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WOMEN MODERNISTS AND FASCISM

Modernism both influenced and was fascinated by the rhetorical and aesthetic manifestations of fascism. In examining how four artists and writers represented fascist leaders, Annalisa Zox-Weaver aims to achieve a more complex understanding of the modernist political imagination. She examines how photographer Lee Miller, filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, writer Gertrude Stein, and journalist Janet Flanner interpret, dramatize, and exploit Hitler, Göring, and Pétain. Within their own artistic medium, each of these modernists explores confrontations between private and public identity, and between historical narrative and the construction of myth. This study makes use of extensive archival material, such as letters, photographs, journals, unpublished manuscripts, and ephemera, and includes ten illustrations. This interdisciplinary perspective opens up wider discussions of the relationship between artists and dictators, modernism and fascism, authority and representation.

ANNALISA ZOX-WEAVER is Associate Editor of *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.

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*To Ivan Vladimir Lincir,
Czeslaw Blanford Thomas Lincir,
and Lawrence Harold Chase Lincir*

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At first we may take pleasure in the monstrousness of the monstrous,
but finally we are left with the banality of banality.

– Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*

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Acknowledgments

The provocation for the project was an image of Lee Miller: the photographer in a bath with a framed photograph of Hitler poised on the tub's ledge. I first came across the image in a shop on Charing Cross Road in *Lee Miller's War*, edited by Antony Penrose. That moment of discovery expanded as I found more examples of women in the modernist era undertaking intimate encounters with Hitler and other fascist leaders. My pursuit of this peculiar project required a special support system. An early debt of gratitude goes to Professor Joseph Allen Boone, who struck a note between careful guidance and allowing me to find my own way. My appreciation also goes to Norman Kleeblatt for his enthusiasm about the project and for the inspiring vision of his 2002 exhibition, "Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art" at the Jewish Museum in New York. Thank you also to Carolyn Burke, the ultimate of *Les Amis de Lee*, for being a model of good scholarship and bold argumentation.

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