

ADAPTATION, FIDELITY, AND THE ORIENTAL GAZE: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE BIOPIC *LION* (2016)

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Abstract

The study critically examines Lion (2016), a biographical adaptation of Saroo Brierley's memoir A Long Way Home (2013), through the lens of fidelity (Hutcheon, 2013) within the framework of the systemic model of adaptation (Yau, 2016). Additionally, it explores the film's representation of binary oppositions, including poor/rich, white/black and east/west, through the theoretical perspective of Orientalism (Said, 1978). A Long Way Home narrates Saroo's (protagonist) story of getting lost in a train as a five-year-old child in the impoverished Indian neighbourhood of Khandwa. The narrator, the author, movingly recounts how he travelled thousands of miles across the country, faced devastating challenges, and was finally adopted by an Australian couple. However, his indefinite childhood memories led him to retrace his roots with the help of Google Earth almost after 25 years.

The biopic Lion successfully translates Brierley's real-life experiences into a cinematic narrative, capturing both his physical journey and emotional struggles. This threefold analysis evaluates the adaptation's ideological underpinnings, compares the film (Lion, 2016) with its source text (A Long Way Home, 2013), and assesses its effectiveness despite certain limitations. The findings suggest that while the adaptation takes creative liberties, it remains a compelling and impactful representation of Brierley's story.

Keywords: Memoir, adaptation, biopic, fidelity, binaries, ideologies, orientalism

Introduction

Adapting fiction and nonfiction has been a significant aspect of cinematic experimentation worldwide. Highlighting the ubiquity of adaptation, Hutcheon (2013) observes that “adaptations are everywhere today, and one can find them on television, film screens, stages, the internet, and even in theme parks and video games, etc.” (p. 2). The biographical film, or biopic, has been a rich genre in cinema's history. Despite their unexciting generic conventions, biopics have been well-received and embraced by both critics and audiences (Weil, 2015 para. 2). According to Karpinski (2023), biographies and autographs blend visuals and text to create subjective, self-aware narratives that differ from traditional research-based biographies by prioritising artistic interpretation over factual documentation. Numerous popular novels, memoirs, and short stories have been successfully adapted for the screen, including the most recent films: American Sniper (2014), The Imitation Game (2014), The Theory of Everything (2014), and Wild (2014) (Kouguell, 2015 para. 1).

The foregoing does not imply that the popularity of the generic representation of biopics makes it an easy practice. Adapting an autobiography has always been a challenge since the directors and producers face limitations in dealing with a true story that may not have the charm and appeal of fiction. Andrews and Andrews (2021) posit that fidelity is a crucial aspect of adaptation that theorists have sought to decentre as the primary criterion of value. In biographical drama, fidelity becomes intertwined with the ethical question of accuracy,

particularly regarding how truth claims can be substantiated. It also involves ethical pressure due to considerations of making amendments to a real story, which might raise objections about the credibility of the narrative. Moreover, there are technical challenges that the film's auteur (director/screenplay writer) has to face, keeping in view the audience and its expectations of cinema. Further, filmmaking is collaborative, whereas writing a book/memoir depends more on individual efforts and the mind. Therefore, converting a printed text (book/memoir) into a visual text (drama/film) is a hard nut to crack.

Despite these challenges, adapting books into movies and dramas remains a common practice worldwide, including Hollywood, Australian, African, and Bollywood cinema, among others. The emergence of advanced modes of communication has amplified the implications of discourse in today's society, and media discourse is no exception. In particular, electronic media has become one of the most important mediums used for disseminating information (Abdullah, 2014). People are becoming increasingly aware of global events; hence, cinematic productions carry ever-growing significance in our rapidly changing technological world. Social media shapes opinion through appraisals even before a movie or drama is screened. This enables audiences to decide in advance whether to watch a movie or not. Regarding adaptations, it is not only experts who assess them but also viewers who spark discussions and debates by comparing the adapted text with the source material. This makes the filmmaker's job even more challenging, yet it may help them enhance the quality of the final product through collaborative efforts during the process.

Building on the above discussion, this study analyses *Lion* (2016), a biopic adapted from Saroo Brierley's memoir *A Long Way Home* (2013), co-authored with Larry Buttrose. The film received critical acclaim, earning six nominations at the 89th Academy Awards, though it secured only two BAFTA Awards—Best Supporting Actor (Dev Patel) and Best Adapted Screenplay (Luke Davies). A critic's consensus on Rotten Tomatoes (2017, para 2) describes it as “an undeniably uplifting story” with a “talented cast,” making it “a moving journey that transcends the typical clichés of its genre.”

The current study analyses the film *Lion* (2016) at three levels. The first stage of analysis examines the aspect of fidelity concerning the source and the adapted text. The second stage involves analysing multiple aspects of adaptation by applying the ‘systemic model of adaptation’ based on Even-Zohar's (1997) conceptual communication scheme, as proposed by Yau (2016, p. 5; see figure 1). Third, it examines the representation of binaries, namely east/west, poor/rich and black/white, through the lens of Edward Said's (1978) Orientalism. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse the adaptation of *A Long Way Home* (2013) into *Lion* (2016) in terms of fidelity, assessing how closely the film adheres to the memoir while considering its creative liberties.
2. To explore the ideological implications of Western/Australian cinema in portraying Indian life, focusing on the representation of cultural binaries such as poor/rich, white/black, and East/West.

To achieve these objectives, the study aims to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent does *Lion* (2016) adhere to or diverge from *A Long Way Home* (2013), and how do these adaptations impact the narrative and thematic representation of Saroo Brierley's story?

2. How does *Lion* (2016) reflect the ideological perspectives of Western/Australian cinema in its portrayal of Indian life and cultural binaries?

The analysis of the adaptation of *Lion* has multiple implications. It offers insight into the current methods of adaptation, their reception by various viewers, and the significance of the adapted text in macro-level cinematography. It also helps unravel the primary purpose of adapting the memoir of an Indian-born Australian since adaptation has not merely been a source of entertainment in the history of cinema but also used to propagate set agendas.

Literature Review

Though hundreds of movies produced each year are adapted from novels and short stories, filmmakers still find it challenging to adapt a memoir to the big screen (Temple, 2012). The issues of authenticity, fidelity and truthfulness of the biopic continue to vex the producers/directors and the other stakeholders involved (Lavery, p. 6), making it difficult for them to transform the story into a thriller or audience-friendly film. In this respect, the director of the biopic *Lion* (2016) has been fortunate, since the real story of Saroo Brierley was filled with adventure and enthralling and incredible incidents (*A Long Way Home*, 2013).

Despite the challenges mentioned earlier, many films based on biographies exist, such as *This Boy's Life* (1993), adapted from Tobias Wolff's work, *October Sky* (1999), based on Homer Hickam's *Rocket Boys*, *Persepolis* (2007), derived from Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, *An Education* (2009), from Lynn Barber's *An Education*, and *127 Hours* (2010), inspired by Aron Ralston's *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, among others. Overall, these films received favourable responses. However, no adaptation can be flawless due to the inherent differences between the two forms: film and memoir. The biopic chosen for examination in this study was also well-received by audiences. In an interview, Brierley (14 February 2017) noted that the film closely mirrors his true story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch>, Uploaded by Vegas Film Critic). Nonetheless, audiences and critics from various backgrounds have criticized the film from multiple viewpoints, which are elaborated in the following paragraphs.

A Long Way Home (2013) details Saroo Brierley's (the protagonist's) story of getting lost in a train as a five-year-old child in the impoverished Indian neighbourhood of Khandwa. The narrator, the author, movingly recounts how he travelled thousands of miles across the country, faced devastating challenges, and was finally adopted by an Australian couple. His indefinite childhood memories led him to retrace his roots with the help of Google Earth almost after 25 years. The bilingual biopic *Lion* (2016) effectively portrays Brierley's real-life journey, layered with his mental and emotional conflicts. However, inclusion and exclusion, the important part of adaptation, certainly add different flavour to the product. The subsequent discussion sheds light on various aspects of *Lion* as reviewed and analysed by the critics.

Vicedomini (2016) regards *Lion* as a universal tale about family values that resonate with audiences worldwide. Italian filmmaker Wertmuller (2016) remarks that *Lion* is a wonderful, uplifting story brought to the big screen through exceptional storytelling; for this reason, it deserves the Capri Award and numerous other accolades. The insights from Italian experts highlight that the beauty of Brierley's real story or the original text has played a significant role in its success on the big screen.

On the other hand, Australian journalist Mathieson (2017, para 2) does not regard the film highly; however, he acknowledges its effectiveness in “how it sets up and satisfies a life-changing tale’. Taking a somewhat similar stance, Mathieson (2017) suggests that people would ridicule the story’s plausibility if it were not based on the biography of Saroo Brierley. This again illustrates that the movie’s success largely hinges on the uniqueness of the true story of the original author since getting lost at the age of five is not extraordinary, but getting back through Google Maps at the age of 25 is undoubtedly an exceptional experience. Furthermore, the filmmaker's efforts to present the work in an impactful manner should not be overlooked. In this respect, Mathieson (2017) notes that it is ‘executed with a skill and insight that can be rare in an inspirational piece such as this.’ He particularly values the extended opening of the film; while acknowledging the limitations of its cinematography, Mathieson (2017) concludes that ‘Lion cannot convey everything from Saroo's childhood’ (para 10).

Another critic, Kohn (2016), views *Lion* as a melodrama with a strong emotional appeal due to the protagonist’s struggle for identity. He compares *Lion* with another Indian film, namely ‘*Slumdog Millionaire*’ (2008). Both films are based on true stories of Indian children from impoverished backgrounds who undergo transformative experiences that introduce them to new worlds. Although *Lion* critiques the poor living conditions in India, the critic acknowledges the skilful handling of the subject by the director, particularly in the film's first half. Ironically, the dismal representation of Indian life has garnered more attention due to Saroo’s desperate struggle for survival in the city of Calcutta. The depiction of poor conditions in India through individual experiences resonates with the audience’s emotions. The critic emphasises this emotional appeal by stating, ‘Garth Davis (director) sufficiently grasps the emotional arc embedded in Brierley’s experience’ (2016).

Matte (2016) criticises *Lion* as a well-crafted melodrama with a rather unsettling message that beautifully showcases the Indian and Tasmanian landscapes alongside emotionally overwhelmed main characters. According to Matte’s (2016) review, there are no issues with the technical aspects of the film; however, it appears to critique capitalist globalisation and its accompanying economic inequality. He also emphasises the political implications of the film by highlighting the contrast presented between India’s urban and rural poverty and Australian capitalist modernity and urbanisation. From the perspective of Eastern viewers, this contrast underscores the differences between developed Western countries and the disadvantaged third world. For Indian viewers, it suggests that Indians are not resourceful enough to care for their impoverished children. In particular, the caption about ‘missing children in India’ at the end of the film may seem to criticise the poor living conditions in India for an Indian audience. Matte (2016) asserts that it is undoubtedly one of the most explicitly Orientalist portrayals displayed on the big screen this year.

Parikh’s review (2017) conveys the sentiments of the Indian audience regarding *Lion* and illustrates how the average Indian feels disappointed by witnessing his or her country in all its ‘filthy glory’. For Hollywood, India is, strangely enough, always depicted through the lens of poverty (Parikh, 2017). Despite this, the film has captivated a large number of viewers across the globe and has been nominated for six categories. Parikh (2017) also draws a comparison between the movie and ‘*Slumdog Millionaire*’ (2008), highlighting how a film centred on impoverished children, child trafficking, and dire living conditions is portrayed as a ‘winning against all odds’ narrative since the West seems to find India cinematically synonymous with such themes. Parikh (2017) emphasises the necessity of showcasing the

lives of prosperous and successful Indians on the big screen. This aspect has been overlooked by both Indian and Western filmmakers and within the global Indian narrative. Khan et al. (2017) studied ideological discursivity in newspapers' headlines. Ramzan and Khan (2019) studied news headlines as a stereotyped ideological construction and Nawaz et al. (2021) studied language representation and ideological stance comparatively. Ramzan et al. (2023) studied comparative cultural analysis as a style shift in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Unmarriageable*. Ramzan and Khan (2024) studied linguistic coherence as a cultural insight in the *Holy Woman* and *Unmarriageable*. Ramzan and Javaid (2023) viewed the psychological discursiveness in the language use of Imran Khan.

Screenwriter Luke Davies recognises the challenges of adapting a book that primarily centres on a search through Google Earth. He acknowledged that the circumstances were quite different from the typical procedural TV dramas, necessitating careful efforts to strike the right balance of cinematic appeal (Davies, 2017). This study examines the film from various perspectives, including ideologies, faithfulness, and the representation of binaries. The following section outlines the analytical and theoretical framework utilised for this analysis.

Methodology

The current study utilises the systemic model of film adaptation (2016), Linda Hutcheon's concept of fidelity (2013), and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to analyse the selected biopic. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the adapted text.

Theoretical Framework

The first step of the analysis examines Hutcheon's (2013) concept of adaptation, wherein she states, 'Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication'. This study aims to establish the analytical parameters by operating within this framework. The next stage of the analysis draws on the systemic model of film adaptation proposed by Yau (2016), which is based on Even-Zohar's (1997) systemic approach and allows the researcher to analyse the adapted text about the institutions, channels, authors, audiences, texts, and repertoires.

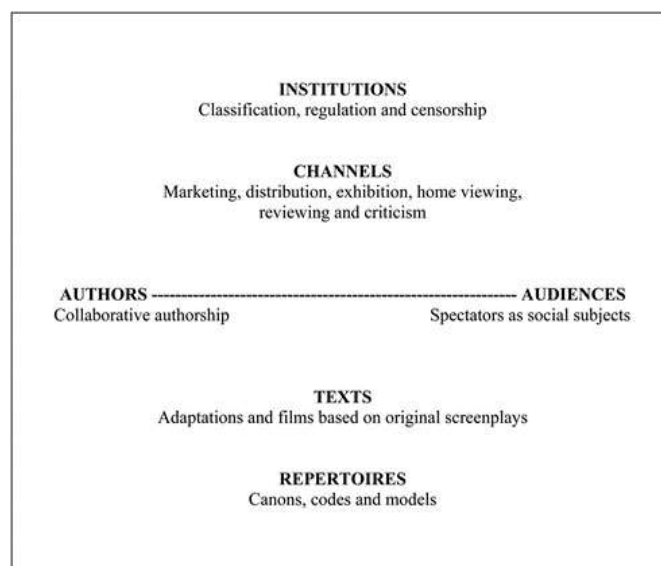


Figure 1. A systemic model of film adaptation (Yau, 2016)

Utilising the concepts of systems and norms developed by Even Zohar and Toury (1997), Yau (2016, pp. 5-6) presents the systemic model of film adaptation, which facilitates contextualisation and ideological analysis. The analysis based on this model does not solely concentrate on the faithfulness of the adaptation to a single source text; rather, it examines the factors that contribute to the production and perception of a particular film adaptation in a specific manner (Zohar, 1997). The systemic model of adaptation views film adaptation as a social practice involving the interaction of the elements within the cinema system. The components of the model hold significant implications for analysis.

Authors play the most crucial role in filmmaking, as film production is a collaborative effort involving directors, producers, screenplay writers, and many others. Without proper coordination and synchronisation among all individuals participating in various phases of filmmaking, achieving good results becomes impossible. Particularly, the understanding between the director and the screenplay writer is of significant importance. Screenplays hold equal weight, whether films are based on original texts or adaptations, as seen in the case of the biopic *Lion* (2016). Another aspect of the analysis is 'Repertoires,' which encompass the rules and materials available for the production and reception of film adaptations. This includes literary and cinematic texts, semiotic codes, and norms that pertain to *mise-en-scène* and cinematography, among others. Channels of communication involve different groups, such as advertising, film festivals, DVDs, television, and the Internet. These channels play a significant role in shaping the audience's opinions. Institutions regulate communication channels since these channels are institutionally embedded and often involve commercial and political interests. The audience represents the most substantial component, as it is the viewership that determines the success or failure of a film. Furthermore, audiences are spatially dispersed and influenced by a variety of social, cultural, and political factors that lead them to watch movies from specific perspectives. A spectator is regarded as a "social subject" who may possess contradictory and oppositional readings and interpretations of discursive authority (Kuhn, 1987).

Various features of the systemic model of film adaptation facilitate a nuanced analysis. The concept of norms helps to explore the ideological implications. It considers both authors and audiences as active producers of meaning.

Orientalism examines the vast tradition of Western "construction" of the Orient. Said (1978) points out that the knowledge about the 'Orient' produced and circulated in Europe had always been ideologically influenced due to colonial power. Said (1978) claimed that representations of the 'Orient' created a dichotomy between Europe and its 'other'. Orientalism refers to the Western ways of representing the East. It established European hegemony over the East even after the rule of colonial powers. Said's main point is that the West's study of the East is politically oriented and promotes binary opposition between Europe and the Orient. *Lion* (2016), the film produced by an Australian filmmaker, extensively depicts Indian life involving the representation of binaries such as poor/rich, black/white, and east/west etc. Postcolonialism critically examines the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised. It examines how different texts construct the colonisers as superior and the colonised as inferior. The analysis based on Edward Said's orientalism allows the researchers to study the representation of binaries compared to the source text, thus enabling the readers to look into the interplay of binaries.

Analysis and Discussion

Fidelity

When a film achieves financial or critical success, the issue of fidelity is rarely considered (Bluestone, 1971 p. 114). Given that *Lion* generally garnered a positive response, the matter of fidelity has not been extensively debated by critics. However, it is important to note that both the director and screenwriter have collaborated with Saroo Brierley, on whose memoir the film is based.

The film *The Lion* appears to conform to Hutcheon's (2013, p. 6) dictum of 'repetition without replication'. It embodies repetition as it captures the biography of Saroo Brierley by drawing information from his memoir, *A Long Way Home* (2013), while it avoids replication. Although certain amendments have been made to meet the cinematographic requirements, the core story remains the same. The film was shot in India and Australia to fulfil the memoir's needs, as the protagonist spent his early years in India and later life in Australia.

The book's prologue (*A Long Way Home*, 2013) describes Saroo's arrival at his birthplace and his emotional reunion with his biological mother. The author of the memoir reflects on his past in the subsequent chapters, whereas the film begins with the protagonist's early childhood and culminates in his reunion with his lost family. This shift appears appropriate to maintain the suspense and emotional engagement of the audience throughout the two-hour movie. The inclusion of background music in both Hindi and English effectively engages the audience emotionally without compromising the authenticity of the biopic. The omission of certain characters from the story, such as one of Brierley's younger brothers and two girlfriends, does not suggest infidelity to the true story due to the time constraints that the big screen must contend with.

One notable difference is the absence of a narrator in the film, as the protagonist himself serves as the narrator in the book. In contrast, the biopic unfolds in a melodramatic fashion and features no narrator. Subtitles have been included in certain scenes to assist the viewers. This change does not present any difficulty for an average reader; however, it does reduce the level of objectivity to some extent, which is significant in a biographical narrative. This aspect makes the adapted text seem more like a commentary (Hutcheon, 2013 p. 7) on the protagonist's life. Interestingly, the film title does not correspond with the source text, keeping viewers engaged in tracing the connection between *Lion* and *A Long Way Home*. This question is addressed at the end of both the memoir and the film. The director skillfully employed various cinematic techniques such as flashbacks, imagery, music, and songs to convey the internal conflict and emotional turmoil faced by the protagonist. The contrast between the Indian and Australian landscapes enhances the film's impact, making it more engaging than the text of the memoir and elevating the status of the adaptation.

In contrast to the memoir, the film is bilingual, namely Hindi and English, whereas the book is solely in English.

Analysis based on the systemic model

The systemic model of film adaptation (Yau, 2016) examines the adaptation process as a social practice (p. 8) involving agents, institutions, repertoires, and communication channels. Considering the systemic model, Australian cinema can be seen as a system and an institution where various individuals collaborate to achieve different projects. However, the

primary aim of the cinema system is to produce content that interests audiences while also generating financial benefits. Nevertheless, the role of ideological and political motives cannot be overlooked. In this context, *Lion* (2016) is adapted from the memoir of Saroo Brierley, an Australian businessman who shares extraordinary experiences from his life in his book. The director, Garth Davis, conceived the idea of adaptation and described the story as inspirational in one of his interviews (2017). The systemic model of film adaptation identifies the director as an agent involved in the decision-making process, starting with the selection of text for adaptation by blending the autobiographical with the political. The director, the screenwriter, and Saroo Brierley collectively authored the film as they collaborated throughout the project. In the case of *Lion*, it resonated with audiences worldwide due to universally shared family values. This provided the director with a solid basis to persuade screenwriter Luke Davies to create an impactful screenplay for the film. As illustrated in interviews and reviews, the director and screenwriter were aligned while working on the production. Their harmonious relationship enabled them to successfully complete the project. The adaptation strategies employed were significant in their efforts to achieve this. As discussed, the changes made to meet the film's requirements have had an overall positive effect; however, the absence of a narrator may create a biased impression regarding the representation of binaries in the biopic, allowing some critics to label the adaptation as ideologically driven (see Matte, 2016; Parikh, 2017).

The comparative analysis of the movie and the book invites us to explore this idea. In the memoir, the author (the protagonist), as the narrator, reveals details about the poor living conditions in India, presenting more of an individual experience for readers. Conversely, the film depicts these conditions more distinctly as a collective issue affecting many Indians. This difference may stem from the varied modes of telling and showing; a screenwriter must show rather than tell (Kouguell, 2015). In short, although it is a reality, this aspect does not imply that it was the sole motivation behind the adaptation by Australian filmmakers.

Regarding communication channels and repertoires, marketers, distribution agencies, reviewers, and critics played a constructive role in promoting the film across continents. The Weinstein Company, Transmission Films, and Entertainment Film Distributors successfully distributed it. Additionally, it received a warm reception at the Academy Awards and BAFTA awards. Despite some reviewers (Rogers, 2016) criticising the film's second half as slow and less engaging, it was nominated for six categories and won two awards at the BAFTA Film Festival. Furthermore, some critics characterised it as an oriental representation and deemed it biased from the perspective of Indian viewers. However, most reviewers (see Debruge, 2016; Mathieson, 2017) praised and recognised the expertise of the director and screenwriter, who skillfully navigated the complexities of adapting a biography. The casting choices, especially for the protagonist and the adoptive mother, have also received commendation.

Turning to the audience, the systemic model views spectators as active agents engaged in a meaning-making process concerning repertoires and contexts of reception, such as criticism and reviewing (Yau, 2016). This model allows a viewer to hold an oppositional viewpoint regarding the text, i.e., film. As noted earlier, *Lion* was aimed at a diverse audience and generally received positive feedback. Moreover, viewers approached the film as emotional and sympathetic due to the story of survival and success centring on a five-year-old Indian child who was lost (*A Long Way Home*, 2013). However, for an Indian audience, the implications might be more profound, as illustrated by the question, 'Why is the poorer

side of India consistently emphasized in films?’ (Parikh, 2017)? It is also posited that the film underscores the superiority of the privileged Western world. This illustrates how audiences perceive a text from various perspectives and derive meaning based on their cultural and political backgrounds.

Oriental perspective

The biopic *Lion* represents binaries such as poor/rich, east/west, and white/black. This study examines these representations concerning Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978). Said (1978) states that the Western portrayal of the East is often ideologically influenced. The film *Lion* is primarily about a lost child, yet several factors exacerbate the biased representation of the aforementioned binaries. For instance, the absence of a narrator is significant; in the case of the book (*A Long Way Home*, 2013), viewers feel sympathy for the narrator, namely the author. However, in the film, the director (an Australian) emerges as the predominant authorial voice. It is presumed that much of the Eastern portrayal emphasises the adverse aspects of the East, perpetuated by various Western authors through an ideological lens (Said, 1978). Additionally, the first half of the movie is set in India due to the narrative’s requirements. The protagonist, according to the memoir (2013), originally hails from the impoverished suburbs of India and, after becoming lost, encounters severe challenges in Calcutta, including child trafficking, filthy streets, and neglected orphanages. The extensive first half vividly depicts the protagonist’s experiences and inevitably serves as a commentary on the poor living conditions in India. The second half contrasts this with Saroo’s affluent life in Australia with his well-off adoptive parents. The opulent Australian landscape, along with Saroo’s transformed life of privilege, starkly contrasts with the impoverished Indian lifestyle, particularly owing to the film’s powerful visuals. Furthermore, the first half of the film is in Hindi, while the second half employs Australian-accented English, and the memoir is exclusively in English. Although the choice to use Hindi appears suitable given the story’s context, it unintentionally suggests the superiority of English over Hindi, especially as Saroo (the protagonist) is depicted as no longer able to speak Hindi.

Another important factor that contributed to heightening this impression is the scene in which Saroo’s adoptive mother discusses her vision of adopting black children. The scene does not adequately address the complexities of adoption, as Saroo’s adoptive mother’s background is described in detail in the memoir (2013). Viewers perceive it as a demonstration of white people’s superiority over black individuals; however, it is worth noting that Saroo was actually adopted by white parents. Additionally, the caption about child kidnapping in India at the end of the film emphasises only the negative aspects of India, even though this is based on truth. It is significant to mention that the filmmakers, including the director and screenwriter, collaborated with the real characters from the memoir (Davis & Davies, 2017). They specifically interacted with the author, Saroo Brierley, to discuss, understand, and clarify the true spirit of his story while working on the project. Therefore, his lack of reservations cannot be overlooked.

As for the memoir, it does not seem biased concerning the representation of binaries. While Saroo’s story centres on his difficult times in India and his privileged life in Australia, it does not criticise the poor living conditions in India. One major factor could be that Saroo, the author, is an Indian-born Australian. Another significant reason is his straightforward and candid style of writing. He does not strive to create anything fanciful but rather describes his personal experiences in an informative way to provide insight into how families in the Third

World endure and, in some ways, survive their poverty (Dempsey, 2013, para. 4). While detailing his privileged life in Australia, he does not neglect to inform the reader about the emotional conflicts caused by his troubling childhood memories and his fascination with Indian land. This is why the memoir reads as a heroic and inspirational tale of struggle, survival, humanity, and family values, rather than emphasising the contrasts between poor and rich, black and white, or East and West.

Though we do encounter descriptions of Indian and Australian lifestyles as well as landscapes in the memoir, the honest and simple manner of writing does not accentuate the stark contrast between East and West, as portrayed through the visuals in the film. Saroo's (*A Long Way Home*, 2013) detailed account of his adoptive mother's background and her views on adopting black children (pp. 48-52) fosters a better understanding of her character as an individual. It contributes to diminishing the perceived superiority of Western caretakers over the East. Moreover, the book concludes with a reflective note that resonates universally: "It is sometimes difficult not to imagine some forces at work that are beyond my understanding. While I don't have any urge to convert that into religious belief, I feel strongly that from my being a little lost boy with no family to becoming a man with two, everything was meant to happen just the way it happened. And I am profoundly humbled by that thought" (Brierley, 2013, p. 101).

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to analyse the biopic *Lion* from the perspective of adaptation. For this reason, Hutcheon's concept of adaptation (2013), the systemic model of film adaptation (Yau, 2016), and Said's (1978) Orientalism have been considered for analysis. The analysis indicates that the film succeeds as an adaptation of the memoir despite its shortcomings. In addition, amendments made to fulfil cinematographic requirements render it more effective and visually appealing, while these changes do not disrupt the reception of the real story. Additionally, it seems to be a faithful adaptation that emphasizes repetition over mere replication. This finding aligns with Anjum's (2020) investigation into the film's fidelity, emphasising that it largely resonates with the details presented in the book. Regarding the representation of binaries, it seems biased towards the Indian audience. In conclusion, both reviewers and spectators are actively engaged in meaning-making, with their perceptions varying due to political, ideological, and cultural factors that cannot be dismissed. However, cinema as an institution needs to focus on highlighting the achievements of successful Indians, whether in Hollywood, Australian, or Bollywood films (Parikh, 2017), as a movie or television adaptation will attract an audience of many millions more (Seger 1992: 5 as referenced by Hutcheon, 2013, p. 5).

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