

Social Meanings and Images of Photo Journalism in the Biographical Drama Lee

Jana Radošínská, PhD.

Associate Professor, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Faculty of Mass Media Communication, Department of Mass Media Communication, Slovakia

Ján Višňovský, PhD.

Associate Professor, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Faculty of Mass Media Communication, Department of Mass Media Communication

Abstract:

Photo journalism is an extremely demanding and complex professional specialisation in the field of media production, which is associated with certain prejudices and contradictory evaluations. Regarding war photography, we often critically discuss whether it is more important to create authentic, albeit shocking testimonies visualizing the cruelty and meaninglessness of war, or whether we should prioritize the deeply personal, even intimate feelings of the people being portrayed while suffering and dying. The views of the general public on photojournalism are also largely influenced by the ways in which media producers create emotionally engaging, yet sometimes hyperbolized and/or distorted images of photo journalists and their work in feature films or television dramas. The main goal of the paper is to critically reflect on the way in which the creators of the feature-length biographical drama Lee (2023) tell the story of American photographer Elizabeth „Lee“ Miller, a former fashion model who became an acclaimed war correspondent for the Vogue magazine during WWII. Applying the principles of discourse analysis, the authors focus on social meanings present in the given film, specifically on the depiction of different aspects of Lee Miller's work and its cultural significance.