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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE  
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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## Lee Miller -- What A Gal!

And the current issue of the [London Review of Books](#) (now officially a must-have for me, alongside [Atlantic Monthly](#)) is a review of "Lee Miller" by [Carolyn Burke](#). This biography tells the life of one heckuva gal. Raped at 7, she contracted gonorrhoea and was doused by her mother with harsh chemicals and "uterine probes to drain secretions," all in the effort to keep her from going blind and/or dying. Oddly, her father immediately began taking nude photos of Lee, teaching her the mechanics of photography along the way. Nothing kinky here -- they had a great bond and he seemed to be reinforcing the idea that she was beautiful and worthy of admiration, despite what had happened. And then she grew up and things took off in the Roaring Twenties. At 18 she was in New York City and about to step into oncoming traffic when she was rescued by Conde Nast, who naturally made her a fashion model on the spot. Then she jaunted off to Paris (just at the right time), bumped into Man Ray at a cafe (she'd tried to get into his studio but was turned away) and HE immediately made Lee his assistant and mistress. Lots of nude weekends and landmark surrealist photos ensued, with Lee soon becoming a photographer herself (snapping Charlie Chaplin when she wasn't appearing in films by Jean Cocteau), working for Brogue ([British Vogue](#)) and so on. She slept with lots of men, ran off with an Egyptian prince, got bored, ran off with another man (financed by the Egyptian prince, who loved her so), buddied up to Dali and De Mille and then welcomed World War II with open arms. Finally! A REAL adventure! She developed a series of black humored photos of London that helped urge America to feel solidarity with the plucky British. That wasn't enough. She got permission to be a real combat photographer, tagged along with troops, cared nought for her appearance and even became pleasingly plump, was one of the first in Auschwitz (sending back photos with a telegram that begged her editors to believe the horror of what they saw), rode into Berlin, took a bath in Hitler's tub (in one of the most famous shots of the war) and then settled in America, gave birth to a child she promptly ignored and

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