PART ONE

Youth

1
Da Capo

Röcken

NIETZSCHE'S GREATEST inspiration, he believed, was the idea that if one is in a state of perfect mental health one should be able to survey one's entire life and then, rising ecstatically to one's feet, shout '*Da capo!* – Once more! Once more! Back to the beginning!' – to 'the whole play and performance'. In perfect health one would 'crave nothing more fervently' than the 'eternal return' of one's life throughout infinite time – not an expurgated version with the bad bits left out, but *exactly* the same life, down to the very last detail, however painful or shameful. His own particular task was to become able to do this, to reach a point where he could shout '*Da capo!*' to his own life. Let us see what he had to contend with before reaching that point.

Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Fritz', was born (exactly a week before one of his divinities, Sarah Bernhardt) on October 15, 1844, in the Saxon village of Röcken. Two facts about this birthplace are important.

The first is that Röcken lay in that part of Saxony which had been annexed in 1815 by the rising power of Prussia. This was a punishment for the Saxon king's alliance with Napoleon, whom the Prussians, together with their allies, the Russians, Austrians, and Swedes, had defeated in the battle of Leipzig in 1813. (Nietzsche recalls that, unlike the rest of the family, his paternal grandmother had been a great admirer of Napoleon,[1] an attribute which, later on, would become an important part of his own political outlook.)

As we shall see, Prussia looms large in Nietzsche's intellectual landscape. In his youth he was intensely proud of his Prussian nationality – 'I am a Prussian', he declared in a moment of summary self-definition – and was a strong admirer of Otto von Bismarck, Prime Minister of Prussia and later Chancellor of the united German *Reich*. After the horrors of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), Bismarck's 'war of choice' initiated in order to compel the German states to unite against a common enemy, Nietzsche became more and more appalled at the use made of Prussian power by the 'blood and iron' Chancellor, and by the complacent, jingoistic philistinism growing up behind its shield. Yet, as a result of being brought up in a passionately Prussian household and in the Prussian education system, he

acquired, I shall suggest, an archetypically Prussian personality. That the philosopher who demanded that one organise one's life as a ramrod 'straight line' towards a single 'goal',[2] and that one achieve a 'rank-ordering' in both the soul and the state, should have been claimed as the godfather of contemporary 'postmodernism' is a tribute to the almost unlimited capacity of philosophers wilfully to misunderstand each other.

The second important fact about the location of Nietzsche's birthplace is its position in the heartland of the Protestant Reformation: Röcken is about seventy kilometres from Eisleben, the birthplace of Martin Luther, about twenty-five kilometres southwest of Leipzig, where Johann Sebastian Bach worked and died, and about fifty kilometres from Halle, where Georg Friedrich Händel was born and worked. Both Bach and Handel – the two great musical voices of German Lutheranism and of Nietzsche's homeland – were of great importance to the profoundly musical Fritz. He records that on hearing the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's *Messiah* during his ninth year, he felt 'as if I had to join in . . . the joyful singing of angels, on whose billows of sound Jesus ascended to heaven' and decided to try to write something similar (track 1 on the Web site for this book).[3]

That the future self-styled 'Antichrist' should be born into the cradle of Protestantism creates a paradox we shall have to try to resolve. How was it, we will need to ask, that German Protestantism nursed such a viper in its bosom?

* * *

Fritz was christened 'Friedrich Wilhelm' because he was born on the birthday of the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and because his father, Karl Ludwig (see Plate 1), was passionately *Königsstreu*, a passionate royalist.

Ludwig, as Nietzsche's father was known, had been born in 1813, the son of Friedrich August (1756–1862), a 'superintendent' (roughly, archdeacon) in the Lutheran church and a writer of treatises on moral and theological subjects. Ludwig's mother, Erdmuthe, was descended from five generations of Lutheran pastors. That Ludwig was a Prussian royalist was at least partly a matter of gratitude. Having completed his theological studies at Halle University, he became tutor to the three daughters of the Duke of Sax-Altenburg, a small principality which, like Röcken, lay in Prussian Saxony. It was here that he acquired a somewhat dandyish taste in dress – far removed from the usual clerical drabness – a taste his son would inherit. And it was here that he met the King of Prussia, on whom he must have made a good impression, since it was by royal decree that, in 1842, he received the living of Röcken together with the neighbouring villages of Michlitz and Bothfeld.

In the same year the twenty-nine-year-old Ludwig met the seventeen-year-old Franziska Oehler (see Plate 2), daughter of David Ernst Oehler, pastor in the nearby village of Pobles. His fine clothes, courtly manners, and talented piano playing – a gift again inherited by his son – must have made a favourable impression, since they were married the following year.

Nietzsche was thus surrounded by Lutheran pastors, wall to wall, as it were. But it would be a mistake to see his later attempted assassination of Christianity as a reaction against a fundamentalist or puritanical background. His family was neither of these, as he himself affirms in *Ecce Homo*, the quasi-autobiography he wrote at the end of his career: 'If I wage war against Christianity, I am the right person to do so, since it never caused me personally any great misfortune or constricted my life – committed Christians have always been well-disposed towards me'.[4]

Nietzsche's father, that is to say, was a man of wide – especially musical – culture who was uninterested in dogma and held the niceties of theological belief to belong within the

privacy of individual conscience. And Erdmuthe Nietzsche, as Fritz's sister, Elizabeth, recollects, 'had grown up at a period of dry rationalism . . . and consequently felt ill at ease during the orthodox revival of the 1850s, when people were beginning to be "born again" and denounce themselves in public as desperate sinners'.[5] The same anti-fanaticism was true of Fritz's maternal grandfather, to whose 'cosy [*gemütlich*]' and indulgent household the young Fritz became extremely attached. David Oehler was the son of a weaver who, through intelligence, education, and marriage, had elevated himself into the landed gentry and was thus able to live the life of a country squire. He fathered eleven children, enjoyed playing cards, and was a farmer and a keen huntsman. He was a gifted musician who organised regular musical gatherings to liven up the winter evenings and possessed a large library that became one of Fritz's favourite haunts.

The Lutheran Church was, in fact, much like the Anglican. It was a path to social advancement and a life of relative gentility. Yet it would be a mistake to reach for the adjective 'Trollopian': to suppose that Christian faith meant nothing to the Nietzsche/Oehlers, that they observed merely its outward, social form. Their faith was genuine and unquestioned, untroubled for the most part by doubt.* It was the foundation of their lives. Elizabeth makes this clear:

> Throughout our childhood Christianity and religion never seemed to contain any element of restraint, but we actually had examples of both constantly before us in the most sublime manifestations of natural submission.[6]

The Nietzsche/Oehlers surrounded the children with authentic Christian lives, with the unforced manifestation of Christian virtue.

This is what makes the ferocity of the mature Nietzsche's attack on Christianity a biographical puzzle. Christianity was the material and emotional foundation of an extended family that filled his childhood with love and security, a warmth he never ceased to value. To his father, in particular, Fritz was intensely attached. In the autobiographical reflections written when he was thirteen, he recalls him as

> the very model of a country parson! Gifted with spirit and a warm heart, adorned with all the virtues of a Christian, he lived a quiet, simple, yet happy life, and was loved and respected by all who knew him. His good manners and cheerful demeanour graced many a

* There is one recorded exception to this, which appears in a letter Nietzsche's uncle, Edmund Oehler, wrote him in 1862: 'You will want to know how I am. I'm very well now, thank God. The melancholy, damp fogs are past and there is again pure, fresh air . . . After a time of dark night and great inner suffering a new day and a new life begins to break. Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected and ascended into heaven, still lives and rules today; he is now my only Lord and the king of my heart, him alone will I follow, for him will I live and die and work. For a considerable time I lived in doubt due to following men, my own reason, and worldly wisdom. As you indeed know, the opinions of men constantly cancel each other out, which means that a searching soul can find no firm foundation. Now, however, that Jesus has become lord of my heart the time of doubt is past. Now I have a firm foundation, for Jesus remains always one and the same . . . My dear Fritz, I know from our conversations that you too are a searching, struggling, conflicted soul. Follow my advice and make Jesus your Lord, whom alone you follow . . . not any human system. Jesus alone, Jesus alone, and again Jesus alone . . . Jesus alone' (KGB 1.1 To Nietzsche 58). This seems to suggest that Nietzsche's uncle Edmund, after a religious crisis, emerged into a 'born again' Christianity which, in the main, the Nietzsche/Oehlers found quite alien.

> social occasion to which he had been invited, and made him straight away loved by all. His leisure hours he occupied with the delights of science and with music. In his piano playing he had achieved a notable skill, especially in improvising variations on a theme . . .[7]

– a skill in which Fritz, too, would soon excel. Elizabeth qualifies this picture of their father with a slightly repressive nuance, recalling that no discord was allowed to come to his attention since

> he was an extraordinarily sensitive man, or, as was said of him at the time, he took everything so much to heart. Any sign of discord either in the parish or in his own family was so painful to him that he would withdraw to his study and refuse to eat or drink, or speak with anyone.[8]

Yet not for a moment does she doubt Fritz's intense devotion to him:

> Our father used to spend much of his time with us, but more especially with his eldest son, Fritz, whom he called his 'little friend', and whom he allowed to be with him even when he was busy, as he [Fritz] knew how to sit still and would thoughtfully watch his father at work. Even when Fritz was only a year old he was so delighted by his father's music that whenever he cried for no apparent reason our father was begged to play the piano to him. Then the child would sit upright in his little pram, as still as a mouse, and would not take his eyes off the musician.[9]

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche states that he

> regard[s] it as a great privilege to have had such a father; it even seems to me that whatever else of privileges I possess is thereby explained . . . Above all, that it requires no intention on my part, but only a mere waiting, for me to enter involuntarily into a world of exalted and delicate things [the world of books]: there I am at home, only there does my innermost passion becomes free.[10]

Whatever, therefore, the grounds for Nietzsche's turn against Christianity, they are not to be found in any Oedipal desire to 'kill the father'.

* * *

The Röcken vicarage (see Plate 3) was presided over by women – by Ludwig's widowed mother, Erdmuthe, a kind but sickly woman sensitive to noise, and by his spinster stepsisters: Auguste, who ran the household and was a victim of gastric troubles, and Rosalie, who was mildly domineering, suffered from 'nerves', was interested in politics, and – unusual for a woman of her times – read the newspapers. Fritz was fond of them all.

Franziska, eighteen when she gave birth to Fritz, was a woman of some spirit, a warm heart, a modest education, simple faith, and the narrow, conservative outlook typical for a girl of rural upbringing. To her teenage son she would complain of his 'desire to be different'. He in turn would complain of her, and Elizabeth's, 'Naumburg virtue', a term denoting narrow, legalistic, oppressive small-town morality taken from the name of the town to which they would soon move.

Fritz's sister, Elizabeth, born on July 10, 1846, was christened Elizabeth Therese Alexandra after the three princesses her father had tutored at the court of Sax-Altenburg. Elizabeth, or 'Llama', as Fritz nicknamed her, worshipped her elder brother, who in turn patronised her in a lordly, though kindly, manner. Elizabeth recalls that after entering grammar school he started calling her 'little girl', even though they were less than two years apart, and, in the street, insisted on walking five paces ahead of her and any female companion she might have.* From an early age, she developed the habit of squirreling away anything Fritz had written, the origin of the remarkably extensive collection of unpublished material (the *Nachlass*) that survived Nietzsche's death. Devoid of any capacity for abstract thought and given to sentimentality (her writing would be so much better if she could get over all the 'ohs' and 'ahs', Nietzsche complained to their mother),[11] Elizabeth nonetheless developed a capacity for shrewd (eventually criminal) entrepreneurship which, as we shall see, enabled her to make a good living from her brother's name after his descent into madness.

Since Franziska was not responsible for running the household and since she was almost as close in age to her children as to the adults of the household, she became as much an older sister as a mother to Fritz and Elizabeth.

* * *

Here is how the seventeen-year-old Nietzsche recalls the village of his birth in one of the nine autobiographical fragments he wrote during his teenage years:

> I was born in Röcken, a village which lies along the high road and is near to Lützen. Enclosing it are woods of willows as well as a few poplars and elms, so that from a distance only the chimneys and the tower of the ancient church are visible above the tree tops. Inside the village are large ponds, separated from each other only by narrow strips of land. Around them are bright green, knotty willows. Somewhat higher lies the vicarage and the church, the former surrounded by a garden and orchard. Adjacent is the cemetery full of gravestones partially collapsed into the earth. The vicarage itself is shaded by three fine, broad-branched elms whose stately height and shape makes a pleasing impression on the visitor . . . Here I lived in the happy circle of my family untouched by the wide world beyond. The village and its immediate environs were my world, the everything beyond it an unknown, magical region.[12]

Three years earlier his recollections, though in the main as sunny as this, are touched by some gothic shadows:

> The village of Röcken . . . looks quite charming with its surrounding woods and its ponds. Above all, one notices the mossy tower of the church. I can well remember how one day

* In 1862, at the age of sixteen, Elizabeth was sent to Dresden, the cultural capital of Southeast Germany, to complete her education. The following letter reveals both Fritz's affection for and his schoolmasterly patronising of his sister: 'Dear, dear Lisbeth . . . I think of you almost always . . . even when I'm asleep I often dream of you and our time together . . . You will survive another couple of months in Dresden. Above all try to get to know well all the art treasures of Dresden, so that you can gain some real profit. You must visit the art galleries at least once or twice a week and it would be good if you look at only two or three pictures so that you can give me a detailed description – in writing, naturally' (KGB 1.1 302).

> I walked with my dear father from Lützen back to Röcken and how half way we heard the uplifting ringing of the bells sounding the Easter festival. This ringing often echoes in me still and nostalgia carries me back to the distant house of my father. How often I interested myself in funeral biers and black crêpe and old gravestone inscriptions and memorials when I saw the old, old mortuary . . . Our house was built in 1820 and so was in excellent condition. Several steps led up to the ground floor. I can still remember the study on the top floor. The rows of books, among them many picture-books and scrolls, made it my favourite place. Behind the house lay the garden and orchard. Part of this tended to flood in spring as did the cellar. At the front of the house lay the courtyard with barn and stalls which led to the flower garden. I was usually to be found sitting in its shady spots. Behind the green wall lay the four ponds surrounded by willows. To walk among them, to see the rays of the sun reflecting off their surfaces and the cheerful little fishes playing was my greatest joy. I have yet to mention something that always filled me with secret horror: in the gloom of the church stood on one side an over-life-size image of St. George, carved in stone by a skilful hand. The impressive figure, the terrible weapon and the mysterious twilight always caused me to shrink back when I looked at it.* It is said that, once, his eyes flashed so terrifyingly that all who saw him were filled with horror. – Around the cemetery lay the farmhouses and gardens constructed in rustic style. Harmony and peace reigned over every roof, wild events entirely absent. The inhabitants seldom left the village, at most for the annual fair, when cheerful throngs of lads and lassies took off for busy Lützen to admire the crowds and the shiny wares for sale.[13]

Tranquil though Röcken was, the outside world was in a quite different condition:

> While we in Röcken lived quietly and peaceably earth-shattering events shook almost all European nations. Years earlier the explosive material [the French Revolution of 1789] had been spread everywhere so it needed only a spark to set it on fire. – Then one heard from distant France the first clash of weapons and battle songs. The terrible February Revolution [of 1848] happened in Paris and spread with ever-increasing speed. 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' was the cry in every country, people, humble and elevated, took up the sword, sometimes in defence of the king and sometimes against him. The revolutionary war in Paris was imitated in most of the states of Prussia. And even though quickly suppressed, there remained for a long time a desire among the people for 'a German Republic'. These ructions never penetrated to Röcken, although I can still remember wagons filled with cheering crowds and fluttering flags passing by on the main road.[14]

In the royalist household at Röcken, there was of course no sympathy at all for this repetition of the French Revolution (a repetition that involved Richard Wagner in Dresden and Karl Marx in the Rhineland). On hearing that, in an effort to appease the crowd, the Prussian king had donned the red cockade of the socialist revolutionaries, Ludwig broke down and cried.[15] All his life, as we shall see, Nietzsche retained a hatred of Rousseau (who gave the French Revolution its battle-cry of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'), of socialism, and

* This is a mistake. There has never been a statue of St. George in the Röcken church. Instead there are two wall-reliefs depicting medieval knights, each armed with a large sword.

indeed of revolution of any kind. And true to his father's royalism, he always thought of monarchy as the ideal form of government.[16]

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During this, throughout Europe, tumultuous spring, Franziska gave birth to her third child, who was christened Joseph, in honour of Duke Joseph of Sax-Altenburg whom Karl Ludwig had once served. Flexing his precocious literary talent, the thirteen-year-old Nietzsche takes up the story:

> Up to now happiness and joy had shone upon us always: our life flowed on unperturbed, like a bright summer's day. But now black clouds piled up above us, lightning flashed, and hammer blows were sent from heaven to strike us. In September 1848 my beloved father suddenly became mentally ill. We consoled ourselves and him, however, with the hope he would soon recover. Whenever a better day did come he would preach and hold his confirmation lessons, for his active spirit was incapable of slothfulness. Several physicians endeavoured to discover the nature of his illness but in vain. Then we sent for the famous Dr. Opolcer, who was in Leipzig at the time, and he came to Röcken. This excellent man immediately recognised where the seat of the illness was to be found. To the horror of us all he diagnosed it as a softening of the brain, not yet hopelessly advanced, but already extremely dangerous. My father had to suffer terribly, but the illness would not diminish, on the contrary it grew worse from day to day. Finally the power of vision was extinguished, and he had to endure his sufferings in eternal darkness. He was bedridden until July 1849; then the day of his redemption drew nigh. On July 26th he sank into a deep slumber from which he awoke only fitfully. His last words were: 'Fränzchen – Fränzschen – come – mother – listen – O God!' Then he died, quietly and blessedly † † † † on July 27th 1849 [at the age of 35]. When I woke the next morning all around me I heard loud weeping and sobbing. My dear mother came to me with tears in her eyes and cried out 'O God! My good Ludwig is dead!'. Although I was very young and inexperienced, I still had some idea of death: the thought that I would be separated for ever from my dear father seized me and I wept bitterly. The next few days passed amid tears and preparations for the funeral. O God! I had become a fatherless orphan, my dear mother a widow! – On August 2nd the earthly remains of my beloved father were committed to the womb of the earth. The parish had prepared for him a stone-lined grave. At one o'clock in the afternoon the service began, with the bells pealing their loud knell. Oh, never will the deep-throated sound of those bells quit my ear; never will I forget the gloomy surging melody of the hymn 'Jesu, my trust'! The sound of the organ resounded through the empty spaces of the church.[17]

Since an autopsy revealed a quarter of the brain to be missing, it seems certain that Nietzsche lost his beloved father to some kind of brain disease. Though he was only five years old, the loss marked him for life. In 1885, having been awarded seven thousand Swiss francs in a court settlement against his publisher, the first thing he purchased after paying off bookstore debts was an engraved tombstone for his father's grave – thirty-six years after Ludwig's death.[18] It appears that it was Nietzsche himself (by now in full swing as the scourge of Christianity) who designed the stone on which is inscribed a quotation from St. Paul: 'Love never faileth (I Cor, 13, 8)'.

The death of his father, soon to be followed by the loss of the *Vaterhaus* [father-house], as Nietzsche always refers to the Röcken vicarage, was Nietzsche's first loss of security. A

sense of homelessness became, and would remain, a obsessive theme in his poetry. In his fourteenth year, for instance, allowing feelings to surface that he could not easily express outside poetry, he composed the following:

Where to?
Little bird in the air,
Fly away with your song,
And greet for me my dear,
My beloved Home.

O lark, take this blossom
Tender with you.
I plucked it as decoration
For my far-away father's house.

O nightingale fly down to me
and take this rosebud
to my father's grave.[19]

* * *

Almost immediately, however, Fritz's desolation over the loss of his father was intensified by two further 'hammer blows from heaven'. The thirteen-year-old continues:

> When a tree is deprived of its crown it withers and wilts, and the tiny birds abandon its branches. Our family had been deprived of its head. All joy vanished from our hearts and profound sadness overtook us. Yet when our wounds had only just begun to heal a new event painfully tore them open. – At that time I had a dream that I heard organ music in the church, the music I had heard during my father's funeral. When I perceived what lay behind these sounds, a grave-mound suddenly opened up and my father, wrapped in a linen shroud, emerged from it. He hurried into the church and returned a moment later with a child in his arms. The tomb yawned again, he entered it, and the cover closed over the opening. The stentorian sounds of the organ ceased instantly and I awoke. On the day that followed this night, little Joseph suddenly fell ill, seized by severe cramps, and after a few hours he died. Our grief knew no bounds. My dream had been fulfilled completely. The tiny corpse was laid to rest in his father's arms. – In this double misfortune, God in heaven was our sole consolation and protection. This happened [in] . . . the year 1850.[20]

Since the vicarage was needed for the new pastor, Fritz now lost not only father and brother, but also the *Vaterhaus*:

> The time approached when we were to be separated from our beloved Röcken. I can still remember the last day and night we spent there. That evening I played with several local children, conscious of the fact that it would be for the last time. The vesper bell tolled its melancholy peal across the waters, dull darkness settled over the earth, and the moon and shimmering stars shone in the night sky. I could not sleep for very long. At one-thirty in the morning I went down again to the courtyard. Several wagons stood there, being loaded. The dull glimmer of their lanterns cast a gloomy light across the courtyard. I considered it absolutely impossible that I would ever feel at home in another place. How painful it was to abandon a village where one had experienced joy and sorrow, where the graves of my

> father and younger brother lay, where the village folk always surrounded me with love and friendliness. Scarcely had the dawning day shed its light on the meadows, when our wagon rolled out onto the high road that took us to Naumburg, where a new home awaited. – Adieu, adieu, dear *Vaterhaus*. [21]

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Earlier, I raised the question of how it was that Christianity's great enemy could have grown up in the heartland of German Protestantism, in a family that provided him, to an exemplary degree, with warmth and love. How was it that, in his maturity, he came to attack the foundation on which his childhood security had been built? It might be, of course, that Nietzsche's philosophical commitment to telling the truth without fear or favour simply overrode all personal considerations. But it might also be that, already in earliest childhood, he was aware of shadowy corners within the sunlit world of his Lutheran homeland, that the worm of doubt was already present in his earliest experiences. Read carefully, I believe, the autobiographical fragments – written, it should be emphasised, by a still-committed Christian – suggest this to be the case.

The adult philosopher has an armoury of polemical descriptions of Christianity: 'madhouse', 'torture chamber', 'hangman God',[22] among others. One phrase, however, is of particular interest: 'Christian sick house and dungeon atmosphere'.[23] 'Sick house' is of interest since, from the end of Fritz's third year, the Nietzsche household was, literally, a 'sick house'. Though the recollections of his father in *Ecce Homo* are a eulogy, they contain, nonetheless, an emphasis on sickness: 'My father died at the age of thirty-six: he was delicate, loveable and morbid, like a being destined only temporarily for this world – a gracious reminder of life rather than life itself'.[24] And, in the remark quoted on p. 6 above what Nietzsche actually says (a major qualification I there omitted) is that he owes his father every 'privilege' of his nature *save for* 'life, the great Yes to life [which is] *not* included' in his debt. Putting these remarks together, we can see that Nietzsche remembers his father as 'morbid' not just physically but also spiritually, remembers him as, in his later terminology, a 'life-denier' rather than a 'life-affirmer': someone low in energy, withdrawn from life in the hope of finding his true home in another, better world. Recall, too, Elizabeth's remark that, even before the onset of his sickness, Ludwig was so sensitive that at the least sign of discord he would 'withdraw to his study and refuse to eat or drink, or speak with anyone' (p. 6 above). It seems to me possible that one of the things the mature Nietzsche held, at least unconsciously, against the Christian worldview was that, with its reduction of this world to a cold and draughty waiting-room we sinners are forced to inhabit prior to our departure for the 'true' world above, it deprived his father of the fullness of life he might have enjoyed had he not been in its grips – deprived him even, perhaps, of life itself.

As for the phrase 'dungeon atmosphere', this puts one in mind of Fritz's 'horror' (about which he could tell no one) before the threatening figure of 'St. George' with his 'terrible weapon' and 'flashing eyes' in the 'gloomy church' (p. 8 above). Could this, one wonders, be an early encounter with 'the hangman God'? And then the mortuary, the tombstones, the black crêpe and the funeral biers: the immediate environment of Nietzsche's childhood provided daily encounters with death and with the terror of its Christian meaning. Though Fritz's autobiographical reflections are, for the most part, conventionally sunny, they include enough of what I called a 'gothic' undertone – later, he will speak of Christianity as a sunless world of 'grey, frosty, unending mist and shadow'[25] – to suggest that some of the seeds of the later critique of Christianity lie in the earliest terrors of an imaginative child.