

“The Strange Happiness of Being Abroad”



Dorothy Richardson's *Oberland*

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Abstract

PDF

Oberland has typically been viewed as an odd interlude in Dorothy Richardson's novel sequence *Pilgrimage*. Depicting a fortnight spent in the Swiss Alps, it focuses on the experience and influence of travel and new surroundings, celebrating a state of intense wonder—“the strange happiness of being abroad.” This article argues that reading *Oberland* within the tradition of travel writing rather than the novel improves our understanding of the volume's distinctiveness as well as themes central to the whole of *Pilgrimage*—in particular those of wonder and “privileged sight,” faculties that, it is suggested, are essential to the artistic temperament. Concerned less with the protagonist's inner life and more with her immediate experience of place, *Oberland* may be distinct from the rest of *Pilgrimage*, but not from modernist travel narratives. This article considers the implications of such genre distinctions for Richardson's text and what it means for her protagonist Miriam's development toward artishood.

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