

Das Ende kommt nie
The End Never Comes
a radio play by Wolfgang Hildesheimer, 1952
as translated by Andrea Silenzi, 2007

Voices:

Martin Roehrich
Ein Mann
Herr Vogler
Frau von Goliath
Franziska
Doktor Brun
Albert
Frau Vogler
Zwei weitere Männer

Throughout the entire play, acoustic methods must be used in order to convey the plot's figurative levels.

*"Das Ende kommt nie",
a radio play by Wolfgang Hildesheimer.*

*"The End Never Comes",
as translated and adapted by Andrea Silenzi*

INT. — ROEHRICH'S APARTMENT — 3RD FLOOR

MUSIC: Musique Concrète.

There's a KNOCK on the door. STEPS to door. DOOR opens.

ROEHRICH

Come in!

MAN

Good day. Are you Herr Martin Roehrich?

ROEHRICH

That's me.

MAN

(takes out LETTER)

I have a letter for you.

ROEHRICH

A letter? Mail at this time of day?

MAN

This letter isn't from the post office.

ROEHRICH

Not from the post office? Then where did it come from?

MAN

From the authorities.

ROEHRICH

(uncomfortably quiet
after a short pause)

From the authorities? To me?

(short pause)

Cigarette?

MAN

No thanks. I don't smoke on duty.

ROEHRICH

I see. You're on duty.

MAN

Yes, sir. I am to wait until you have verified with your signature that you have taken notice of the contents of this letter.

ROEHRICH

Taken notice, aha. Bring it here.

(reads)

"Supreme Building Authority." I had no idea there was such a thing. "To Herr Martin Roehrich." The address is correct.

(rips open the ENVELOPE, reads)

"You are hereby requested to make arrangements for an immediate evacuation of your spaces, in order to make room for an expansions project for the outer rural district's designated public building complex!"

(pause)

What kind of strange language is that?

MAN

Have you taken notice of the contents?

ROEHRICH

Yeah, I did take notice of the contents. As far as understanding the contents goes, I'm not doing so well.

MAN

My work limits itself solely to the taking-notice-of. The understanding is not involved. Please sign here.

ROEHRICH

Here? There you go.

MAN

Thanks, now I can move on. There aren't more than four units in this house, right?

ROEHRICH
(in thought)
Excuse me?
(collects himself)
Oh right, no. There aren't more than four.

MAN
Thank you. Goodbye!

ROEHRICH
Goodbye!

STEPS going down the stairs trail off.

ROEHRICH (cont.)
(somewhat closer to the microphone, but
softly, in thought)
"are hereby requested, to make arrangements for
an immediate evacuation of your spaces...",
immediate, "evacuation of your spaces..."

KNOCKING on the door interrupts him.

ROEHRICH (cont.)
What is it now? Come in!

DOOR opens, STEPS approaching.

ROEHRICH (cont.)
Ah, Herr Vogler, it's you!

VOGLER
(unpleasant roughhousing)
Well, Herr Roehrich? Received an order of
eviction too, eh?

ROEHRICH
So that's what you call it? That then is an
order of eviction.

VOGLER
Right you are. I'm the kinda guy who calls a
spade a spade. You gotta look 'em right in the
eyes, I always say.

ROEHRICH
Why yes, but I don't completely understand.
What must...

VOGLER

You don't understand it? You'll start understanding it when you're out on the streets.

ROEHRICH

Out on the streets? Sure, but doesn't it bother you at all? You certainly got an order of eviction as you call it — too, or not? It surely concerns us all?

VOGLER

Of course, it concerns us all. But I think, I'm not going to just take it, you see? I'll fight back. I'll make some noise. If those perfect gentlemen think that I'll just let this go, they've made a big mistake. A big mistake. You can't just come to me with this sort of thing, not to me.

ROEHRICH

(weary)

So, not to you?

(pause)

What are the others saying? What does your wife say?

VOGLER

Oh, you know how women are, they're built with leaky pipes. Always turning on the waterworks. They just throw in the towel. My wife wants to start packing already. Nothing will come of this, that I can assure you. I'm not going to let them dance in circles around me. I'll show my fists. They'll see who they're...

MUSIC: Slowly fades out.

INT. — GOLIATH'S APARTMENT — 1ST FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I must assume, that the people don't know who they're dealing with. In any case, supposing it's mistaken, they're barking up the wrong tree. Such a silly scrap of paper shouldn't be taken too seriously, above all, one that is practically incomprehensible. I will, in any case, trouble Herr Doktor Brun for an explanation. I don't understand such language, and I don't want to understand it.

(pause)

But how can it be, the people can't just kick us out with all our goods and chattels. What do you think, Franziska?

(not quite certain)

The people can't just kick us out, they just can't!

FRANISKA

I don't know, Frau von Goliath, what the people are capable of.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

You know diddly-squat, kid. But I know, that the people can't just kick us out.

(pause)

In any case, I will call the Minister and ask him to help me. For an old friend he would certainly do something. Isn't that right, Ching Meh? For an old friend he just has to do something. Franziska, does Ching Meh have fresh milk?

FRANISKA

Yes, Frau von Goliath.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Widdle Ching Meh, do you think they'll just kick us out? But we still have connections, isn't that right, Ching Meh? One always has connections. Franziska, do you think the Minister would do something for me?

FRANISKA

I don't know Madam. I don't know him personally.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Of course you don't know him personally. But I know him and know that he would do something. I need only to call him. But not now. He is very busy. In any case, he will help me. He is an old friend. We once, way back when, together...

FRANZISKA

I know, Madam...

FRAU VON GOLIATH

He will help me. I can't be treated like this. What would I do with my empire furniture, the Etruscan vases, the porcelain, the... Franziska, Ching Meh wants out. Isn't that so, Ching Meh, you want out.

DOOR is opened and closed.

FRAU VON GOLIATH (cont.)

Oh, such a good animal, so clean. Give him his liver bits when he comes back, Franziska, he is hungry. Poor Ching Meh, isn't this distressing for him! And Franziska, don't forget to give Selma her instructions, she should dust more carefully. Dust is collecting on the Chippendale-Silver. This morning, I could have written my name in it over and over. Since we're still here, and as long as we are here, everything in my household should stay in order, you understand?

FRANZISKA

I understand every word, Frau von Goliath. As long as we are here, we don't want won't allow any anarchy to break out.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Right. We're still here, and the Minister is still alive. I will call him first thing in the morning. He will help us. Isn't that right, Ching Meh? He will help us. Franziska, where is Ching Meh?

FRANZISKA

Outside, Madam.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Oh yes, right.

The DOORBELL rings.

FRAU VON GOLIATH (cont.)

Who could that be? Certainly not company, at such an hour? I can't receive company now. I am much too excited. Franziska, if it is company, whoever it is should be told to wait a few minutes. I want to freshen up a bit.

FRANZISKA

Yes, Madam.

STEPS, DOOR, STEPS, sound moves into HALLWAY, DOOR closes.

FRANZISKA (cont.)

How good of you to have come, Martin. I would have liked to have gone straight to you, but I couldn't. Frau von Goliath is beside herself.

ROEHRICH

I would like to talk with her, Franziska.

FRANZISKA

You can try, but it won't be easy. She's completely lost it. What do you want from her?

ROEHRICH

Actually, I don't want a thing. I just want to know how the other tenants have taken things. If we're going to take a stand together or if we're going to resign ourselves to our fates and see what happens. You know? I want assurance.

FRANZISKA

She wants to call the Minister.

ROEHRICH

That won't help. No Minister is useful here.

DOOR opens, pair of STEPS going inside.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Ah, Herr Roehrich. I believe I know what the honor of your visit at such a late hour concerns. It's on account of this ludicrous letter. Is it not?

ROEHRICH

Quite right, Madam, it is on account of the letter. But unfortunately it is not as ludicrous as you have found it.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

But, Herr Roehrich, as I was saying to Franziska earlier, they won't just kick us out.

ROEHRICH

I'm afraid they will do it, if we don't take any action. You must, in any event, brace yourself for it.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I refuse, Herr Roehrich, to take this matter seriously. I will call the Minister. He is my friend. We once, way back when... but that's neither here nor there. In any case, I will speak with him. I can't right now, of course. He is a very busy man. You know all that this kind of Minister must have to think about. But, first thing in the morning, I will call him. He will help us. Franziska also thinks he will help us.

ROEHRICH

I'm afraid, Madam, it will be no use. When the authorities have decided to make a public building complex – as they call it – out of the house in which we live, they won't let the fact that you know the Minister stop them. Something else must happen.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

But dear Herr Roehrich, what's to happen to us if we can't resist such assaults upon our private lives?

ROEHRICH

I don't know what's going to happen to us.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Herr Roehrich, did you come down here to tell me that? To be honest, I have no desire to let you bring me out of the peace and quiet that I can barely retain already. I am in a state that requires the encouragement of each of us. In which everything is at stake. I, my entire collection, my porcelain, my...

(pause)

I want to discuss this with Herr Doktor Brun. He is the kind of guy who can deal with such situations, don't you think?

ROEHRICH

I must say, that I haven't yet grasped the situation well enough to judge if there even are people who are strong enough to deal with it.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

You give up too easily, Herr Roehrich. You're doing a disservice to yourself, believe you me. One must know when to fight, or else he'll go down. I will try it with Herr Doktor Brun. Perhaps he will give me courage again. Right now.

Frau von Goliath's STEPS away, distant DOOR opens and closes

FRANZISKA

Now I have you alone for at least a moment. I see you so rarely these days. And who knows for how much longer I'll have you. Who knows, how much longer it will take.

ROEHRICH

Yeah, who knows. You can't know. And the authorities don't even know it themselves.

(pensively)

But how would you act, if you did know? Everything would be the same.

FRANZISKA

Perhaps. But we would be happier. We could arrange for some kind of decision.

ROEHRICH

No, we couldn't do that, Franziska. No one can find a decision. It presupposes finality. And nothing is final, only death.

(suddenly anxious)

Franziska, let me go now, I'm anxious. I have much to do. It's getting late. I'll see you again soon. Goodnight.

FRANZISKA

Goodnight, Martin.

INT. — BRUN'S APARTMENT — GROUND FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

BRUN

(cynical, mostly speaks in
parenthesis)

So they want to throw us out then, Albert?
Throwing us out is what they want to do.

ALBERT

(similarly, but softly)

That's right. The Doktor Brun will once again
have to find a new happy hunting ground. That
won't be so very simple, I'm afraid.

BRUN

Now, old chap, our types must be able to deal
with anything. Being thrown out well is better
than having lived uselessly. That doesn't sound
right. I must formulate it differently in order
for an aphorism to arise.

(pause)

So, they want to throw us out. But it is not
yet the end of days. Or would you say, Albert,
that it is already the end of days?

ALBERT

Should I go along with this attempt at a joke,
or would you like for me to do justice to
seriousness of the situation?

BRUN

Do as you'd like, old chap, I don't care, but
get me something to drink. The usual.

Albert WALKS away.

ALBERT

As you wish, Doktor.

BRUN

Thanks.

ALBERT

(preparing a DRINK)

Does the Doktor plan to show his teeth, or does he want, in considering the circumstances, to rather stay away from that?

BRUN

Stay calm, my dear.

(unpleasant kidding)

Perhaps I could send you in, humm, and have you flash them your cute baby teeth.

ALBERT

Sometimes I find you a bit vulgar.

BRUN

Oh, do you? You're not always pleased with me? Would you rather go somewhere else? But no worries, we'll stay together. And if I go, you'll go as well. As they say, "When the purple falls, so must the Duke."

ALBERT

That doesn't work.

BRUN

Doesn't hurt though, old chap, doesn't hurt. We are in private. Get me a drink.

(pause)

How well do you think the old lady above us has taken it?

ALBERT

Was that a rhetorical question, or do you demand a prognosis?

BRUN

I find, Albert, you are somewhat dull of late, somewhat tired. But you cannot come out of your skin, and I cannot come out of mine, absolutely don't want to.

(jovial, slowly)

So they want to throw us out... well, nothing is eaten as hot as it's boiled. Or would you say, Albert, that some things are as hot...

DOORBELL rings.

BRUN (cont.)

Who's here now? Open up, Albert, but, to be on the safe side, look through the peephole first. I'm no longer accustomed to visitors at this hour.

Albert's STEPS, opens and closes DOOR.

BRUN (cont.)

Oh, if it isn't Frau von Goliath. This is nice, Madam, you came at just the right time for a little evening drink. I was just about to pour myself one, isn't that right, Albert? And to go with it, I wished for a bit of company. And already the company has descended. Dea ex machina, to say it poetically. How about a little cocktail for the night?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I didn't come for that.

BRUN

No? You amaze me, Madam. I am certainly curious to hear what could have provoked you, in the middle of the night...

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I must presume, that you know exactly why I came.

BRUN

Well, perhaps I can guess it. Certainly nothing regarding the letter from the – what's it so perfectly titled – the Supreme Building Authority? Albert, please give Frau von Goliath a glass. But you won't get yourself worked up about that, Madam? Nothing is eaten as hot as it's boiled, as I have already commented once on the occasion, eh, Albert?

ALBERT

Several times, Herr Doktor.

BRUN

Certainly several times, you see?

ALBERT

Would you like a cocktail, Madam, or would you prefer to drink your gin without tonic, like the Herr Doktor?

BRUN

Albert, you're relinquishing my secrets. You don't do that.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

A cocktail, if it has to be something.

BRUN

It has to be. I insist.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Herr Doktor Brun, you act like this here is about an outing. You know just as well as I do that this is dead serious. I wanted to speak with you before I call the Minister first thing in the morning. He is an old friend of mine and...

BRUN

(changed, slowly)

So. — You want to call the Minister. Albert, leave us alone.

ALBERT

Very well, Herr Doktor.

DOOR is closed.

BRUN

(unpleasantly friendly)

Now, my dear Edna, what can I do for you? May I assume that this thing about the Minister is a matter of idle threats?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Absolutely not. I can assure you, Ernst, that it is much more deathly serious than that.

BRUN

Then I must, dear Edna, in your interest, advise you against that. It could have consequences that may not be pleasant for you.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I don't understand you.

BRUN

No? Then I want to be more clear. It would not be ideal for me, if the Minister and thereby the authorities could be reminded of my existence through this matter, and that they would, without a doubt. As you well know, my conscience is not clean, in the official sense.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Good, but I find it presumptuous of you to believe that I will, in such a situation, take your interests into consideration. Ultimately, everyone is out for themselves.

BRUN

This is what I'm getting at. Everyone is out for themselves, but I am that way too. You can't forget, dear Edna, that in one of my darkest periods you were on my side as a, so to speak, partner. You remember?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

You can't prove that.

BRUN

I can, dear Edna, I can and will do it. You can bet on it. I have witnesses, and if I don't, I can buy them for myself. We're all in the same boat, my dear, and wherever it is steered, that's where we're all going. All together.

(pause)

FRAU VON GOLIATH

You are inhuman.

BRUN

Call it what you'd like. But think over your steps. And think: "when the snows from yesterday melts, so reappears the foul leaves from the days before yesterday."

(shouts)

Albert!

(DOOR opens)

Albert, Madam would like to have another cocktail.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

No, I'm going up.

BRUN

Already? What a shame. It was just beginning to be so intimate.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Goodnight.

ALBERT

Goodnight, Madam, and I wish you a comfortable rest.

BRUN

I can only add, without reservation, to the wishes of my servant.

STEPS to door, DOOR closing.

BRUN (cont.)

(dangerous, with a somewhat artificial cheeriness)

Albert!?

ALBERT

What can I do for you?

BRUN

(as above)

Albert, I believe, we must hold this house in check. Things might get out of hand.

ALBERT

What do you want to do?

BRUN

I don't know yet, but I have no other choice than to take dictatorial measures. I will think it over. Safe is safe.

ALBERT

Very well formulated.

BRUN

Don't be silly. For once, I am not joking.

ALBERT

Then the situation must already be very serious.

BRUN

It isn't yet, but it can become that way, Albert, it can become that way. We must take care that no dust is stirred.

MUSIC: Fade out. Mechanical music, implies time lapsing.

INT. — ROEHRICH'S APARTMENT — 3RD FLOOR

ROEHRICH

(in thought)

So, that's done with.

(rustling PAPER)

What now?

(PAPERS)

Oh yes, pay the gas bill,

(read automatically:)

pay off old taxes, notify housing office,
register with housing office, unsubscribe with
municipal office, pay electrical bill, mover...

(KNOCKING on front door)

Aha, it comes closer already. Come in!

DOOR opens, a few STEPS, several men enter.

MEN

We come from the building authorities.

ROEHRICH

(with a light irony)

From the Supreme Building Authority, no doubt?

MEN

(dry)

Yes sir, from the Supreme Building Authority.
We are to check the further usefulness of the
materials in this house.

ROEHRICH

(light irony continues)

Aha, for further usefulness. Go right ahead.

MEN

May we step closer?

ROEHRICH

Yes, though I don't completely understand. You
want to check me for further usefulness?

MEN

(humorless)

Not that. We want to step onto your roof
through your window, in order to survey your
roof tiles.

ROEHRICH

I see. The tiles. Be my guest, survey the roof tiles.

STEPS, WINDOW is opened, NOISE.

EXT. noise including streets below, general clamoring.

ROEHRICH (cont.)

(shouts out the window)

But don't fall down! That would be a terrible omen for the prospective public building complex!

Knocking, DOOR.

ROEHRICH (cont.)

Ah, good morning, Frau Vogler. Sleep well?

FRAU VOGLER

Not at all, Herr Roehrich. I didn't sleep a wink. I brought your laundry. It is for the last time.

ROEHRICH

The laundry for the last time. How that sounds.

FRAU VOGLER

Should I clean up your place again?

ROEHRICH

Thank you, Frau Vogler. At the moment it isn't worth it. As you see, I'm packing. Perhaps later you could sweep a bit between the boxes.

FRAU VOGLER

Good, Herr Roehrich, then I'll go now and come back later.

ROEHRICH

There's no hurry, Frau Vogler. Tomorrow is also soon enough. Hopefully it won't happen so fast.

FRAU VOGLER

You never know, Herr Roehrich. If you knew it... if you at least had some certainty!

ROEHRICH

Yeah, if only. Has your husband make the fuss that he'd been talking about?

FRAU VOGLER

He hasn't made it yet, but he's still talking about it. I don't think it will happen. He always says he will make a fuss, but in reality he's afraid.

ROEHRICH

It's that way for many, Frau Vogler. I get scared too sometimes.

FRAU VOGLER

He also has no sense. We have to get out. It's always so hard for us.

ROEHRICH

It's hard for us all.

FRAU VOGLER

Oh well, perhaps. But it's especially hard on us. I'm going now. Goodbye, Herr Roehrich.

ROEHRICH

Goodbye, Frau Vogler.

EXT. sounds at the WINDOW, clamoring, STEPS.

ROEHRICH (cont.)

So, have you checked the roof tiles for further usefulness?

MEN

Yes sir, that we have.

ROEHRICH

And are they still useful?

MEN

A few surely.

ROEHRICH

(at the window)

You left a tile pretty loose there.

MEN

It doesn't matter anymore if they are in the right places. They'll be removed soon anyway.

ROEHRICH

I see, yeah, right. In the meantime a bit of rain might come in, but that doesn't matter, everything's already done being packed anyway. And a little toughing up never hurt anyone.

MEN

I agree. Well then thanks, and goodbye.

WINDOW closes.

EXT. noise ceases, STEPS, DOOR.

ROEHRICH

(quietly to himself)

And when it storms, so blows the roof away, but it is all of a sudden summer, and you can stand it then.

(slow STEPS, CHAIR)

Where was I? Oh yes, the letter to the collection office. And the application.

(pause)

Perhaps you shouldn't put up with everything.

Fade out.

INT. — GOLIATH'S APARTMENT — 2ND FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
Franziska, what time is it?

FRANZISKA
It's nine thirty, Madam.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
Already nine thirty? I always sleep for so long now. Have you let Ching Meh out?

FRANZISKA
He's already back.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
Already back? Did he do anything?

FRANZISKA
I didn't look, Madam, but if it's important to you to know exactly, then I could...

FRAU VON GOLIATH
It isn't important, Franziska. You know, Franziska, I am not going to call the Minister.

FRANZISKA
Not?

FRAU VON GOLIATH
No, Doktor Brun thinks there's no point.

FRANZISKA
But you can always try in any case.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
No, I will not try. Doktor Brun thinks it is possible, that perhaps, after this whole affair, nothing will happen. Be that as it may, Franziska, but we must make preparations in any case. Then perhaps we will have to move. — Do you think that we will have to move, Franziska?

FRANZISKA
I don't know, Frau von Goliath. How should I know that?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Yes, you can't know that. No one can know that. But we will by all means prepare. We will think about packing in due time. There comes Ching Meh. Widdle Ching Meh, do we want to think about packing? Such a good cat. How clueless such an animal is. – Well then, Franziska, there is a considerable amount of things to order today. We need boxes. Furthermore, tissue paper for the packing of the porcelain and the silver. Then the wood shavings. With it we will fill the boxes. And a carrying basket for Ching Meh. Isn't that so, Ching Meh? A widdle basket for you. It must be a big basket, in which he'll get enough air and be able to move around a bit. All that one must think of. And Franziska: cardboard boxes! Preferably filled with sawdust already, so that we can pack...

MUSIC: Slow fading out.

INT./EXT. — STAIRWELL — OUTSIDE BRUN'S APARTMENT

MUSIC: Another level.

Reverberation throughout.

RING bell, DOOR is opened.

ALBERT

What can I do for you?

ROEHRICH

I would like to speak with Herr Doktor Brun please.

ALBERT

And what is your good name, if I may ask?

ROEHRICH

Excuse me? Oh right, my name. Roehrich. Roehrich. I have lived, that is to say, until recently, for years on the top floor of this house.

ALBERT

You don't say, Herr Roehrich. I will see if Herr Doktor Brun is able to speak with you.

DOOR closes, STEPS inside, behind the door

ROEHRICH

They have strange manners down here.

STEPS on the stairs from above.

ROEHRICH (cont.)

Franziska, it's you. Where are you going?

FRANZISKA

To buy twine and tape, order boxes, packing paper, a basket for Ching Meh, woodchips for packing the porcelain, cartons for packing the woodchips... Do you want me to go on?

ROEHRICH

Thanks, Franziska, that's enough. I have an idea of what that's about. I'm packing too, though with less effort.

STEPS from behind the door, DOOR is opened.

ALBERT

Herr Doktor Brun will see you.

ROEHRICH

Thank you. Goodbye, Franziska. Will we see each other soon?

FRANZISKA

Very soon, I hope. Goodbye!

The DOOR is closed, STEPS move inside, STEPS in the stairwell moving away from the front door.

Noise should move closer to the street sounds, as if we are following Franziska out of the building.

VOGLER

Oh, good morning, Fräulein Franziska, where to in such a hurry?

FRANZISKA

(made uncomfortable)

I have things to take care of, Herr Vogler. Please let me through.

VOGLER

(sleazy)

No no, Fräulein, there's no rush. We could certainly chat about something together, eh? Soon there won't be another chance.

FRANZISKA

Herr Vogler, I really have no time.

VOGLER

But, Fräulein Franziska, just a moment. You know, I'm really sorry that I never took advantage of our household. And now it is almost over, eh? But a pretty girl like you will always land on her feet.

FRANZISKA

(last syllable strongly emphasized)

Herr Vogler, let me through!!

STEPS out to the building's entrance. DOOR opens, EXT. sounds, DOOR closes.

VOGLER

(shouts after her)

So some things you only let Herr Roehrich do, eh?

(to himself)

Cute kid, that Franziska, that was something. Who knew? Maybe there's still the chance...?

Fade out.

INT. — BRUN'S APARTMENT — GROUND FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

BRUN

Oh, good morning, Herr Rühmlich. That's a good name, means "Praiseworthy", isn't that right Herr Rühmlich?

ROEHRICH

Roehrich.

BRUN

But of course, Roehrich. How could I have forgotten. Albert, why must you always garble everything. Roehrich, of course. You live in this very house, isn't that right? Yes, of course. Move so that I can receive you in bed. I always wake up somewhat later and take my breakfast in bed. But of course. Roehrich. Please take a seat, Herr Roehrich. Regretfully the comfortable chairs were just now packed. Yes of course, you live in this house. Above the Voglers, if I'm not mistaken.

ROEHRICH

You are not mistaken.

BRUN

Yes, I remember. Above the Voglers. They also live upstairs, isn't that right? How are they doing then? Such respectable people.

ROEHRICH

That's right, the Voglers are also upstairs. Very respectable people. But, Herr Doktor, I came...

BRUN

Yes, quite right, respectable people. But, ultimately, aren't we all, no? Say, Albert? Now then, Herr Roehrich, have a little snack with me. Or perhaps a glass of red wine? How about a tiny glass of red wine? Châteauneuf du Pape!

ROEHRICH

Great, thank you very much. But I...

BRUN

Red wine for breakfast is one truth of an old, lovely culinary custom, eh Albert?

ALBERT

Very lovely, Herr Doktor, and very old.

BRUN

Quite right. Albert gets it. One must know how to live. Yes yes, Herr Roehrich. I am the kind of man who judges the world by what it's worth. Am I right?

ROEHRICH

Completely right, Herr Doktor. But I am coming to you for a another reason.

BRUN

For another reason? Should I guess once? You came regarding the eviction.

ROEHRICH

Quite right, that's why I came.

ALBERT

Excellently guessed.

BRUN

Don't be so pert, Albert. We want to hear what our young friend has to say about this.

ROEHRICH

I don't have much to say about it. I don't believe that one can resist it anymore, Herr Doktor Brun. But I support that at least we tenants arrange for a formal protest against the authorities.

BRUN

My dear Herr Roehrich, it appears that you haven't yet come completely to terms with the harsh reality.

ROEHRICH

In such matters, Herr Doktor, the reality is what you make it.

BRUN

So, that's what you say? Just now you implied that a protest would be worthless. How does that fit into your thesis?

ROEHRICH

It is already too late.

BRUN

There, you see!

ROEHRICH

Yes, it is too late, because the reality is already what others have made for us.

(intensely)

It is people like you that have already spoiled everything.

BRUN

(quietly, insistent)

So? Then what do you know about me, my friend?

ROEHRICH

Absolutely nothing. But I'm starting to get a picture. No pretty picture! Adieu. Now I see, there's nothing to be done here.

DOOR, closed forcefully.

BRUN

(shouts after him)

You are a jerk!

(quiet)

A jerk, and I'm afraid, you will regret it.

(pause)

Albert!

ALBERT

What can I do for you?

BRUN

(deliberately, slowly)

Albert, I believe, we must show our young friend the tricks of the trade.

ALBERT

That will be hard if you don't know what that trade is.

BRUN

Say, Albert, do you know this Vogler well?

ALBERT

No, not well.

BRUN

(deliberately, slowly)

Fetch me this Vogler and bring him down here.

ALBERT

What do you have in mind?

BRUN

I don't know yet, old chap. Send him over to me. I trust the inspiration of the moment in such matters.

MUSIC: A couple measures of interlude music.

VOGLER

You called, Herr Doktor.

BRUN

Oh yes, Herr Fiedler, very right. If I'm not mistaken, your name means "Fiddler", isn't that so?

VOGLER

The name's Vogler.

BRUN

Ah, quite right, of course, Vogler, how could one be so forgetful. I'm getting old, eh, Albert? Vogler, of course, meaning "bird hunter". Herr Vogler, have you always been cooped up in this house?

VOGLER

Until recently I've lived here, yes. But who knows how much longer.

BRUN

Quite right, Herr Vogler, who knows? These are some times, eh, Herr Vogler? Times are tough, eh? This wouldn't have been possible before, such a thing.

VOGLER

Very true, before, when times were different, if someone would have come to me then, I would have... But it isn't too late yet, Herr Doktor, not too late yet. With your consent I could still make a fuss. The gentlemen still don't seem to know who they're...

BRUN

Gentle, Vogler, gentle. I treat such matters as mistakes. We're certainly still here, aren't we? We're still here.

VOGLER

Quite right, Herr Doktor, we are still here.

BRUN

And who knows, Vogler, who knows? Perhaps we stay? Who knows? Perhaps the gentlemen from the authorities forget that we're still here? Perhaps they forget us entirely? You never know. Listen up: everything depends on whether we can all keep quiet and not stir anything up in the next few days, you understand? No stirring. Believe you me, it's best.

VOGLER

Perhaps you're right, Herr Doktor.

BRUN

Of course I'm right. Believe you me, Vogler, I know such situations. We must keep quiet and not stir up anything.

(with emphasis, note the rhyme)

I am trusting you alone to make sure that no one will roam away from this home.

(pause, insistently:)

You are a reliable man, Vogler. I trust you. I would like you to take care that no one leaves this house, you understand?

VOGLER

(somewhat hesitant)

I understand, Herr Doktor.

BRUN

You see, you are a perceptive, sensible man. I knew that you would get this right away. And Vogler: in the case that we, against all expectations, must leave this house, you can depend on me. I will take care of you. A man like you I can use. You're a decent guy.

VOGLER

The Herr Doktor can count on me.

BRUN

Rightly so, Vogler, rightly so!

(pause)

You say, Herr Vogler, does this – now what's he called? – this Roehrich, still live over you?

VOGLER

That's right, Herr Doktor. He occupies the studio apartment over my own.

BRUN

Well well. Tell me, what kind of man is this Roehrich? Certainly somewhat flighty, eh? Somewhat incalculable?

VOGLER

The Herr Doktor is quite right. Incalculable. Real flighty.

BRUN

You see? I don't trust him at all. You confirmed my suspicion. Flighty, as you say. Very unreliable, eh?

VOGLER

That's entirely my opinion. Furthermore – beneath us – he is in a relationship with the...

BRUN

You see? Unreliable, that is what I thought to myself.

(with emphasis)

I would like, Herr Vogler, for you to watch out for him like a hawk. He may not, on any account, leave this house. If he may try, hold him back, if it must be, with force. You don't know what this Roehrich intends. He is obscure. Would you like to take care of this, Herr Vogler?

VOGLER

The Herr Doktor can depend on me completely. Vogler will take care of everything.

BRUN

Very good, Vogler, now you may go. Thanks a lot. And don't forget: I won't just leave you.

VOGLER

And if the Herr Doktor should need further help, Vogler will...

BRUN

Very good, Vogler, I know. You are a dependable person. It is good. Goodbye.

VOGLER

Goodbye, Herr Doktor.

STEPS going out, DOOR.

BRUN

How did I treat that, Albert?

ALBERT

The Herr Doktor is an average Joe. He gets it. With kindheartedness and promises one can accomplish ever so much.

BRUN

Quite right, Albert. Above all with promises.

(jovially)

Apparently I am a do-gooder. But unrecognized, Albert, unrecognized. Get me something, Albert, I'm thirsty.

Fade out.

INT. — ROEHRICH'S APARTMENT — 3RD FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level. Knocking on the DOOR.

ROEHRICH
You get used to it eventually.
(shouts)
Come in!

DOOR, STEPS.

MAN
I bring a letter.

ROEHRICH
Presumably from the authorities?

MAN
Quite right, from the authorities.

ROEHRICH
Thank you. — Cigarette?

MAN
No thank you, I...

ROEHRICH
You really don't smoke on duty? Should you wait
until I have taken notice of the content.

MAN
Yes sir, quite right.

ROEHRICH
(ironic, experimenting)
And if I don't take notice of it?

MAN
(humorless)
That can't be. You can certainly read.

ROEHRICH

I can't deny that.

(reads)

"You are hereby requested once more to prepare yourself for an immediate evacuation. Furniture as well as other movable property will be removed at public expense." – Now that is very obliging, that with the furniture.

(to the man, ironic)

You serve a noble authority.

MAN

(as before, uncomprehending)

Yes sir.

ROEHRICH

I see, yes, the signature. I have taken notice of it. There you go.

MAN

Thank you. Goodbye.

DOOR, STEPS.

ROEHRICH

Goodbye.

(pause)

Also in signing you find a gradual routine.

(in thought)

It never comes quick. It comes slow.

Fade out.

INT. — GOLIATH'S APARTMENT — 1ST FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Franziska!

(shouts)

Franziska! Where the hell is she? Now, when I need her most. Franziska!

FRANZISKA

(approaching)

Frau von Goliath, it seems to me, you called?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Called, yes, for hours. Franziska, already this letter again. We should ready ourselves. But we are ready. What should we do then? We couldn't possibly be more ready!

FRANZISKA

Then everything is fine.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

But is everything also ready? Have you lined Ching Meh's basket with a wool shawl? Ching Meh! Where is he?

FRANZISKA

He is outside.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Outside? But he must come in, before we must go out. Franziska, do you think the furniture truck will come soon?

FRANZISKA

I don't know, Madam, no one can know that.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

You are right, no one can know that. It can still be this evening, or early tomorrow. Perhaps the first of next month, who knows?

FRANZISKA

Perhaps never?

FRAU VON GOLIATH
Or perhaps never. We must wait it out.
(pause)
It won't spare us.

Fade out.

MUSIC: implies time lapsing.

The same level slowly blending in again, STEPS, monotone, always to and fro.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
Franziska, look out the window, see if you can see the furniture truck already.

FRANZISKA
I looked out the window just now, Frau von Goliath, and they weren't there yet.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
Perhaps they came in the meantime.

FRANZISKA
(with growing impatience)
When they come, Madam, it won't be soon enough. The people will ring the bell. If by then the electricity hasn't been switched off yet, and if it has been switched off, then they will knock on the building's door. The door is still there.

(pause)

Continuous to and fro.

FRANZISKA (cont.)
Perhaps you want to sit at the window, in order to look over the streets? You can't pace to and fro forever.

FRAU VON GOLIATH
I am too restless. Furthermore, I don't like to sit on boxes. Has Ching Meh had something to eat?

FRANZISKA
Yes, Madam.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

Is he getting enough air in his basket?

FRANZISKA

At the moment he is outside. But when he is in his basket, he receives entirely enough air.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I am hungry, Franziska.

FRANZISKA

Should I fetch you a couple hard boiled eggs out of the food crate?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

No! For days nothing but hard boiled eggs from the food crate! I don't like them anymore.

FRANZISKA

As you wish, Frau von Goliath.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

If only the furniture truck would come already...

FRANZISKA

You are free to leave the house before it comes.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

No, no one moves out, before he absolutely must. Franziska. I am restless, but one must savor the moment. We are still here. Who knows what comes afterwards.

FRANZISKA

As you believe, Frau von Goliath.

Steps back and forth, fade out, until they are just slightly, almost audible from above.

INT. — BRUN'S APARTMENT — GROUND FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

ALBERT

(with growing hysteria)

I can't stand it anymore! The old Goliath is driving me mad, how she has paced to and fro for days above our heads.

BRUN

(no longer quite as calm as before)

Stay calm, old chap. There are worse things that can happen over our heads.

ALBERT

You can talk. You will land on your feet again and again. Nothing can happen to you. Things will always do well for you.

BRUN

We can only hope, old chap. Get yourself something to drink and be quiet.

ALBERT

I don't want anything to drink. I don't want to stay here longer. I've had enough.

BRUN

Easy, old chap, don't make me nervous. You know that can make me very intolerable. Besides, you aren't making the situation any better. Sit yourself down and be still, you listening?

ALBERT

I don't want to anymore. I can't tolerate your sense of humor anymore. I can't stand it anymore.

BRUN

(uncomfortable)

So? You can't stand it anymore? There will be nothing else leftover for you to stand. I hope you understand what I mean. We belong together, my dear Albert, or not? The bonds of years of companionship bind us. Therefore it is certainly better...

ALBERT

No. I can't anymore! I can't stand it anymore!

Heavy STEPS, DOOR is opened, and closed, STEPS outside trailing away. Front DOOR falls down, after which loud falling and breaking of STONES outside.

A moment of silence.

BRUN

He had it coming.

(at WINDOW)

Roof tiles! No handsome death. The house is tipsier than I had thought!

MUSIC: Do NOT fade out. Go immediately to another level.

INT. — VOGLER'S APARTMENT — 2ND FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level immediately after.

FRAU VOGLER

What happened? For God's sake, what happened?
Is the house falling without our knowing?

VOGLER

(at the WINDOW)

He had it coming! But he's the wrong one.

FRAU VOGLER

What is it, Karl? What happened?

VOGLER

The guy from below. The servant of the Herr
Doktor. A pair of roof tiles fell on his head.

FRAU VOGLER

Karl, the house is falling. What should we...

VOGLER

Don't scream like that. The house hasn't fallen
yet. So far it's only hit the guy from below. —
Serves him right! Why did he have to leave the
house? But he's the wrong one.

FRAU VOGLER

The wrong one?

VOGLER

Yeah, the wrong one. That Roehrich, it should
have hit him.

FRAU VOGLER

What are you saying? Herr Roehrich?

VOGLER

Yeah, him. He's suspect to me. He's planning
something. And you never know what it is. It
should have hit him, then we'd be free of him.

FRAU VOGLER

What are you talking about?

VOGLER

Back off. It has nothing to do with you.

FRAU VOGLER

I can barely stand it anymore. We're always the ones that...

VOGLER

Then go ahead, if you'd also like a pair of roof tiles on your head, go ahead, I'm not stopping you.

FRAU VOGLER

It's too much. I can't stand it anymore.

INT. — GOLIATH'S APARTMENT — 1ST FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level, steps to and fro.

FRANZISKA

(exhausted)

Please sit down, Frau von Goliath. I can't stand it anymore when you walk to and fro continually.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

I'll do, what I want. But you can leave, you twit, and it will hit you like it did Herr Doktor Brun's servant. The poor guy, he truly didn't deserve it.

FRANZISKA

How do you know that?

FRAU VON GOLIATH

How I know that? No one deserves such a thing.

FRANZISKA

I also don't deserve having to sit here, while you pace in front of me, all day and all night, like a pendulum!

FRAU VON GOLIATH

(bordering on hysteria)

So go ahead. You think I can't manage without you?

FRANZISKA

(at ends)

It's the same to me if you can manage without me or not. I'm going. Good riddance!

STEPS, slamming the DOOR, STEPS outside going up.

FRAU VON GOLIATH

(hysterical)

Now we are alone, Ching Meh. You and I, we depend on each other now.

(pause, shouts)

Ching Meh, where are you then?

(pause)

He is gone. That cat ran out on me.

Steps to and fro, increasing intensity, then decreasing again, until weak, almost audible from above.

INT. — BRUN'S APARTMENT — GROUND FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level.

BRUN
It's insanity, these steps.
(shouts)
Quiet!
(louder)
Quiet!
(pause)
I can't stand it anymore. — If I knew where
Albert put the broom.
(searches, DOOR, STEPS)
Quiet up there.
(knocks with the broom on the
ceiling, shouts)
Quit it up there.
(weaker)
Quit it! Quit it!

Steps slowly fading away.

INT. — ROEHRICH'S APARTMENT — 4TH FLOOR

MUSIC: Another level. There's a knock on the DOOR.

ROEHRICH

(quietly)

It comes now?

(pause)

Come in!

(DOOR)

Franziska, it's you! That's good. I thought the time had come.

FRANZISKA

Martin! I couldn't stand it anymore. I'll stay with you until the end.

(pause)

But you've unpacked!

ROEHRICH

Yeah, I unpacked.

FRANZISKA

The books posed on the bookshelf again! The curtains hung up again!

ROEHRICH

Yeah, everything looks like before. Better actually. It is not livable otherwise. I need the curtains most of all. Roof tiles are falling, and there's a draft. The wind whistles through the room. One hears it above everything at night. I couldn't sleep anymore.

FRANZISKA

And now you sleep again? Was it then just the wind that disturbed you in sleep?

ROEHRICH

Yes, I can sleep again. You must sleep. You can't just wait, Franziska. Perhaps the end never comes and you wait in vain? Perhaps everything will stay like this?

FRANZISKA

Do you believe that? It can't just stay like this.

ROEHRICH

I don't know. The threats lose terror gradually. They don't work anymore. I don't believe in them anymore.

(pause)

Don't always look out the window, Franziska.

(pause)

No, I don't believe in them. I believe, that everything stays, as it is, it will only become even more so, you understand? No real changes come suddenly. They come gradually. We barely notice. And it looks like everything stays as it is.

MUSIC: The same music as at the beginning.

The End Never Comes

a translation, production and performance of Wolfgang Hildesheimer's first radio play

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Das Haus
symbolisiert den Raum, in dem wir leben.¹

Das Haus:

Dachwohnung

Martin Roerich

(der einzig anständige Mensch im
Hörspiel, außer Franziska)

2. Stock

Herr und Frau Vogler

Er ein widerlicher Kriecher

Sie ein arme, abgehärmte Frau

1. Stock

Frau von Goliath, eine verrückte

Sammlerin mit dunkler Vergangenheit

Franziska, liebt Roerich

Parterre

Dr. Brun, zynischer Verbrechertyp

Albert, sein homosexueller Diener

¹ Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Briefe*, ed. Silvia Hildesheimer and Dietmar Pleyer, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999), p. 49.

Introduction

Leben und Werk | Life and Works

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Für den Zweck meiner Vorlesung und der Literatur überhaupt, die ja nicht nach dem Warum fragt, sondern sich im gegebenen Raum einrichtet, genügt der Satz: “Der Mensch fragt. Die Welt schweigt.”²

Es klopft an die Tür. Tür. Schritte.

MARTIN ROEHRICH: Herein!³

Whether or not the end ever comes, there is always a beginning. *Das Ende kommt nie* is Wolfgang Hildesheimer’s first radio play. It was produced by the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk on June 17th, 1952, only a couple years after the author wrote and published his first short story. It was during these early beginnings in postwar Germany that Hildesheimer, albeit unwillingly, became a writer. His writings from this time are often considered in a category of their own, as they are the only works he created while living in Germany. In them, one can find the beginnings of numerous themes that would go on to echo throughout the entirety of his works, like the sound of a loud knocking in a vast stairwell.

² Wolfgang Hildesheimer, “Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesung,” *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*, vol. 7, ed. Christiaan Lucas Hart Nibbrid and Volker Jehle (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), p. 50.

³ Wolfgang Hildesheimer, “Das Ende kommt nie,” *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*, vol. 5, ed. Christiaan Lucas Hart Nibbrid and Volker Jehle (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), p. 7.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: 18. Februar 1950 vormittags (...) An diesem Tag war es in meinem Atelier sehr kalt, sehr feucht, es zog. Ich frohr an den Händen und mußte in die Nähe des Ofens rücken, wo es aber zum Malen zu dunkel war. Unlustig – die Unlust hat in meinem Leben immer eine große, wenn nicht gar entscheidene Rolle gespielt, und ich habe ihr viel zu verdanken-, unlustig also nahm ich ein Blatt Papier zur Hand, um wenigstens zu zeichnen, aber wider jegliches Erwarten begann ich eine Geschichte zu schreiben.⁴

Many writers come with an anecdotal epithet about the act of writing. These myths become part of how their works are discussed. For example, it is commonly mentioned, when discussing these authors, that Mary Shelly wrote *Frankenstein* as part of a ghost story contest, Jack Kerouac wrote *On the Road* on one long roll of paper, and Kafka wrote late into the night after days working in an insurance office. These stories become part of each author's literary narrative. This excerpt from Hildesheimer's 1966 *Vita* attempts to frame him within this self-created myth, and, in so doing, it says a great deal about Hildesheimer at the time he wrote *Das Ende kommt nie*.

This story of Hildesheimer's beginnings has been retold by many of his critics and biographers over the years.

PATRICIA STANLEY: Wolfgang Hildesheimer became a writer on 18 February 1950 when his studio was so cold that he could not paint.⁵

VOLKER JEHLE: Ein bescheidener Anfang—⁶

HENRY LEA: Der Wandel vom Maler zum Schriftsteller kam, nach seiner Darstellung, plötzlich.⁷

⁴ Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Begegnung im Balkanexpress. An den Ufern der Plotinitza* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), p. 69.

⁵ Patricia Stanley, "Wolfgang Hildesheimer," *Gale Literary Database*, Wesleyan University Library, Wesleyan University, <<http://galenet.galegroup.com>>, 9 Jan 2007.

⁶ Volker Jehle, *Wolfgang Hildesheimer Werkgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990), p. 9.

⁷ Henry Lea, *Wolfgang Hildesheimer's Weg als Jude und Deutscher* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1997), p. 27.

This story also appears in Hildesheimer's own documents. In a letter to his parents dated January 1950, he tells it again.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Gestern hat mich die Kälte zum Jugendliteratur gemacht, denn es war im Atelier so kalt, daß ich an den Arbeitstischen am Fenster nicht arbeiten konnte, aber am Ofen ist es nicht hell genug und so schrieb ich statt dessen eine Geschichte für Kinder, die sehr schön geworden ist. Nachmittags kam Jo, der sofort beschloß sie zu illustrieren. Wir werden sie noch diese Woche an die "Neue Zeitung" verkaufen, die sie bestimmt nehmen.⁸

The story he refers to here is the first story he ever published, "Der Kämmerjäger," which appeared in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on March 25th, 1950. He published his next story, "Der hellgraue Frühjahrmantel," just two months later, on May 16th, 1950 in *Die Neue Zeitung*.⁹ The latter story appears again in Hildesheimer's first collection of short stories titled *Lieblose Legenden*. In this story, a couple receives a letter from a cousin who asks for his light, gray spring coat to be mailed to him.

DER VETTER: Ich kann ihn nämlich brauchen, das es hier oft empfindlich kalt ist, vor allem nachts.¹⁰

This line is echoed in the last scene of *Das Ende kommt nie* as the main character Roehrich discusses the wind that has been keeping him awake at night.

MARTIN ROEHRICH: Der Wind pfeift durchs Zimmer. Vor allem nachts hört man ihn.¹¹

This phrase is one of many strings of words and themes that web Hildesheimer's early writings together. This happens in a similar manner throughout the conversations that independently overlap across apartments in *Das Ende kommt nie*. Phrases such as, "Ich

⁸ *Briefe*, p. 23.

⁹ Volker Jehle, *Wolfgang Hildesheimer. Eine Bibliographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984) p. 6.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Lieblose Legenden* (Augsburg: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968) p. 99.

¹¹ *Das Ende kommt nie*, p. 32.

halt es nicht mehr aus” are exclaimed by multiple characters in a way that connects the experiences across each of the figurative levels of the house.

The idea of a studio apartment is another element that connects Hildesheimer’s early writings, not only with each other, but also with the writer’s life at the time he wrote them. Within *Lieblose Legenden* at least two different narrators live in a studio apartment. The story “Das Atelierfest” tells the tale of a narrator who hammers a hole out of his own loft, where an endless party is being thrown, and into his neighbor’s apartment. While lying on his neighbor’s bed (they have left for the party), the narrator remembers the glazier who was the first guest that day.

ERZÄHLER: Er war dabei an einem Nachmittag, als das Atelier noch mir gehörte, jenem denkwürdigen Nachmittag, als ich nach einer langen, unfruchtbaren Periode wieder anfangen wollte, zu malen. Er wechselte einige zerbrochene Fensterscheiben aus und hämmerte leise vor sich hin.¹²

This story, like Hildesheimer’s autobiographical anecdote, tells the same tale of an artist interrupted. This also contains parallels to the fourth scene of *Das Ende kommt nie*, when the narrator is interrupted by a group of strangers there to examine his roof tiles. All instances represent an unwelcome presence entering the private space in which one lives. While Hildesheimer is never didactic, and never intended make his stories political pamphlets, such a scenario forms a fitting metaphor for the build up to WWII that is hard to miss when reading an postwar writer.

There are many similar connections between Hildesheimer’s life and fictions in another story from *Lieblose Legenden* called “Die Dachwohnung” (originally titled “Eine wunderliche Dachwohnung”).¹³ In this story, the narrator buys an apartment, which is really just the air above a ruin, the skeleton of an apartment. This narrator, Martin, who

¹² *Lieblose Legenden*, p. 116.

¹³ Jehle, *Bibliographie*, p. 49.

is given the same first name as the studio apartment dweller in *Das Ende kommt nie*, decides to build a precariously perched apartment in this space, supported by an arrangement of concrete beams. The pillars collapse, one by one, by the errors of different characters over the course of the story. The last one is knocked down by and on top of Martin himself.

ERZÄHLER: Er kletterte hinunter, legte mit ruhiger Zuversicht die Hände an den letzten Träger und knickte ihn wie eine Blume.¹⁴

The repetition of elements across Hildesheimer's stories, such as the cold, the interrupted artist and the studio apartment, seem to connect each of the subjects of his stories to both himself and, in turn, to the story of how he became a writer. The coldness that the cousin writes about in "Der hellgraue Frühjahrmantel", the interrupted painter in "Das Altierfest" and Martin's swaying studio in "Der Dachwohnung" all seem to come right out of Hildesheimer's own studio apartment where he not only wrote the stories, but wrote about the act of writing the stories. The fictions all carry the same literary voice that began Hildesheimer's career during his time in Germany.

Wolfgang moved to Ambach am Starnberger See almost exclusively for the apartment that he wrote about so frequently.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Im Oktober 1949 [zog ich] nach Ambach am Starnberger See wo mir ein Freund, der Grafiker Jo von Kalcreuth, eine sehr schöne kleine Wohnung gefunden hatte. Hier wollte ich zunächst von meinen ersparten Dollars ein paar Monate leben, um endlich im Ruhe zu malen.¹⁵

While living there between the years of 1948 and 1953, he participated in two collective exhibitions of his artwork, wrote notes to accompany the artwork of Paul Flora titled

¹⁴ *Band I*, p. 83.

¹⁵ *Briefe*, p. 39.

Flora's Fauna, published numerous stories in magazines, compiled many of these in *Lieblose Legenden*, completed several translations into English, wrote his first novel *Paradies der falschen Vögel*, and took his first stab at writing radio plays and radio operas including *Das Ende kommt nie*, *Das Ende einer Welt* and *Begegnung im Balkanexpress*.¹⁶ His roommate Jo was a friend from the Odenwaldschule, a progressive, coeducational boarding school, where Hildesheimer studied as a teenager from 1930 to 1933. Wolfgang had lived relatively close to Ambach when working as a translator at the Nürnberg trials a few years prior, and had likely visited Jo and the small community of other artists and writers who lived in the area during that time.

Hildesheimer's life up until that point had been full of change and transition. He was born December 9, 1916 in Hamburg, Germany to Hanna Goldschmidt Hildesheimer and Arnold Hildesheimer, a chemist who came from a long line of rabbis in Berlin.¹⁷

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Meine ersten beiden Jahrzehnte verbrachte ich in Hamburg, Berlin, Cleve, Nymwegen, Mannheim, der Odenwaldschule, Frensham Heights School (Surrey), Jerusalem, London, Mousehole (Cornwall), Flüelen (Uri) and wieder Jerusalem; und zwar als Säugling, Kind, Elementarschüler, Gymnasiast, Schüler eines Langschulheims, Public-School-Boy, Tischlerlehrling, Kunststudent, Maler, Graphiker und Müßiggänger, das letztere zwischen längeren Perioden jeweiliger Tätigkeit, aber nicht weniger intensiv.¹⁸

The anecdote about Hildesheimer's birth as a writer is more fictional than factual because of all it excludes about his previous experiences and thoughts about writing. In Hildesheimer's *Briefe*, arranged by his widow Sylvia and Dietmar Pleyer, a 1953 letter from Heinrich Böll appears.

¹⁶ Jehle, *Bibliographie*, p. 5-8.

¹⁷ *Begegnung im Balkanexpress*, p. 69.

¹⁸ *Begegnung im Balkanexpress*, p. 69.

HEINRICH BÖLL: Der Süddeutsche Rundfunk beauftragte mich, ein “Porträt” von Dir zu schreiben, d.h. eine Art feature von 1/3 Stunden mit biographische Überblick, Zitaten aus Deinen Werken und Stellungnahmen dazu.¹⁹

In his lengthy response, Hildesheimer tells the story of the cold day in his studio apartment again, but with closer detail. He begins it in the same way that one would begin a fairy tale:

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Eines Tages im Februar 1950 war es in meinem großen Zimmer sehr kalt, besonders an meiner Straffelei, die an dem großen Fenster stand.²⁰

The story goes on to give a moment of personal reflection that previous versions have excluded.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Der Entschluß, etwas anderes zu tun, muß wohl schon lange latent in mir gewesen sein, aber an diesem Wintermorgen, an den ich mich wahrscheinlich noch lange erinnern werde, brach er aus.²¹

In this moment, he acknowledges the process of remembering that winter morning. Perhaps the repetition of this anecdote is related to exactly this—the role of epiphany in memory. Though, as Henry Lea points out, it is possible that Hildesheimer knows exactly what he is doing by repeating this anecdote.

HENRY LEA: Es macht Hildesheimer Spaß, den Leser zu foppen.²²

Earlier in this letter to Böll, as Hildesheimer writes about his interests and occupations throughout his life, he elaborates about the things that made him a writer beyond just a cold room and a latent will.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: [Ich schrieb] Besprechungen und Kritiken von Wanderausstellung und Kunstbüchern für eine Wochenschrift der englischen Regierung. Nach dem Krieg ein paar Monate war ich

¹⁹ *Briefe*, p. 38.

²⁰ *Briefe*, p. 40.

²¹ *Briefe*, p. 40.

²² Henry Lea, p. 27.

Herausgeber dieser Zeitschrift, das heißt viel mehr Chefredakteur. Das war auch der – sehr bescheidene – Anfang meiner schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit. Ich veröffentlichte darin einige – gar nicht schlechte – englische Gedichte und ein paar – miserable – Buchbesprechungen.²³

This reminds one that an author never just starts out cold because of the cold. There was an intellectual atmosphere in Hildesheimer's family, and his Zionist father, after retiring, began working on his own book, *Die Welt der ungewohnten Dimensionen. Versuch einer gemeinverständlichen Darstellung der modernen Physik und ihrer philosophischen Folgerungen*, which was published in 1953.²⁴ Additionally, Hildesheimer already had a strong ear for language and rhetoric. He was a skilled translator, a fluent English speaker and had previous experience as a publisher and as someone being published. It is clear through these biographical details that on that fateful February day in 1950, it was much more than the cold that made him take up the pen instead of the paintbrush.

Another thing that makes this anecdote interesting is how it fits into the idea of Hildesheimer as an unwilling writer. In his version of this anecdote for Böll, he goes into greater detail about the artwork that was left unfinished that day.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: Das halbfertige Bild habe ich kurz danach weggeworfen, und viele andere meiner Bilder, die Farbe auf der Palette trocknete ein, die Pinsel verstaubten.²⁵

In the story, he is literally pulled away from his career as an artist into a career as a writer, leaving his paintings in the garbage and his paints all dried up. The story so successfully transmits this image of a lonely easel, an unhelpful stove, and thirty-four year old Hildesheimer with shaking hands and nothing else to occupy him in his entire studio apartment. At the end of his *Vita* anecdote, which was written well into his career, the story, for the first time, ends with a sentiment of regret.

²³ *Briefe*, p. 39.

²⁴ *Briefe*, p. 28.

²⁵ *Briefe*, p. 40.

WOLFGANG HILDESHEIMER: (...) und so wurde ich allmählich Schriftsteller, denn wenn man einmal mit dem Schreiben angefangen hat, scheint es schwer, wieder damit aufzuhören, selbst wenn man will, und ich habe seitdem schon mehrmals gewollt.²⁶

Although Hildesheimer found great success in his career as a writer, he always regretted not finding this same prosperity as an artist or a musician. Though colorblind, Hildesheimer created sketches and collages his entire life. Though never a musician, he wrote extensively about music, befriended composers, and one of his most well known novels in the English speaking world is his unconventional biography of Mozart. Towards the end of his career, in his speech “The End of Fiction”, Hildesheimer went as far as to suggest that, after the ending comes for the world, only the visual arts will remain meaningful. Still, Hildesheimer never stopped being a writer. His last radio play, the untranslatable Rundfunkoper, *Endfunk*, brings his writings on the theme of endings around in a full circle. Hildesheimer’s anecdote about his beginnings as a writer makes him a character within his own works of fiction, a character for whom the end will never come.

²⁶ *Begegnung im Balkanexpress*, p. 69.

The Beginning

Übersetzung | Translation

GÜNTER EICH: Ich bin ein Schriftsteller, das ist nicht nur ein Beruf, sondern die Entscheidung, die Welt als Sprache zu sehen. Als die eigentliche Sprache erscheint mir die, in der das Wort und das Ding zusammenfallen.²⁷

ROEHRICH: *Pause.* Was ist denn das für eine seltsame Sprache?

MANN: Haben die den Inhalt zur Kenntnis genommen?

In my study of *Das Ende kommt nie*, I have frequently thought of the story as a tale about beginnings rather than endings. For Wolfgang Hildesheimer, this story was his first exploration into radio playwriting. For me, it has been my first experience as a translator and then later as a director and a producer. The combination of these methods of understanding a text have helped me to interpreting meaning in *Das Ende kommt nie* in a way I have never experienced with any other written work. During this process, I have learned that there is an inherent intimacy created between the interpreter and the interpreted, which has manifested itself in my sense of duty to translate the words, in addition to the sounds, imagery and ideas within the text. This relationship with the story also taught me that behind every act of translation there is an inherent crime. For example, in translating the title alone, the stress placed upon the word “Ende” and the contrasting smallness of the word “nie” are both lost. In the translated title, *The End*

²⁷ *Band VII*, p. 48.

Never Comes, each word is given an equal weight, and the word “Never” stands strong and tall in the middle. There is no way for me to make the title “The End comes never” without jarring the readers and listeners beyond the degree that the play is already prepared to jar them. During this project, changes like this often felt like killing something and then hiding the body behind a nice font and a gentle syntax. The purpose of this section of my introduction is to pull out all of these bodies, and then tell you why I killed them, where I hid them, and how I have attempted to raise the dead in this text.

Hildesheimer was a translator before he became a writer. While it is well known by his critics that he was an English translator at the Nürnberg trials, very little critical attention is given to the English translations he did both before and after becoming a writer. Between 1943 and 1945, Hildesheimer took a stab at translating a poem by Stefan George and Kafka’s short story “Elf Söhne”.²⁸ Later in life, he translated everything from excerpts of James Joyce to Samuel Beckett, and formulated a few talks and essays on translation.

In approaching my first translation, I looked to Hildesheimer’s own advice and thoughts about the process. What I learned is that he encourages one to only chose a text that you wish you wrote yourself, and to refrain from using a language dictionary while translating it.

HILDESHEIMER: Und Lexika sollte man nur benutzen, um festzustellen, daß man sie nicht braucht.²⁹

After reading this, I backed away from Hildesheimer’s advice. I think a lot has changed since the time when Hildesheimer was a translator and today. Often, especially in the

²⁸ Jehle, *Eine Bibliographie*, p. 116-19.

²⁹ Wolfgang Hildesheimer, “Der Autor als Übersetzer. Der übersetzte Autor,” *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*, vol. 7, ed. Christiaan Lucas Hart Nibbrid and Volker Jehle (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), p. 211.

case of nuanced idioms, I relied closely on the wise input of my thesis advisor, Ulrich Plass, as a native speaker and on the *German – English Dictionary of Idioms*. Additionally, I often consulted a basic google search to see how specific phrases continue to be used (or, in many cases, not used) today. Additionally, this translation is different from many other translations because it was written for production on radio. Very often, more attention was given to how words and phrases sounded as opposed to looked and how specific imagery could be maintained for the sake of mind's eye of each listener.

That being said, my translation works to stay as close to the original text as possible with a few exceptions. Many of these exceptions are related to pronouns, alliteration, and ease of reading. A majority of these exceptions were related the collage of idioms, clichés and aphorisms that Hildesheimer pasted throughout the text in a manner akin to his artwork. I will begin by breaking down the idiomatic phrases that presented a significant challenge of translation. I have arranged them in the form of a table, for ease of reading. Then, I will end by laying out the moments in which I broke away from the original text with a specific intention, and give insight into these decisions.

Das Idiom	The Idiom	+ / -
<p>VOGLER: Ich bin einer, der das Kind beim Namen nennt.</p>	<p>VOGLER: I'm the kinda guy who calls a spade a spade.</p>	<p>This translation loses the imagery of the child, and therefore the allusion to the newness of the situation in which these characters have found themselves in this scene. It also loses the connection to the next scene where Frau von Goliath calls Franziska "Kind". Still, the translation retains the meaning and the sense of a common saying, while creating the convenient imagery of the spade, a tool for digging and construction.</p>
<p>VOGLER: Man muß Dingen ins Auge sehen, sage ich mir.</p>	<p>VOGLER: You gotta look 'em right in the eyes, I always say.</p>	<p>This is a close match.</p>
<p>VOGLER: Na, Sie wissen ja, Frauen haben nah am Wasser gebaut.</p>	<p>VOGLER: Oh, you know how women are, they're built with leaky pipes. Always turning on the waterworks.</p>	<p>This was the most difficult idiom in this text by far. There just isn't an English equivalent. When choosing what to say, I decided that I wanted to retain the allusion to water, and also retain the idea of a building. The term "waterworks" successfully implies crying, without ever using the word "cry", like in the original German.</p>
<p>VOGLER: Die werfen gleich die Flinte ins Korn.</p>	<p>VOGLER: They just throw in the towel.</p>	<p>This particular idiom is more German language specific than others in this text. The idea of throwing in the towel retains the idea of throwing while also continuing the sense of wetness (tears) from the previous idiom.</p>
<p>VOGLER: Ich lasse mir nicht auf dem Kopf herumtanzen (...)</p>	<p>VOGLER: I'm not going to let them dance in circles around me.</p>	<p>This translation loses the reference to things happening above Vogler. This idea of vertical positioning is important within the plot of an apartment building, especially one in which Roehrich literally lives above Vogler's head.</p>

Das Idiom	The Idiom	+ / -
VOGLER: (...) ich werde meine Fäuste zeigen.	VOGLER: I'll show my fists.	This is one of those fun moments when the idiom exists across both languages.
FRAU VON GOLIATH: Jedenfalls wäre es falsch, sich von ihnen gleich ins Bockshorn jagen zu lassen.	FRAU VON GOLIATH: In any case, supposing it's mistaken, they're barking up the wrong tree.	This is a very specific German phrase with an old feeling to it. My translation maintains the hunting imagery and the sense of an idiom, though the meaning is changed from implying that it is wrong to scare Goliath to meaning that they should not approach Goliath with such matters. Both are something she would say at this moment in the plot.
FRAU VON GOLIATH: Aber wie dem auch sei, die Leute können uns doch nicht einfach mit Hab und Gut vor die Tür setzen.	FRAU VON GOLIATH: But how can it be, the people can't just kick us out with all our goods and chattels.	The English idiom "goods and chattels", though I have never heard it spoken, retains the sense of an outdated idiom. Hopefully, this impression will discourage listeners from pausing and wondering, "what on earth is a chattel?"
BRUN: Also, raussetzen will man uns...Na ja, nichts wird so heiß gegessen, wie es gekocht wird.	BRUN: So they want to throw us out... well, nothing is eaten as hot as it's boiled.	While this is not an idiom in English, by directly translating this phrase, it can be easily read as a metaphor. In this line, the idea of boiling is significant both in my choices for the production, and the discovery much later in the play that Frau von Goliath and Franziska have lived off of hard boiled eggs for weeks while they await the arrival of the furniture truck.
BRUN: Ich bin ein Mensch, der die Welt nach ihrem Wert achtet.	BRUN: I am the kind of man who judges the world by what it's worth.	This phrase is not an idiom in English, but the meaning remains clear.

Das Idiom	The Idiom	+ / -
VOGLER: Der Herr Doktor kann auf mich bauen.	VOGLER: The Herr Doktor can depend on me completely.	While there have been many small victories in my translation, this is a moment I have written off as a clear loss. The idea of the building invoked by the phrase “bauen” is hard to maintain while staying true to Vogler’s character and encouraging natural dialogue.
BRUN: Wohl ein etwas lockerer Vogel, wie?	BRUN: Certainly somewhat flighty, eh?	This translation turns the idiom “lockerer Vogel” into the adjective, “flighty”. Here, the allusions to Roehrich as a bird is maintained while also implying that Brun finds Roehrich aloof and irresponsible.
ALBERT: Der Herr Doktor ist ein Allerweltskerl.	ALBERT: The Herr Doktor is an average Joe. ³⁰	While I was presented with many options for this translation, I liked “average Joe” best because it carried no outside associations. Also, especially in the production of this radio play, this phrase carries a very successful irony when read by Albert.

³⁰ This choice in translation was very much aided by a discussion on the LEO forums where every option from “Jack of all Trades” to “Man of the World” to “A Much Loved Bloke” was discussed in early March: <<http://dict.leo.org/forum/viewUnsolvedquery.php?idThread=254481&idForum=1&lp=ende&lang=de>>.

Many of the most difficult moments in translating this text came during the scenes that featured Herr Doktor Brun. In the cases of the aphorisms, which Brun repeatedly attempts to formulate, I repeatedly attempted to translate them as directly as possible:

BRUN: Gut herausgesetzt ist besser, als nutzlos gelebt zu haben.

BRUN: Being thrown out well is better than having lived uselessly.

BRUN: Und bedenke: wenn der Schnee von gestern schmilzt, so erscheint zunächst das faule Laub von vorgestern.

BRUN: And think: “when the snows from yesterday melts, so reappears the foul leaves from the days before yesterday

BRUN: “Wenn der Purpur fällt, muß auch der Herzog nach.”

BRUN: As they say, “When the purple falls, so must the Duke.”

This last quote comes from Friedrich Schiller’s drama *Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua*. Since this wouldn’t instantly strike an English speaking audience as an obscure and misquoted Schiller reference in the same way that it might a German speaking audience, I decided to verbally introduce the quote with the lead in “As they say”. This is a cue for listeners that a quote is about to begin. This change was very much made in consideration of how this phrase will sound when spoken.

Another moment of tricky verbal behavior in this radio play takes place in the seventh scene, when both Roehrich and Vogler arrive in Brun’s apartment to speak with him. When each character arrives, Brun very intentionally mispronounces both of their names. In the same way that each name in this radio play serves as more than just a name, each of these mispronunciations are more than just mispronunciations. I decided