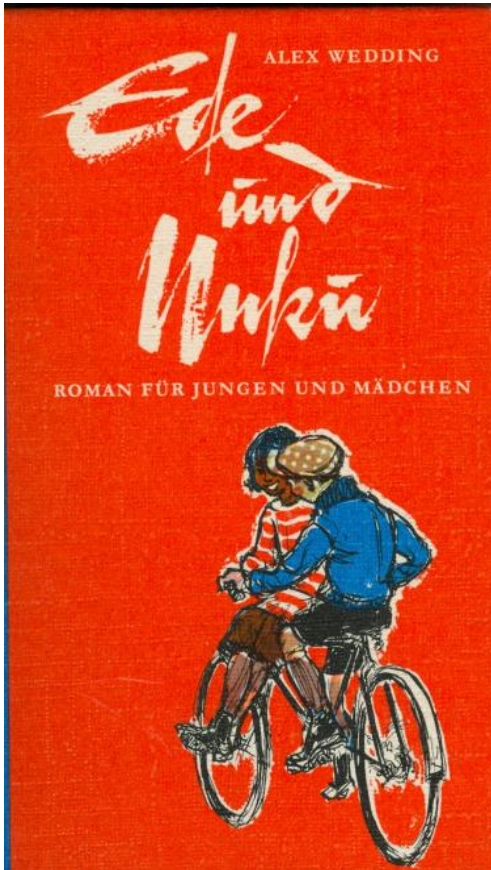




University Library, Special Collections & Archives
Highlight for November 2011



Alex Wedding, *Ede und Unku* (Berlin: Kinderbuchverlag, 1971). Classmark: Printed Books SPEC Scott Macfie H.3.511

Recently-acquired for Special Collections, *Ede und Unku* is the story of a working-class Berlin boy (Ede) who makes friends with a German Sinti girl (Unku). Banned by Hitler, the story has strong connections with the Gypsy Lore Society Archive, one of the Library's most important research collections.

This children's novel was first published in 1931 by the socialist publishing firm Malik-Verlag. The photographs of Ede and Unku were taken by the publisher's brother, Helmut Herzfelde (1891-1968) better known as John Heartfield, renowned for his design use of photomontage .

Grete Weiskopf (1905-1966), the author, based her pseudonym on two Berlin references – 'Alex' is shorthand for Alexanderplatz, a central square in the city, and 'Wedding' refers to a working-class district of Berlin. Weiskopf left Berlin in 1933 but returned twenty years later to live in East Germany, where her story, which had become part of the school curriculum, was filmed in 1980 as *Als Unku Edes Freundin war*.

Photograph of Ede and Unku

(Taken from SPEC Scott Macfie D.2.5, *Eddie and the Gipsy* (1935), English translation by Charles Ashleigh)

The original German edition appeared on one of the earliest lists of authors and titles targeted for removal or destruction by the Nazis, Wolfgang Hermann's 'Prinzipelles zur Säuberung der öffentlichen Bücherein', or 'Principles for the cleansing of public libraries', which was printed in the German professional library journal *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* in 1933.



The significance of the story of Ede and Unku in the context of the Gypsy Lore Society collections in Special Collections & Archives is highlighted by a letter which arrived, incidentally, during Banned Books week.

From a German school near Rostock, it asked to reproduce a photograph of Erna Lauenberger from the Gypsy Lore Society archive for their class project on the history of the Sinti and Roma in Germany. This was the official German name of Unku Thormann, the Unku of the children's story.

Unku was eleven at the time of the story, when her Sinti family became friends with the author Grete Weiskopf. Ten years later, in 1943, her family was one of many deported to Auschwitz by the Nazis. Of the eleven Sinti children mentioned in *Ede und Unku* only one survived.

Unku's picture (below), with many other photographs of Sinti families in Germany in the 1930s, survives in the archive of the photo-journalist Hanns Weltzel (1910-1952), who published a series of illustrated papers in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1938, on 'The Gypsies of Central Germany'.



Photograph of Unku Thormann

Hanns Weltzel himself was executed in 1952 by the Soviet authorities in Berlin, charged with assisting in the deportations of Gypsies under Hitler by making his work on Sinti families available to Nazi officials.

Weltzel's papers and photographic archive were acquired initially from his widow, Klara, by the German pastor, Georg Althaus, who had made contact with Klara Weltzel through Dora Yates, the editor of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* at the University of Liverpool.

Althaus's daughter made a gift to the University in 2001 of the Weltzel archive via Eve Rosenhaft, a historian in the Department of German, who has worked extensively on this material.

References:

SC&A Gypsy Lore Society collections: <http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/colldescs/gypsy/index.html>

Weltzel papers and photographs: <http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/collections/colldescs/althaus.html>

Eve Rosenhaft, At large in the "Gray Zone": Narrating the Romani Holocaust. In: S. Jobs and A. Luedtke, *Unsettling History. Archiving and Narrating in Historiography*. Frankfurt a.M. and New York, 2010.

University of Arizona Library exhibition on banned books:
<http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/burnedbooks/indexpage.htm>