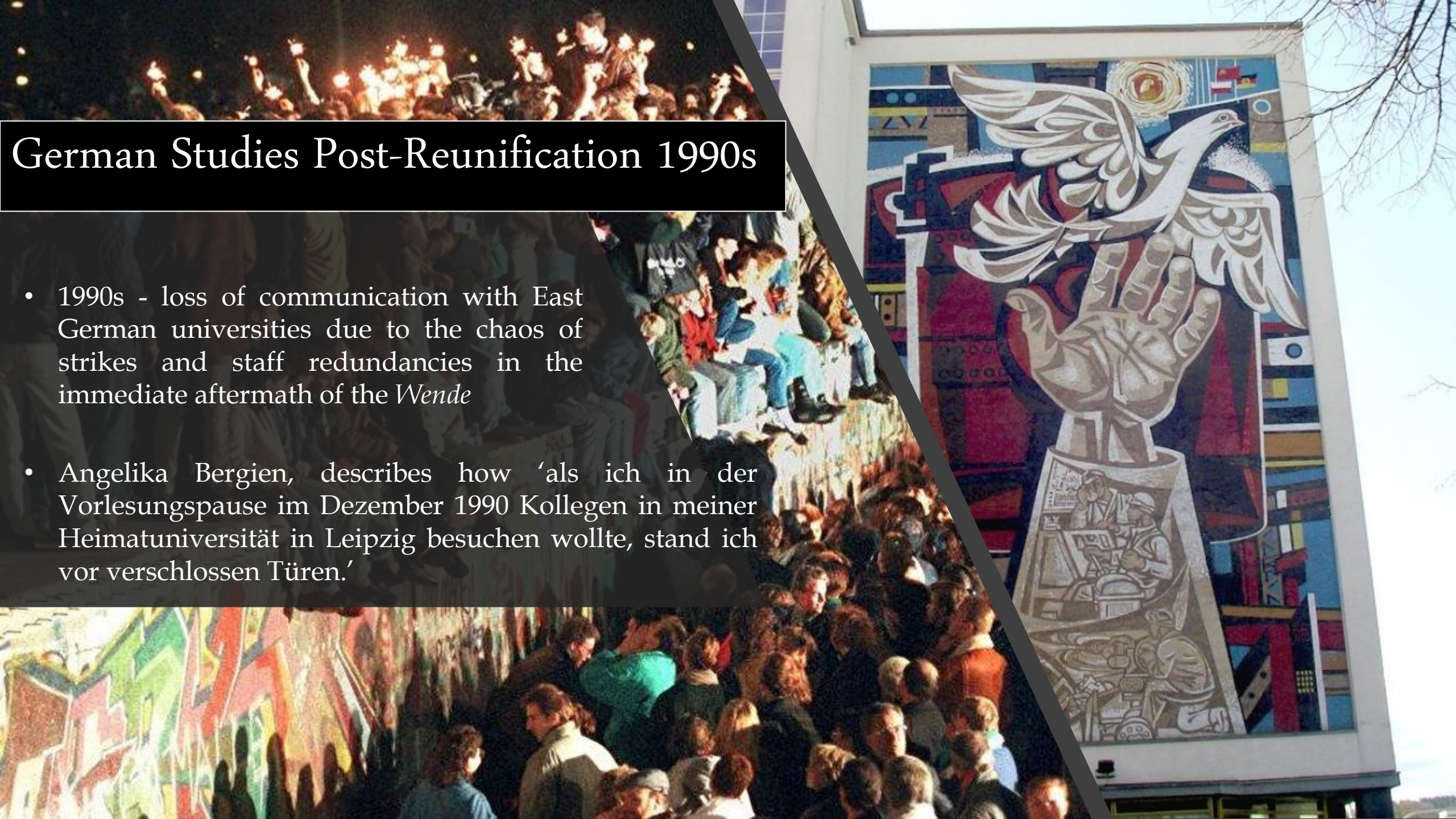
within 1970s, 1980s Britain

- Sander L. Gilman

- Conclusion of the war and the destruction it had brought to Europe and further afield led to a contemplative and critical tone arising within the German Department at Leeds
- Series of letters concerning the decline of the Blackwells German collection. Criticism of the collections’ ‘outdated’ approach (the beginnings of a decolonial dialogue emerging at the University)
- German Department at Leeds becoming keen to establish relationships with universities in East Germany. Increased celebration of German culture within the University, such as the performance of German plays

# German Studies Post-Reunification 1990s

- 1990s - loss of communication with East German universities due to the chaos of strikes and staff redundancies in the immediate aftermath of the *Wende*
- Angelika Bergien, describes how 'als ich in der Vorlesungspause im Dezember 1990 Kollegen in meiner Heimatuniversität in Leipzig besuchen wollte, stand ich vor verschlossenen Türen.'



# Anti-German Sentiment in Brexit Negotiations

'A single European currency was first proposed by the Nazi Reichsbank to Hitler [...] Now it is EU policy'.

- Sir Peter Tapsell



# Euromphobia and the Effect on Modern Foreign Language Learning in Britain

- Distorted perception of foreign cultures is inextricably linked to students' motivation for studying a foreign language
- Language teaching within Britain has always been political, or, perhaps more accurately, 'used for political ends'
- Blurring of anti-European and anti-German discourse within Britain reflects a reversion to the insular attitudes of the British Empire through the demonization of the foreign 'Other'.



*The United Kingdom's unwillingness to learn languages is 'indexical of Euromphobia'*  
– Ursula Lanvers

# Conclusions

- Portrayal of Germany and the German language within British education has been constructed by changing British-Germany across the 20th Century to perform a political function
- Decreasing popularity among students within the UK demonstrates how economic jealousies and tensions between the two countries have engrained biases within the British education system
- Demonstrates that universities have never existed within a vacuum isolated from current affairs and global tensions, but rather should be perceived to engage with a wider dialogue regarding international crises.



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