



UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

The South African Voice in South African Animation:

A critical examination, via the case study approach, of the South African animation industry and its commitment to representing a local Identity

By

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DECLARATION

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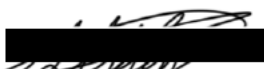
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Abstract

A critical analysis of the South African identity in South African animation, focusing on the representation of a South African identity within the animation. The study looks at contemporary South African animations, both, television series and feature films examining the visual language, narratives, themes, and use of language within the animations as well as the key developments within South African animation. The majority of the inquiry is seen through a qualitative collective case study approach looking primarily at the analysis of *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* by Jonas Lekganyane *Seal Team (2021)* by Triggerfish, followed by a practice-led reflection analysis on the creation of *Midnight Escapade*. The study is guided by the social identity theory relative to animations' ability to represent social and cultural identities. Through this analysis, an attempt will be made to assess the current state of representation within South African animation and whether it represents a uniquely South African Identity while attempting to answer the question; to what extent does South African animation explore cultural themes of identity and representation unique to South Africa?

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Introduction

This research endeavours to critically analyse the landscape of the South African animation Industry. The study aims to examine selected studio-based animations produced in South Africa and analyse the extent to which locally produced animation presents a uniquely South African voice. In this regard, the exploration will consider case studies from 1915 to the present, focusing on the evolution of themes of representation and identity and how this has changed over the years.

In an attempt to answer the main research question – “to what extent does South African animation explore cultural themes of identity and representation unique to South Africa?” - it is vital to look at animations created by South Africans. This begins with a historic overview of South African animation, starting from 1915 to post-apartheid works and then proceeding to contemporary case studies. It is also important to examine the content of the animations in order to determine if themes of representation, culture, and identity are visible within the animation and to examine how these themes have evolved. This includes character and environmental design, narrative, and themes. The study aims to illuminate the identity of the animation industry in the country and better understand what the South African voice in animation is. The term 'voice' is used metaphorically in the study to articulate how a South African identity is visually and narratively represented within the animation. The theme of representation is not only examined within the content of the animation but also with the workforce that creates the animation answering a sub-question – who creates the animation and who are they creating it for?

I will apply a qualitative methodological line of research, primarily looking at a collective case study approach. This concerns the exploration of multiple case studies, an approach which aims to facilitate a holistic, all-embracing illumination of the research question (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The case studies will be evaluated on the various ways in which they, visually, thematically, and linguistically identify and represent a unique South African voice. The case studies include the television series *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), *Supa Strikas* (2008) and *Magic Cellar* (2006) and the feature film *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012) and *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020). The main case studies used to examine how South African animation represents a South African identity are *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) by Jonas Lekganyane and *Seal Team* (2021) by Triggerfish. This study will also reflect on my time as an intern at Katanimate Studio, where we created a short, animated film titled *Midnight Escapade*. The research methodology will include a practice-led approach which will be adopted in a reflective chapter on *Midnight Escapade*. Practice-led research looks at examining practical works to garner new information that enhances our understanding of the practice as well as the practical application (Candy, 2006). Thus, through the lens of the main research question and sub-question, these case studies will be examined and contrasted, with the hope of understanding and identifying whether a unique South African identity is represented.

Chapter 1 Literature Review and theoretical framework

This first chapter will provide an overview of the literature review that guides this study as well as lay a foundation to build upon to further the study. The literature includes South African studies that look either at South African Media and the industry as a whole or that look specifically into the South African animations and their roles in representing a South African identity. This section also reviews texts that illuminate the broader theoretical and conceptual ideas relating to representation, and that have this guided study. Representation is broken down into three important sub-theories in this chapter which are representation in media, stereotyping, and representation in animation looking at theorists like David Buckingham, Walter Lippmann, and Paul Wells.

Chapter 2: An Examination of Representation within the History and Theory of Animation

This chapter comprises a brief overview of representation within the animation industry in the West. It does not attempt a history of this theme but focuses on key examples that tackle notions of representation. This chapter mainly focuses on Western animation (and the US) as it is the region that has impacted most profoundly the South African animation industry. Notably, this chapter analyzes how the representation of different social groups has evolved within Western animation and the various features that promote representation.

Chapter 3: South African Animation: A case study examination of the Evolution of Representation in SA animation film and television series from 1915 to the Present

This section locates key examples that illuminate the research aims by exploring a collective case study approach. This chapter dives into the South African animation industry, looking at multiple case studies, giving a historical and thematic overview of how representation has evolved within the television and film industry from the early 20th to the present. The chapter further explores the representation in contemporary South African animations looking at *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), *Supa Strikas* (2008) and *Magic Cellar* (2006) and the feature film *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012) and *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020).

Chapter 4: Key Developments within the South African Animation Industry and the Impact on Representation

This chapter examines the South African animation industry's current climate, looking at key developments shaping the industry. This includes developments around globalisation, insourcing and outsourcing, post-colonialism and the impact of these developments as they pertain to South African animation. The section also looks at the emerging notion of 'Afrimation'¹ and how this relates to the topic.

Chapter 6. Representation of SA Identity: Detailed Analysis of *Seal Team* (2021) and The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)

¹ Afrimation refers to African Animation made by Africans primarily for an African Audience

This chapter examines the paper's primary case studies *Seal Team (2021)* and *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)*. These case studies are examined primarily on their content and whether it represents a South African Identity. This includes a look at the visuals, narratives, themes, use of language and cultural references. This chapter concludes with a comparison of the two case studies highlighting how in their own way represent a South African Identity.

Chapter 7: A practice-led analysis of *Midnight Escapade*

This chapter reflects on the practical experience I gained from working within the South African animation industry. In particular, it reflects on the production of the short animation *Midnight Escapade*. The chapter begins by analysing the film and how it came to be made, then followed with an examination of the roles I played in its creation.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Animation in South Africa has grown and developed as the country's social climate has developed. In the past few decades, animation has become more diverse and representative of different cultures and identities within the country. This study stands on the backdrop of literature that has explored the notion of representation within the media and specifically the medium of animation. The literature review focuses on representation and animation in South Africa locating texts that explore this theme and the industry both historically and in terms of specific case studies. It also looks at literature that investigates this theme in a broader context of screen media. Importantly this review considers commentators who provide historical, critical, and analytical viewpoints that include the diverse ways in which contemporary media (including animation) challenge dominant and historical cultural perspectives around representation. The literature review also includes the key texts and commentators the study drew on for the theoretical framework.

1.1.1 Critical and historical perspectives of Representation in South African Media

Representation and identity in South African media has several facets. In the context of this research, Christine Singer and Alexia Smit are two researchers that inform and help guide this study. Singer's (2017) paper titled *Transitional Narratives: Youth and Screen Media in Contemporary South Africa (1994-2014)* investigates the role of screen media in shaping the identity of South African youth in the post-apartheid era. Smit's paper, *Relatedly, Intimacy, Identity, and Home: 40 Years of South African Television (2016)* discusses South Africa's television history, including the exclusion the country faced during the early days of television in South Africa based on its apartheid climate at the time (Bendazzi, 2015). Singer's study analyses various media forms, including film, television, and video games. It argues that these narratives offer a transitional space for young people to negotiate their cultural identity and imagine alternative futures. The 'youth' in this study refers to the "born-free" generation, meaning those born after the end of apartheid in 1994 (Singer, 2017, p20). The study explores the relationship between screen media and the experiences of South African youth during the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. It begins by providing a contextual background on South Africa's political history, outlining the systemic oppression and racial segregation that characterised the country's apartheid regime.

Whereas Smit's article further explores the post-apartheid era of South African television, looking at how it has changed to shape and reflect the country's social, cultural, and political landscape. Smit argues that television has significantly shaped and reflected the country's identity and sense of place throughout its history. Through these themes, she tracks the changes and developments of South African television. One of the key ways in which television has portrayed an evolving sense of identity is through themes of intimacy and through its representation of relationships and social dynamics. Smit notes that early South African television often depicted white families in suburban settings, which reinforced a sense of homogeneity and exclusion of other groups. However, as the country's social and political landscape changed, so did the television portrayal of relationships. Smit notes that more recent television shows have depicted a broader range of relationships, including interracial and same-sex couples. Relatedly, Smit examines the theme of home in South African television. She notes that early television in the country depicted a narrow and exclusionary concept of home, which reflected the dominant ideology of apartheid. However, as the country has changed,

so has the home representation on television. Smit argues that more recent television shows have depicted a broader range of homes and families, which reflects the country's growing diversity and changing social norms. An essential television show that tackles the theme of home in the study is *Kumbule'Khaya* (SABC, 2012) which follows the journey of real South Africans searching for their long-lost relatives and reuniting families.

Smit discusses the role of television in promoting social change and transformation in South Africa. Television has been used as a tool for education, awareness-raising, and social activism, challenging the status quo and advocating for social justice and equality. Television shows such as *Yizo Yizo* (Mahlatsi et al., 1999) and *Intersexions* (Sisanda Henna, 2010) tackled taboo topics such as HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and gender-based violence, sparking public debates and challenging societal norms. Smit notes that television has the power to shape public opinion and influence social change, making it a critical tool in the struggle for democracy and human rights (Smit, 2016, p4).

With the discussion of representation and identity in media, Singer highlights the importance of understanding the impact of screen media on youth during the transition to democracy, given that this period was marked by significant social, cultural, and political change. Singer argues that screen media played a crucial role in shaping the experiences and identities of young South Africans during this transitional period. She also conducts several interviews to contextualise her research with directors, writers, producers, and other film subjects. Through her analysis of the interviews, she identifies three main themes that emerged in relation to the impact of screen media on youth: the representation of youth in screen media, the role of screen media in shaping identity, and the impact of screen media on social relationships. One of the study's key findings is that screen media significantly shaped how young South Africans understood their identities in the post-apartheid era. Singer notes that young people use screen media to explore and articulate their identities in a context of significant political, cultural, and social change. She argues that youth representation in screen media was significant in this regard, as young people sought to see themselves reflected in the media they consumed. Singer also highlights screen media's role in shaping social relationships among young South Africans during the transitional period. She notes that screen media provided a shared cultural reference point that allowed young people to connect with one another across cultural and linguistic divides. This was particularly important in a context where there was significant social and cultural fragmentation due to apartheid. Singer asserts that the media can reinforce, and challenge dominant cultural narratives and that representing diverse perspectives and experiences is essential for building a more inclusive society. Chapter four takes this perspective into account, noting the skewed and lack of representation for the majority of South Africa's population during the early days of animation and during the apartheid era. These perspectives of representation are discussed in context with the evolution of animation from the Apartheid era to the post-apartheid era. They are further discussed within the context of the South African Animation industry and how they attempt to challenge and redress the notions of representation in a more inclusive and diverse manner.

Identity is a central theme that Smit explores in her article. She notes that television has significantly shaped and reflected South African identity over the past four decades. In particular, she focuses on the representation of black South Africans on television, which has undergone significant changes over time. Smit argues that early television in South Africa was marked by a lack of representation of black South Africans, reinforcing the dominant apartheid ideology. However, there has been a greater emphasis on diversity and representation on television in the post-apartheid era, with a growing number of black South Africans in leading roles. Smit also refers to Adam de Beer's article, *Animating a South African identity? The case of URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2016) looks at

the medium of animation and its role in reshaping reality and telling stories closely linked to South African and African cultures.

1.1.2 Historical Perspectives of Identity in South African Animation

Looking at South African animations and how they fit in with themes of identity the paper explores written works by Adam de Beer, Pfunzo Sidogi and Kelly Walker. De Beer's aforementioned article on animating an African identity explores the representation of a South African identity, post-apartheid, in the animated television series *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), which aired on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) from 2006 to 2009. The author examines how the series attempts to construct a new inclusive national identity that reflects South Africa's diversity. De Beer's analysis of *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006) is organised around three key themes: representation, identity, and diversity. In terms of representation, De Beer notes that the series presents a positive image of South Africa, showcasing the country's natural beauty and cultural richness. The series also promotes a sense of national pride, emphasising the importance of working together for the common good. In terms of identity, De Beer argues that the series constructs a specific South African identity that is inclusive of different cultural groups. Finally, in terms of diversity, De Beer notes that the series is notable for representing a range of different cultural groups, including black, white, and Indian characters. De Beer argues that this representation reflects the reality of contemporary South Africa, where diversity is an important aspect of national identity. Pfunzo Sidogi's article, *(South) Africa's online animation revolution: the case of Jonas Lekganyane's The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2021), is an article that speaks on how black South African comic artists find alternative methods to get their work to the mainstream media other than through official publications while also exploring the emerging trend of online animation in South Africa. The article specifically focuses on the popular animated YouTube series, *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013), created by South African animator Jonas Lekganyane. Kelly Walker's research paper, *A Comparative Analysis of the Transition from Stop-Motion to CG Animation at Two South African Studios: Sunrise and Triggerfish* (2019), on the other hand, provides a detailed examination of how two South African animation studios, Sunrise and Triggerfish, have transitioned from using stop-motion animation to computer-generated (CG) animation. The paper offers insights into the challenges and opportunities that come with such a transition, as well as the broader context of the animation industry in South Africa. The research was conducted using a comparative case study approach, where the two studios were analysed and compared to identify similarities and differences in their experiences with the transition (Walker, 2019).

Looking specifically at identity in South African animation, De Beer discusses how the creators of *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006) attempted to contribute to this process by creating a superhero who embodies a new South African identity. De Beer also analyses the narrative structure of the series, focusing on how it constructs the character of Pax Afrika and his relationships with other characters. The author argues that Pax Afrika represents a new kind of hero, one who is not based on Western archetypes but instead reflects the unique cultural and social context of South Africa. Pax Afrika is depicted as a leader who brings together people from different backgrounds to fight against a common enemy, thus promoting unity and social cohesion. De Beer also examines the visual style of the series, which blends traditional African art with contemporary animation techniques. De Beer argues that this combination creates a visual language that is uniquely South African and helps reinforce the message of a new national identity. The author notes, however, that there are also elements of the series that draw on Western animation styles, such as the use of humour and exaggerated character designs. In addition to analysing the series' content, De Beer also

discusses the reception of *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006) by audiences and critics. The author notes that the series received mixed reviews, with some praising its attempt to create a new national identity. At the same time, others criticised it for being too derivative of Western animation styles. De Beer argues that the mixed reception of the series reflects the ongoing debate in South Africa about what a new national identity should look like and how it should be constructed. De Beer's arguments and perspective on the animation provide context and a foundation for how to view the series and similar animations of the time as well as provide a guide to how to examine the two primary case studies, *Seal Team* (2021) and *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013).

Sidogi looks at the topic from a different lens and begins by providing a brief background on the history of animation in Africa, highlighting the challenges African animators face due to limited resources and a need for recognition within the global animation industry. The author notes that the emergence of online platforms, such as YouTube, has provided a new avenue for African animators to showcase their work and reach a global audience. The article then delves into the case study of *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba*, an animated series that has gained significant popularity in South Africa and beyond. Sidogi examines the various factors that have contributed to the success of the series, including its relatable characters, humour, and social commentary on contemporary issues in South Africa, all which make the series easy for South Africans to identify with. The author also notes the role of social media in promoting the series and creating a community of fans (Sidogi, 2021, p703). The article also highlights the importance of addressing social and political issues in South African animation. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* is an example of how animation can be used to address complex issues in an engaging and accessible way. The use of local vernacular and cultural references also contributes to the popularity and relevance of the show, highlighting the importance of cultural specificity in South African animation. Sidogi notes that while online animation presents its own set of challenges, such as limited funding and resources, it also offers unique opportunities for innovation and experimentation. The author notes that *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) success has paved the way for other African animators to showcase their work and have their voices heard. The article concludes by discussing the potential of online animation in South Africa and its ability to provide a platform for underrepresented voices and perspectives. (Sidogi, 2021). Sidogi's article on *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) analyses the show, the animation industry, and representation broadly. This paves the way for examining the show as a case study in this paper to focus on the contents of the show, the animation, narratives, designs, and themes explored within the episodes.

Walker begins the paper by providing a background on the animation industry in South Africa, highlighting the country's unique position as a hub for animation production in the African continent. The paper also discusses the challenges faced by the industry, including limited funding and resources, a need for more local talent and infrastructure, and competition from established animation industries in Europe and North America. The paper then goes on to contextualise animation's historical and cultural significance in South Africa and highlights the industry's growth over the years. It then delves into the specifics of the transition from stop-motion to CG animation, comparing the two studios' narratives, aesthetics, and designs (Walker, 2019). In terms of narrative, the paper notes that Sunrise and Triggerfish began their animation journeys by producing short films heavily influenced by South African culture and folklore. However, as they transitioned to CG animation, the narratives shifted towards more universal themes and stories that could appeal to a global audience. Regarding aesthetics, the paper notes that while the tactile, handmade feel characterised Sunrise's stop-motion animation, Triggerfish's CG animation was more polished and slick. However, the paper also notes that both studios retained a unique visual style influenced by their South African roots within their stop-motion animations. The paper also compares the design

of the characters and backgrounds in the CG animation produced by Sunrise and Triggerfish with international designs, noting that while the studios have successfully adapted to the demands of the international market, they have also attempted to maintain their unique South African identity in their animation.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the broader implications of the transition from stop-motion to CG animation for the animation industry in South Africa. The author argues that the successful transition of Sunrise and Triggerfish is a sign of the industry's resilience and growth potential, despite its challenges. The paper also highlights the need for continued investment in the industry, particularly in terms of developing local talent and infrastructure, in order to ensure its long-term sustainability. This study feeds into the paper's collective case study approach, as the animations referenced are primarily from either Triggerfish or Sunrise Productions.

The five works of literature all examine South African media, including live-action works and animation, but specifically look into how the different media related to South African and South African identities and cultures are represented on the screen. The literature also examines specific animated films and series through various themes, including identity, representation, diversity, and home. They also examine the visual aesthetics of the animation pieces and how they compare to South African and international visual identities. The literature provides context and a base upon which the research builds, allowing for a more focused look into how identity is represented within contemporary South African animation.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework focuses on the following key theories: the Social Identity Theory² seen through Richard Jenkins as well as Representation, specifically in animation seen through Paul Wells. These two theories make up the main structure on which the study is based. The combination of the two theories encourages the examination of stereotyping when looking at how the social identities are represented in the animations. This can be seen as a sub-theory primarily seen through Walter Lippmann, an American journalist and political commentator.

1.2.1 Representation and Identity

This study focuses on representing the identity of a shared group of people within the South African animation industry. Social identity (Social Identity Theory) and representation are the main theories that drive this research. In its broadest sense, social identity can be read from multiple angles ranging from the individual to social group, nationality, gender, race, etc. Richard Jenkins mentions that people find identity, and collective identification, within each other through a shared experience (Jenkins, 2014). Within this research, I will use the theory of identity to examine whether people in South Africa, as individuals or in groups, can find a sense of belonging or relatability within the animated content produced in South Africa. Social Identity, as discussed by Richard Jenkins and the South African Identity are the

² Social Identity Theory - SIT

two sub-themes that will drive the research forward as one will influence the other. South Africa, having a colourful history with a multifaceted mix of people, cultures, beliefs, and religions, all while in different social standings ranging from extreme poverty to abundance of wealth, has a layered sense of identity, and as such, there needs to be content, both television series and film, that the people of South Africa can identify with.

The theory of representation within this research works in tandem with the themes of Social Identity and South African Identity as one will influence the other, respectively.

Representation within media is a theory that cannot be examined alone but with the overall theory of Identity and stereotyping. David Buckingham's *Introducing Identity* (2008) study examines identity and how media represents specific identities. Walter Lippmann is the primary theorist that gives a foundation to look at stereotyping from his book *Public Opinion* (1922). The concept of representation, like identity, includes various meanings and applications (Vieira, Runciman, 2008), from gender to age to race to profession, to name a few. We also have to look at animation as a medium and its ability to be representative. Paul Wells is the primary theorist that contextualises our understanding of the representation of animation within the research as he looks at the representation theory channeled within the medium of animation.

1.2.2 Social Identity in Media

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a theoretical framework that explains how individuals develop their sense of self in relation to their social groups. Developed by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s, SIT suggests that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from their group memberships. This social identity influences their attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of others (Hogg, 2016). According to SIT, social identity is based on two types of categorisations: personal and social. Personal identity refers to the unique characteristics that define an individual as a distinct person. Social identity, on the other hand, refers to the characteristics that define an individual as a member of a particular social group, such as race, gender, nationality, religion, class, or profession. Social identity is based on social categorisation, the process by which individuals sort themselves and others into categories based on shared characteristics (Jenkins, 2014). Richard Jenkins' conceptualisation of social identity provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals define themselves and others based on social categories. Social identity is a dynamic process that involves categorisation, identification, and comparison and is shaped by the social context in which it occurs. Power relations are inherent in social identity and significantly affect individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. Understanding social identity is essential for promoting social justice and equality in society.

According to Jenkins, social identity is a dynamic process that involves three interrelated components: categorisation, identification, and comparison. Categorisation refers to placing individuals into social categories based on observable characteristics such as race, gender, class, etc. These categories serve as a basis for defining oneself and others. Identification refers to the process of adopting a social identity that corresponds to one's social category. The comparison refers to the process of evaluating one's social identity in relation to others.

Jenkins notes that social categorisation leads to social identity, which creates social comparisons that may produce positive (or negative) self-evaluations (Jenkins, 2014). Jenkins argues that social identity is not fixed or innate but instead is constructed and reconstructed through social interactions. Social identity is also not a purely individual phenomenon but is shaped by the social context in which it occurs. Social context refers to the social and cultural norms, values, and beliefs that shape the way individuals define themselves and others. SIT also puts forward that individuals derive self-esteem from their group memberships, which is based on the social status and perceived value of the group in society. Individuals are motivated to maintain a positive social identity by favouring their in-group over out-groups, which can lead to intergroup conflict and discrimination. This process is known as social categorisation and social comparison, the process by which individuals compare their in-groups to out-groups to establish their relative social status (Jenkins, 2014). SIT has been applied to various social phenomena, including intergroup conflict, prejudice, discrimination, and social influence. It has also been used to understand how individuals form and maintain their political and national identities and how media representation can impact their sense of self.

SIT has essential implications for understanding how media representation can shape social identity. Media content portraying certain social groups positively can enhance individuals' self-esteem, promoting positive social identity and social inclusion. In contrast, negative or stereotypical media content can lead to internalised oppression, negative social identity and social exclusion (Jenkins, 2014). Understanding the role of media representation in social identity formation can inform strategies for promoting positive social change and challenging dominant cultural narratives and stereotypes (Hogg, 2016).

1.2.3 Representation in Media

Media representation plays a crucial role in shaping social identity. The media can influence how individuals perceive themselves and others through its content and discourse and help reinforce or challenge cultural norms and stereotypes. David Buckingham, in his 2008 book *Introducing Identity*, argues, media representations are not just images of the world, but also shape the world in which we live (Buckingham, 2008, p18). For example, media representations of disabled individuals as inspirational or heroic can promote positive social identity and challenge disability stereotypes. In contrast, media representations of disabled individuals as helpless or pitiable can contribute to negative social identity and reinforce ableist attitudes (Forrest, 2013).

Furthermore, media representation can also influence social identity through its role in constructing and maintaining power relations. The media has the power to shape public opinion and influence policy decisions, which can have significant implications for the social identity of marginalised groups. Media representation can challenge or reinforce the dominant cultural narratives and power structures contributing to oppression and marginalisation. Positive media representations of social groups can contribute to positive social identity and self-esteem. For example, media representations of women as strong, competent, and independent can promote positive social identity and challenge gender

stereotypes. Similarly, media representations of racial and ethnic minorities as successful professionals or heroes can promote positive social identity and challenge racial stereotypes. Negative media representations of social groups can contribute to negative social identity and internalised oppression. For example, media representations of women as sexual objects or as subordinate to men can lead to negative social identity and internalised sexism among women. Similarly, media representations of racial and ethnic minorities as criminals or inferior to the dominant group can lead to negative social identity and internalised racism among these groups. For example, media representation of Indigenous peoples as savage or primitive can contribute to negative social identity and perpetuate colonialism. In contrast, media representation that promotes Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty can promote positive social identity and challenge colonialism (Jenkins, 2014). Another example can be seen through the media representation of Muslims as terrorists can lead to negative social identity and contribute to Islamophobia. In contrast, media representation of Muslims as diverse and complex individuals can promote positive social identity and challenge stereotypes (Fearon, 1999).

To further examine representation in media, we have closer examine stereotyping. To do so, we look at Walter Lippmann. Walter Lippmann was an influential American journalist and political commentator who wrote about the role of mass media in shaping public opinion (Lippmann, 1922). In his book *Public Opinion* (1922), Lippmann defined stereotyping as creating oversimplified and exaggerated mental images of a particular group of people based on limited or incomplete information (Lippmann, 1922,). Lippmann states that these stereotypes often serve as shortcuts for understanding and interpreting the world. Still, they can also lead to misunderstandings and prejudice (Lippmann, 1922) as individuals categorise individuals or groups into certain roles, behaviours, or characteristics based on prior experiences and limited information. He also argued that the mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion by transmitting stereotypes to a large and diverse audience (Lippmann, 1922). He believed that the media often perpetuates stereotypes by presenting a limited and biased perspective of particular groups of people, which becomes society's dominant perception (Lippmann, 1922). For example, the media may present a stereotypical image of a particular ethnic group as criminals or violent, leading the public to form negative opinions about that group (Lippmann, 1922). The impact of media on stereotypes has been the subject of much research and debate (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Entman, 1993). Some researchers have argued that exposure to media can reinforce existing stereotypes and lead to more significant prejudice and discrimination (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), while others have suggested that media can also challenge and change stereotypes by presenting a more nuanced and diverse perspective (Entman, 1993).

Sisanda Henna et al. (2010) provide another example of the power of media representation in shaping social identity through their television series *Intersexions* (2010). *Intersexions* (2010) is a South African television series that addresses issues of HIV/AIDS and sexual identity. The series features a diverse cast of characters from different socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and genders, challenging traditional cultural norms and stereotypes around gender and sexuality (Sisanda Henna et al., 2010). The series has been praised for its ability to promote positive social identity among LGBTQ+ individuals and challenge the stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS. *Intersexions* (2010) has contributed to forming a more inclusive and equitable society by representing complex and diverse characters. The

series portrays intersex individuals as complex and nuanced individuals with their own unique experiences and challenges, challenging the dominant binary narrative of gender. The show also portrays the intersection of social identities, including race, ethnicity, and sexuality, promoting a holistic view of identity. By challenging dominant stereotypes and promoting inclusivity and acceptance, *Intersexions (2010)* promotes a positive sense of social identity and promotes positive social change.

Khumbul'ekhaya (2012), which translates to "Remember Home," is a South African television series that focuses on reuniting families who have been separated due to various historical events, such as forced removals during the apartheid era. The series has been praised for bringing people together and promoting positive social identity among previously divided communities (SABC, 2006). Through its representation of diverse South African cultural identities and histories, *Khumbul'ekhaya (2012)* promotes positive social identity and challenges the negative legacy of apartheid (SABC, 2006). The show's focus on family connections and cultural heritage helps to create a sense of community and belonging among its viewers, while its discussion of the impact of apartheid on families promotes awareness and empathy.

These live-action shows highlight the importance of media representation in shaping social identity. Through their representation of historical events and diverse characters, *Khumbul'ekhaya (2012)* and *Intersexions (2010)* have contributed to forming a positive social identity and promoting social cohesion and inclusivity. However, it is important to note that media representation can also negatively affect social identity when it perpetuates stereotypes and reinforces oppressive power structures. It is also important to note that adult audiences primarily viewed these shows based on the content they covered. Therefore to promote positive representation for younger audiences, it is important to examine animation as a medium for representation. Though the animation is largely aimed at younger audiences, it is not limited to younger audiences and adult audiences can be influenced by the representation showcased within the content.

1.2.4 Representation in Animation

Looking at the idea of representation in animation, we have to look at key theorists who have researched it thoroughly. One such theorist in this area is Paul Wells, who has written about the representation of race and ethnicity in animation. Wells notes that animation has often been used to construct and reinforce stereotypes of racial and ethnic groups, particularly through the use of offensive and stereotypical character designs. However, he also argues that animation can be used to challenge these stereotypes and provide more nuanced and positive representations of racial and ethnic groups. For people or a group to feel represented within media or animation, there is an element or character within the animation that they identify with. Jane Baktin, another theorist in this discourse, raises the question, how can one apply identity to something as elusive as animation? (Batkin, 2017, p. 1) Animation is the illusion of life and could never compete with the real thing, but that is not a negative thing as it presents new possibilities that other mediums, like film, cannot. It

can be moulded, manipulated, and exaggerated to emphasise topics, emotions, themes, etc. Animation also allows for the personification of inanimate objects and animals. This then allows for more possibilities of representation within an animation. (Wells, 1998) (Thomas et al., 1995) (Batkin, 2017)

Paul Wells has made significant contributions to our understanding of representation in animation. His work has highlighted the importance of considering the cultural, social, and political context in which animated content is produced and consumed. Wells has also emphasised the role of authorship and genre conventions in shaping the interpretation and reception of animated content. In a study of identity and representation in animation, it is important to examine animation beyond its entertainment value. Representation in animation is a crucial element in creating and consuming animated content. In his 1998 book *Understanding Animation (1998)*, Paul Wells argues that animation is a medium that is inherently concerned with representation and the construction of meaning (Wells, 1998). He suggests that animation can be understood as a form of visual language that relies on various visual and audio signifiers to convey meaning. Wells argues that animation is not just a technique but a cultural practice that offers a distinct mode of representation. He posits that animation has a wide range of potentialities, from exploring the mind's inner workings to expressing political commentary and conveying cultural ideologies. As a result, animation has been able to cross geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, making it a global art form (Wells, 1998).

According to Wells, animation can be seen as a means of representation that can reflect and reinforce dominant cultural, social, and political values (Wells, 1998). He argues that animation can reflect the values and beliefs of the culture that produces it, but it can also challenge and subvert these values. Wells suggests that the representation of gender, race, and ethnicity in animation is an important study area, as it can reflect and reinforce existing power structures and social norms. In his work *Animation: Genre and Authorship (2002)*, Wells poses that animation can be used to express a wide range of genres, including comedy, horror, science fiction, and fantasy. He argues that genre conventions can provide a framework for understanding the meaning and significance of animation. Wells suggests that authorship in animation can take different forms, from the individual animator to the studio or production team. He argues that authorship is important because it can influence how animated content is produced and consumed. The author's identity can also shape the meaning and interpretation of animated content, as audiences may bring their own expectations and assumptions based on the author's reputation and past work. This links to the overall representation of the animation as it is then tied to the creators, and that extends to the nationality of the creators. He further argues that the authorship of animation is often a collective process that involves a team of animators, writers, and directors who work together to create a distinct style and identity for the animation. Authorship can also be used to establish a personal signature in animation, which can be recognised across different genres and mediums. (Wells, 2002).

In *Re-imagining Animation: The Changing Face of the Moving Image*, Wells and Hardstaff (2008) explore how animation has evolved and continues to change in response to technological advancements and cultural shifts. They argue that animation has moved beyond the traditional forms of commercial 2D and 3D animation and now includes a range

of techniques such as stop-motion animation, motion graphics, and computer-generated imagery. They also argue that the increased availability of digital tools and technologies has opened up new possibilities for animation, allowing for greater experimentation and innovation. They further put forward that animation has become increasingly hybridised with live-action cinema, creating new opportunities for representation in animation. They also argue that animation is becoming more socially and politically engaged as animators use the medium to comment on contemporary issues and challenge dominant cultural narratives.

Paul Wells' theories on animation allow us to explore animation not just as a medium but as a tool that could be used to represent people with different means of identification. We can see examples of this through American animation, specifically the CalArts style³ (California Institute of the Arts). (Poitras, 2014) The style has an American identity with American history attached to it and will serve as an example while examining South African Animations. Visual style alone does not give CalArts its American identity, but the narratives, themes and cultural representation of American life enhance the American identity within the animation. (Poitras, 2014) Overall, social identity and representation are theories that play a critical role in animation identity and will shape the study of South African animation. It looks at how people form identities as individuals and within a group and how they are represented within the media they consume. The research will look at if South Africans or South Africa are represented within the animated content created in South Africa and if the content is created for a South African target audience. In order to accurately examine that, it is important to examine the case studies of this research parallel to the theories of social identity and representation.

1.2.5 Chapter 1 Conclusion

This chapter looked at literature that represented the historical perspective on representation in South African media and animation as well as the theoretical framework, both of which form the foundation on which the study of the identity of South African animation will be built. Christine Singer's (2017) paper titled *Transitional Narratives: Youth and Screen Media in Contemporary South Africa (1994-2014)* and Alexia Smit's *Relatedly, Intimacy, Identity, and Home: 40 Years of South African Television (2016)* Are two pieces of literature where the authors studied the relationship between media and post-apartheid youth within South Africa, referred to as the born-free generation. Singer argues that media played a significant role in shaping the identities of this youth in South Africa. In contrast, Smit goes into detail and examines the themes explored in South African television, which the youth and the rest of South Africa were exposed to. This relates to this study as it aims to identify the South African identity in animation by looking at how South African animation represents and reflects on the South African people, primarily youth, that consume the medium. De Beer's *Animating a South African Identity? The case of Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Africa* (2016) and Pfunzo Sidogi's article *(South) Africa's online animation Revolution: the case of Jonas Lekganyane's The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2021) looked specifically at animations of the time and provide literature that this research aims to build

³ California Institute of the Arts, also became the name of an animation style that originated in the school

upon, providing more context to the conversation around the South African identity in animation. Kelly Walker's research paper, *A Comparative Analysis of the Transition from Stop-Motion to CG Animation at Two South African Studios: Sunrise and Triggerfish* provided context about the two studios that have been at the forefront of creating contemporary South African animation as well as bridging the gap in terms of understanding history and the animation industry in the country. This chapter also examined the study's theoretical framework, which mainly follows two theorists, Richard Jenkins and Paul Wells, and the literature in which they explored their theories. This chapter also examined the idea of stereotyping, looking at Walter Lippmann's writing as a guide. Richard Jenkins provided context on the social identity theory, and his work will guide how the content in the rest of the study will be examined. Paul Wells provided the framework of representation in animation on which this study stands. Overall, this chapter's examination of literature and theoretical frameworks provided a stable guide for the study.

Chapter 2: An Examination of Representation within the History and Theory of Animation

2.1 Overview

With a focus on Western animation, this chapter provides an overview of the evolution of representation in animation over time, from its earliest days to the present. Examining animation's records of representation is important as it provides a foundation to base and build upon when examining how South African animation tackles representation. Animation has a long and complex history, spanning over a century of development and evolution. As a medium that has been historically used to entertain and inform audiences of all ages, animation has played a significant role in shaping cultural attitudes and perceptions. One of the most critical aspects of this impact has been the representation of diverse identities in animated media. Another function of animation is to help people understand and relate to others who are different from themselves. Animation can be a powerful tool for promoting empathy by depicting characters and situations that viewers might not encounter in their daily lives. For example, an animated film about a child with a disability can help non-disabled viewers understand the challenges and experiences of people with disabilities. Similarly, a film about a refugee family can help viewers empathise with refugees' struggles and hardships worldwide.

2.2 Early Representation in Animation

Animation has a long history that spans several nations, including the United Kingdom, Asia, and America, to name a few. Although the history of animated works is extensive, for the purposes of this study, we are primarily concerned with American animations, as it is one of the two leaders in the animation world alongside Japan (Mukherjee and Sobhakar, 2020). But unlike Japan which focuses on telling stories that have historical and cultural representation of Japan, American animation has a global identity and, in that regard, dominates the medium and has had a significant impact on the industry's growth by pushing it into mainstream media. U.S. animation is often seen as a pioneer in creating norms within the industry, which is important for this study because South African animations are seen to be heavily influenced by mainstream traditions.

In the early days of animation, particularly within the development of mainstream animation in the USA, for example, representation was limited in terms of its scope and quality. Stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, and gender were commonplace in animated films, with characters often reduced to one-dimensional caricatures. African Americans, for example, were frequently depicted as being lazy, ignorant, and uneducated, while women were often portrayed as passive and submissive. In terms of specific examples, Disney, Waner Brother and Fleischer Studios all have infamous examples of stereotypical representation in animation. Disney's early films, such as *Dumbo* (1941) and *Fantasia* (1940), have been widely criticised for their depiction of racial stereotypes and offensive character designs. These films have been accused of perpetuating negative and stereotypical depictions of people of colour, particularly African Americans, as evidenced by the caricatured crows in *Dumbo* (1941) and the depiction of black centaurs as servants in

Fantasia (1942). Fleischer Studios has similar stereotypes in their earlier animations including their rendition of Snow White in which the mirror that the evil queen consults with becomes a blackface character (Wells, 1998, p74). Early Warner Brothers cartoons are guilty of the same stereotypical work, so much so that a number of their early shorts have been banned from broadcast (IMDb, 2017). This includes, but is not limited to, the infamous Censored Eleven which are a prime example of the racist stereotypes in animation that were societal norms at the time of their making. The eleven shorts include titles like *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* (1943), *All This and Rabbit Stew* (1941) and *Jungle Jitters* (1938) to name a few (Schlesinger & Warner Bros. Cartoons, 2021). All of which featured over-exaggerated features and facial designs resembling blackface. The character designs along with offensive subject matters and jokes were later found to be inappropriate and offensive to modern audiences resulting in shorts being banned from broadcast in 1968. During historical re-releases of original Tom and Jerry cartoons and censored cartoons, Warner Brothers includes disclaimers at the beginning giving context to the animations, acknowledging and condemning the negative stereotypes but stating that, not showing the animations would be the same as claiming they never existed. (See Figure 1 below)

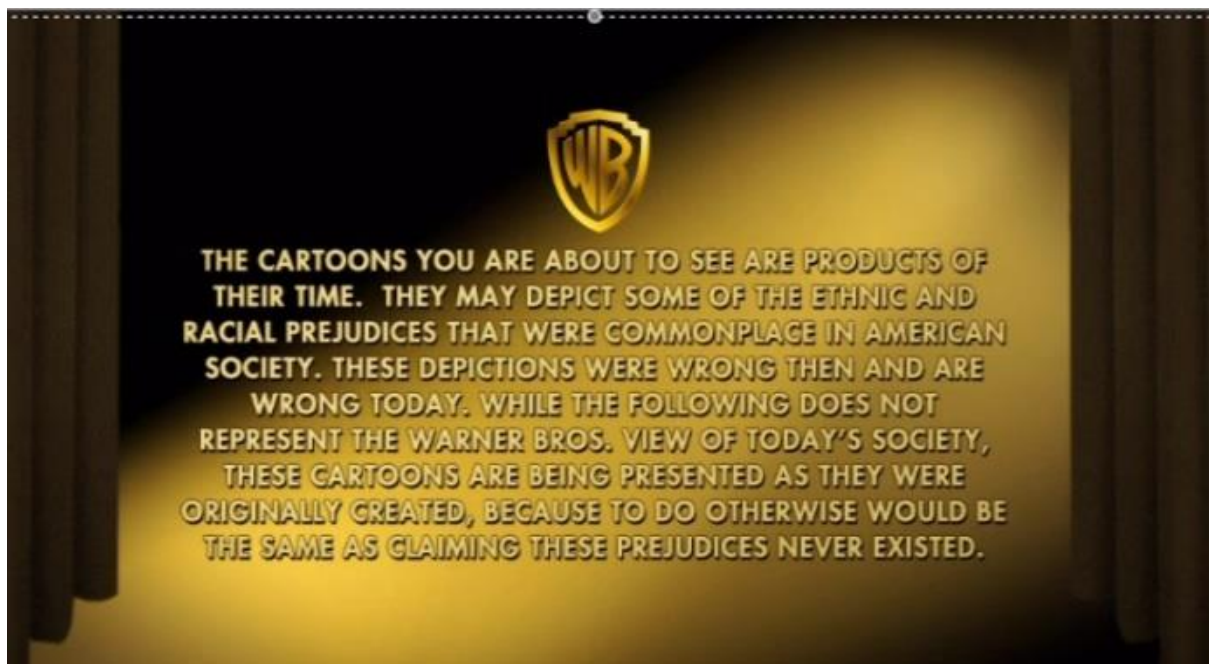


Figure 1. Still of Warner Brothers Disclaimer (n.d) Warner Brothers Loony Toons Disclaimer (Imgur)

Despite the limitations of early representation in animation, some filmmakers began to challenge these stereotypes and offer more nuanced depictions of diverse identities. In 1946, Disney released the film *Song of the South*, featuring Uncle Remus, a formerly enslaved African-American who told stories to white children. While the film was widely criticised for its perpetuation of stereotypes and the idealisation of slavery, it also marked a significant step forward in terms of the representation of African Americans in animated media (Wells, 2002).

2.3 Shifting Representation in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s and 1970s marked significant social and cultural changes in the US, including the civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement. This led to a shift in the representation of racial and ethnic diversity in animation. Shows like *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* (1972) and *The Simpsons* (1989) in the 1970s and 1980's marked a turning point in the representation of racial and ethnic diversity in animation. *Fat Albert*, created by comedian Bill Cosby, featured a diverse group of characters from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, challenging the previously held notion that animation was a medium solely for children. *The Simpsons* (1989), which premiered in 1989, featured a diverse cast of characters from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, including the African American character of Carl and the Indian character of Apu. The show also tackled issues related to race and ethnicity in a humorous but thoughtful way, paving the way for more diverse representations in animated television shows (Wells, 2002). These characters represented a significant shift away from the stereotypical representations of race and gender that had dominated animated media in the past. In conversation on representation is constantly adapting and evolving, though the character, Apu, was seen as a step forward in the late 1990s, it is worth noting that now, the character is seen as stereotypical by some, leading to the voice actor of the character, a white man, leaving the show and apologised for his portrayal of the character (*TheGardian*, 2020) (*NYTimes*, 2020).

2.4 Gender Roles

Gender roles have also played a significant role in representing identity in animation. In the early days of animation, female characters were often portrayed as damsels in distress or love interests for male protagonists. They were often depicted as weak and dependent on male characters for their survival or as sexualised objects of desire (Gargini, Mugnaini, & Tic, 2022). This is most evident in early Disney films. 1937's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) as an example depicts Snow White as the embodiment of the Ideal woman of the time. But there is nothing more to her character than that, nor does she do much to contribute to the advancement of the plot as she has to wait for a prince to save her. Since *Snow White*, the archetype of the traditional Disney princess persisted for more than 20 years (Gargini, Mugnaini, & Tic, 2022).

However, as women's roles in society began to change, so too did their representation in animation. Characters like Wonder Woman, who first appeared in DC comic books, appeared in *The Brady Kids* (1972-1973), and She-Ra from *She-Ra: Princess of Power* (1985-1987) challenged traditional gender roles by portraying strong, independent female characters who could hold their own in combat (Wetzler, G. et al. 1985) (Schwartz, 1972). They were looking back at Disney, *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), both present two princesses with more nuanced personalities. Although the princess and the prince's love story remain at the centre of both stories, they don't just wait to get married. Instead, they wait until they've gotten to know one another and found love before they get married. *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Mulan* (1998) are three Disney films that exhibit more notable indications of a shift in viewpoint. These cartoons introduce diverse ethnic characters to Disney's animated films and strong, self-reliant female leads (Gargini, Mugnaini, & Tic, 2022). The more recent animated films, such as *Brave* (2012) and

Moana (2016), have further challenged these stereotypes by depicting strong, independent, and capable female characters (Gargini, Mugnaini, & Tic, 2022). Another example is *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021), which features a Southeast Asian female hero, further breaking the stereotype that animated films are only made for white, western audiences (Gargini, Mugnaini, & Tic, 2022).

The representation of gender and sexual identity has also become an increasingly important issue in animation. Historically, animation has often been criticised for its lack of representation of LGBTQ+ characters or its portrayal of such characters stereotypically or offensively. This has contributed to a lack of visibility and representation for LGBTQ+ individuals in the media, which has real-life consequences for how LGBTQ+ individuals are perceived and treated. However, more recent animated series have begun challenging these negative representations and promoting more positive and accurate depictions of LGBTQ+ characters. For example, the animated series *Steven Universe* (2013) has been praised for its representation of non-binary and LGBTQ+ characters and its exploration of themes such as love, identity, and self-acceptance. The series features several characters who identify as LGBTQ+, including a same-sex couple and a non-binary character, and explores themes related to gender fluidity and self-expression (O'Neal, 2021).

Similarly, *Adventure Time* (2010) has been praised for representing LGBTQ+ characters and themes. The series features a number of characters who identify as LGBTQ+, including a same-sex couple, and explores themes related to love, acceptance, and the complexities of gender and sexuality. The series has received widespread recognition for its positive and nuanced representation of LGBTQ+ characters and themes and its commitment to inclusivity and diversity. Overall, the representation of LGBTQ+ characters in animation has improved in recent years. However, work must still be done to ensure that these characters are depicted accurately and positively (O'Neal, 2021). The success of animated series such as *Steven Universe* (2013) and *Adventure Time* (2010) demonstrates that there is an audience for shows that promote inclusivity and diversity and that this representation can significantly impact how LGBTQ+ individuals are perceived and treated. This chapter is important as it highlights social groups that have been historically overlooked across the globe and in South Africa. This study's case studies will examine how these social groups are represented within the animations.

2.5 Cultural representation

In the field of animation, there has been a growing interest in the representation of cultural identity in recent years. Scholars such as Jane Batkin and Paul Wells have argued that animation can be a powerful tool for representing cultural identity due to its ability to create visual metaphors and convey complex ideas through imagery. This is particularly relevant in the case of online animation, which has emerged as a popular medium for creators to explore and express their cultural identity.

Animation has not only been recognised as a medium of cultural representation but for education as well. It can be used to represent cultural values, traditions, and practices. According to Kangong (2010), 3D animation effectively represents cultural diversity and promotes cultural understanding (Kangong, 2010). Animation is a powerful medium of cultural representation that has the ability to communicate complex ideas, values, and emotions through visual and narrative storytelling. Animation allows creators to represent cultural identity and diversity in unique and innovative ways through characters, settings, and storylines that reflect the cultural nuances of a particular society. Animation is a medium that can transcend language barriers and reach a global audience, making it an ideal tool for cultural representation and education. Using animation to represent cultural identity, creators can promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions. This can be achieved in various ways; for example, through the use of music, dance, and folklore, creators can incorporate cultural elements into their animation to create a rich and authentic representation of a particular culture. Animators can also use character design and visual cues to convey cultural identity, such as clothing, accessories, and facial features (Kangong, 2010). Animation can also be used to tell stories that reflect the values and beliefs of a particular culture. For example, an animation that promotes the value of community and cooperation may use a storyline that involves characters working together to achieve a common goal. Similarly, an animation promoting perseverance and resilience may feature a character overcoming obstacles to achieve their goals.

Animation is a form of visual storytelling that has the ability to create fantastic worlds and characters that are not constrained by the limitations of live-action filmmaking (Wells, 1998). For example, Japanese animation, or anime, has become synonymous with Japanese culture and identity, with many anime series exploring themes such as Japanese folklore and mythology. Similarly, Canadian animation often incorporates elements of Canadian history and culture, such as the popular series *Anne of Green Gables* (1979), which is based on a classic Canadian novel and explores Canadian rural life. Though animated in Japan by a Japanese company, it still culturally represents Canada (Takahata, 1979). Scholars such as Stuart Hall and Benedict Anderson have argued that national identity is a social construct created through a particular community's shared experiences, history, and cultural practices. This view of identity is particularly relevant in the case of South Africa, which has a complex history of colonialism, apartheid, and post-apartheid reconstruction. South Africa is a country with diverse cultures; as such, it is important to examine how they are represented within South African animation.

In conclusion, the representation of identity in animation has evolved over time, reflecting changing societal attitudes towards race, gender, and other social categories. From the racial stereotypes and gender roles of the early days of animation to the diverse cast of characters in contemporary animated films, representation has played a crucial role in shaping how people view themselves and others. While there is still much work to be done to promote diversity and inclusion in animation, the industry has come a long way in recent years in terms of challenging stereotypes and promoting empathy and understanding across different groups.

2.6 Localization vs Globalization and its Impact on Representation

The concept of localisation and globalisation in animation has become increasingly important in recent years as the animation industry has grown and become more globalised. With the rise of digital technologies and the increasing availability of animated content online, the audience for animation has expanded to include people from diverse cultural backgrounds. There are a few ways to look at localisation, the two main ones being localising an existing piece of media to accommodate a specific region or audience. The other is to create content that specifically targets a specific region and audience, typically created by the people of that region. The latter of the two is the method of localisation which this research will focus on.

Localising pre-existing content involves adapting media to the target audiences cultural, linguistic, and social norms. This may include more minor changes like translating text and voiceovers or much more significant changes to various animation elements, such as story, character design, environment design, and themes. Localisation aims to make the animation more accessible and appealing to local audiences while preserving the essence of the original content. In the context of the story, localisation may involve changes to the plot, dialogue, and humour to better reflect the cultural norms and values of the target audience. For example, the movie *Ratatouille* (2007) has a scene where Remy, the rat, reads a letter and for the original release, the letter is written in English, but the film itself is set in France, so for the French release of the film, the scene was changed so the letter would be in French. (Screen Rant, 2018) Similar changes were made to *Inside Out* (2015), where a scene involving broccoli was changed to green peppers for the Japanese release as green pepper are more unappealing to Japanese children than broccoli is to American children. (Jiuliani, 2017) Similarly, character design is another important aspect of localisation in animation. Character design can influence how the audience perceives a character and can affect the cultural relevance of the animation. Localisation may involve changes to a character's appearance, clothing, and behaviour to make them more relatable to the target audience. For example, the animated film *Zootopia* (2016) underwent a few localisation changes in a few countries by changing the news anchor character to the most popular animal in those countries. The original version has a snow leopard which was changed to a panda for the Chinese release, a koala for the Australian and New Zealand releases and a Japanese racoon dog for the Japanese release. (Jiuliani, 2017) (Screen Rant, 2018)

In South Africa, localisation and globalisation in animation are important aspects of the animation industry. South African animators are increasingly focused on creating content relevant to local audiences while also appealing to international audiences. This requires a careful balance between localisation and globalisation, as animators seek to preserve cultural identity while making their content accessible to global audiences. Victor Roudometof, in his book "Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy," argues that globalisation and localisation in media, including animation, can significantly impact cultural identity and how people understand their place in the world. Roudometof argues that localisation can help preserve cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange while enabling global audiences to connect with local cultures.

2.7 Visual Language

Visual style can also be tied to specific identities based on Wells' writing in *Animation: Genre and Authorship* (2002), in which he speaks about the importance of authorship and how the animation's identity can be tied to the creators of the animation and this identity extends to the visual style of those creators. Similar to how Hayao Miyazaki has a specific visual style to his films that tie the films' identity to him and Studio Ghibli, but that identity extends to the overall nation of Japan. A similar thing can be said with Disney animations as they not only have a visual identity that ties them to Disney even though their lengthy film catalogue features several different directors, the visual style and identity point back to Disney, which then extends to the USA. This is influenced by the understanding of authorship discussed by Wells (Wells, 2002). There are many elements that make up a visual style in animation. Still, it is important to understand visual language in media, as the same concepts are applied to animation. A visual language is a form of communication that uses images and other visual elements to convey meaning. It is a universal mode of expression and can be understood by people regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The concept of visual language has been explored in various fields, including art, design, advertising, and education. In this section, we will discuss visual language's definition, characteristics, and applications, drawing on the works of Paula Eubanks, Kim Marriott and Bernd Meyer.

Eubanks argues that art is a visual language that allows people to communicate their thoughts and emotions non-verbally. According to her, visual language is more than just a means of representing the physical world; it is a tool for expressing abstract ideas and concepts. Eubanks suggests that visual language has grammar and syntax, which can create meaning and convey messages (Eubanks, 1997). One of the key characteristics of visual language is its ability to communicate across cultural and linguistic barriers. Unlike spoken and written language, which is often tied to specific cultures and languages, visual language can be understood by people from different backgrounds. This makes it a powerful tool for global communication and can be used to bridge cultural divides (Eubanks, 1997).

Marriott and Meyer (1998) expand on the concept of visual language, proposing a theory that explains how visual elements are used to convey meaning. They argue that visual language consists of a set of visual signs and symbols that are used to represent ideas and concepts. These signs and symbols can be organised into visual grammar, which governs how they can be combined to create meaning (Marriott, Meyer, 1998). Visual language has many applications in various fields, including art, design, advertising, and education. In art, visual language is used to create works that convey emotion and meaning beyond their physical appearance. In design, visual language is used to create products and experiences that communicate brand values and identity. In advertising, visual language is used to create campaigns that capture audiences' attention and communicate key messages. In education, visual language is used to help students understand complex concepts and ideas through visual aids and diagrams. (Marriott and Meyer, 1998).

2.8 Visual Language in Animation

Looking at these concepts and applying them to animation brings a new and richer understanding of why specific animations look the way they do. There are many different aspects of animation where visual language is applied, like; character designs, prop designs, environmental designs, and overall lighting. All of these sections are typically designed to have a unified design that would represent the world in the way they are designed for. According to Eubanks, art is a visual language that employs colours, shapes, lines, and textures to express various emotions and ideas (Eubanks, 1997). The same is applied to animation with the addition of motion.

Visual language is a crucial element in animation used to communicate emotions, ideas, and stories to the viewers. Marriott and Meyer (1998) suggest that visual language theory studies how visual elements such as images, symbols, and colours are used to communicate meaning. In animation, visual language is used to convey characters' emotions, personalities, and relationships, as well as to create the world and atmosphere of the story. (Marriott, Meyer, 1998). One of the primary visual elements in animation is colour. Colour is used to set the mood and tone of a scene, as well as to convey the personalities of the characters. Bright, vibrant colours can create a sense of happiness and excitement, while darker, muted colours can create a sense of sadness or danger. For example, in the Disney film *The Lion King* (1994), the use of warm, earthy colours in the Pride Lands scene creates a sense of peace and harmony, while the use of dark, cool colours in the elephant graveyard scene creates a sense of danger and foreboding.

Another important visual element in animation is shape. Shapes can be used to communicate a character's personality and create a sense of movement and action. For example, a character with round, soft shapes may be seen as friendly and approachable, while a character with sharp, angular shapes may be seen as aggressive or dangerous. In the Pixar film *The Incredibles* (2004), the characters' designs are based on their personalities. Mr Incredible has a strong, square shape to emphasise his strength, while Elastigirl has a fluid, elongated shape to emphasise her flexibility. Lines are also an essential element in the visual language of animation. They can be used to convey movement and action, as well as to create texture and depth. For example, thick, bold lines can create a sense of weight and solidity, while thin, delicate lines can create a sense of fragility and lightness. In the animated film *Up* (2009), the lines are used to create a textured, hand-drawn look that emphasises the nostalgic feel of the story. Textures are another crucial element in the visual language of animation. They can be used to create a sense of realism and depth, as well as to convey a character's personality and emotions. For example, a character with rough, jagged textures may be seen as tough and rugged, while a character with smooth, polished textures may be seen as refined and sophisticated. The DreamWorks film *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) uses textures to create a sense of the dragon's scaly skin and rough, rocky landscapes.

Animation as a medium has evolved over time, with different regions of the world developing and improving on their unique styles. Western and Japanese animation (anime) are two of the most well-known styles. The Western animation style has its roots in the golden age of American animation in the 1930s and 1940s, characterised by Disney's classic animated features with somewhat realistic character movements, Fleischer Studios experimental and surreal elements to their animations and Warner Brothers stylistic,

exaggerated and fluid shorts. The animation style of this era was highly stylised, with characters having exaggerated features and highly detailed painted backgrounds (Bendazzi, 2015).

2.9 Western Animation Visual Language

One of the defining characteristics of the visual style of Western animation is its use of anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to non-human entities. According to Timothy Jardim in his study *Animals as Character: Anthropomorphism as Personality in Animation* (2013), anthropomorphism has been a key aspect of Western animation since its inception, with many early animated characters being animals with human-like qualities (Jardim, 2013). This trend continued into the golden age of animation, with iconic characters such as Bugs Bunny and Mickey Mouse being prime examples of anthropomorphised animals.

In Western animation, animals are often depicted as highly anthropomorphised with human-like features, such as walking on two legs and using tools. For example, in Disney's *Zootopia* (2016), the characters stand and walk on two legs, wear clothing, have human jobs and have human-like facial expressions, see Figure 2. This style of anthropomorphism is popularised by Western cartoons like Looney Tunes and Tom and Jerry (Jardim, 2013).

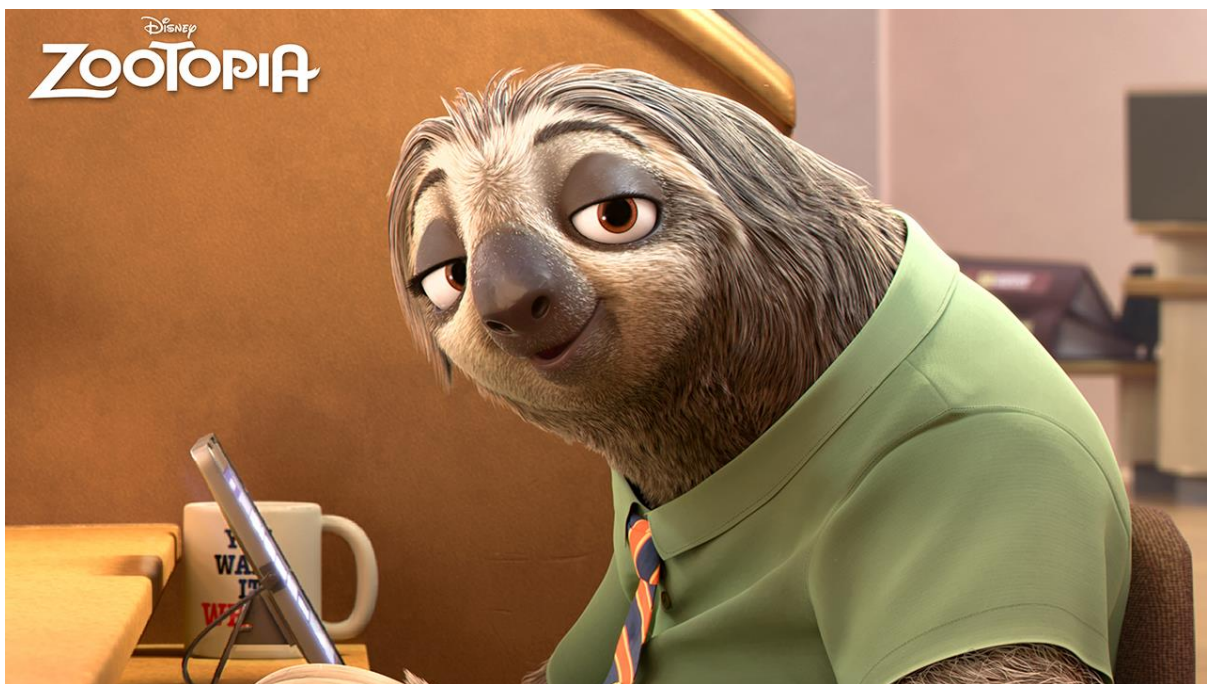


Figure 2, Flash Slothmore, Still from *Zootopia* (2016), (Disney, 2016)

Western animation tends to draw on popular culture and established archetypes when creating animal characters. For example, the character of Bugs Bunny from Looney Tunes is a humorous and mischievous rabbit, embodying the trickster archetype. Similarly, Mickey

Mouse from Disney is a friendly and adventurous mouse, embodying the hero archetype (Jardim, 2013).

2.10 CalArts Style in Western Animation

Western animation has evolved significantly over time. One of the most recent and prevalent styles is the CalArts style. The CalArts style is a distinctive visual language that has emerged from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and is commonly used in contemporary Western animation (Bendazzi, 2015). Simplified designs, bold colours, and exaggerated expressions characterise this style. According to featuredanimation.com, the CalArts style is known for its "use of shapes and colours to convey the essence of the character or object, rather than striving for a realistic representation." This style is often used in cartoons targeted at children, such as *Steven Universe* (2013) and *We Bare Bears* (2015), See Figure 3.



Figure 3. Collection of characters that follow the CalArts visual style, (Crombar, 2023)

One of the critical features of the CalArts style is its emphasis on simplicity and stylisation. Characters in CalArts-style animation are often depicted with rounded, simple shapes that emphasise their basic characteristics and personalities (Bendazzi, 2015). In addition, the CalArts style also tends to simplify characters' anatomy, often reducing them to basic geometric shapes (Crombar, 2023). The CalArts style also employs a vivid and bright colour palette. Bold, bright colours are used to draw attention to some aspects of a scene, such as a character or an object, and are often used to create a contrast between different parts of a frame (Bendazzi, 2015). For example, a character's clothing or hair may be brightly coloured to make them stand out from the background or other characters.

Exaggerated expressions are another distinctive feature of the CalArts style. Characters in CalArts-style animation have large, expressive eyes and mouths, and their facial expressions are often exaggerated to convey a wide range of emotions (Bendazzi, 2015). Using exaggerated expressions also helps emphasise the character's personality traits and make them more recognisable to the audience. Furthermore, the CalArts style often incorporates elements of surrealism and whimsy, creating a playful and imaginative world for characters to inhabit (Featured Animation, n.d.). For instance, characters may interact with strange and fantastical creatures or objects, and the environments they inhabit may be highly stylised and imaginative. It is vital to the study as the visual language used in Western animation, whether it be the use of anthropomorphised characters or the CalArts style or any other Western style, gives the animation a Western identity or identity specific to where that style was created, i.e., California for CalArts. Within this study, we examine the visual style of South African animation to try to determine if there is a visual style that represents a South African identity.

2.11 Representation within Animation Conclusion

Overall, animation, in this case Western animation, has been a tool for representation from the early 1900's until present times. However, the early representations of minority groups have primarily been shown through negative stereotypes that have been widely criticized, as they reduced the characterisation of these groups to one-dimensional caricatures. This is seen through a number of the early Disney animated films. The 1960s marked a change in the representation of different races within animation, particularly with minority and marginalised groups. This consisted of more diverse characters of other races in animations that had depth and did not just rely on stereotypes. This is also evident in the evolution of the representation of gender and sexual identity, with female characters in Western animation evolving past the typical princess archetype to more robust and independent personalities that don't rely on male characters to save them, as well as more representation and exposure of LGBTQ+ characters.

These representations have grown and evolved as animation as a medium and tool for entertainment and presentation evolved. Representation in the animation also extends to the language used in the animation and how different accents sonically represent different regions of the world. Visual language is a major component used in animation to communicate in which different styles and visual elements of the animation represent different characteristics, moods, emotions, personalities, etc... The combination of visual elements in animation can combine into a visual style that, depending on origin and use, builds an identity tied to the nation in which the animation was created.

Overall, visual language is a vital component in animation used to communicate various emotions, ideas, and stories to the viewers. By using elements such as colour, shape, line, and texture, animators can create characters and worlds that are visually compelling and engaging. As Eubanks suggests, art is a visual language that allows us to express ourselves uniquely and creatively; animation is no exception. Western media's cultures and aesthetics

heavily influence Western animation styles' visual language. The CalArts style in Western animation emphasises simplified shapes and bold colours to convey emotions. By understanding the visual language, we can better appreciate the art form and the cultures that have shaped them.

Chapter 3:

South African Animation: A case study examination of the evolution of representation in SA animation film and television series from 1915 to the present

3.1 Overview

This section looks at selected case studies of South African animation from 1915 to the present to trace the evolution of representation in South African animation. The history and growth of the South African animation industry were intertwined with the country's political climate, which included the unavailability of the latest technologies, being excluded by other nations due to the apartheid social climate, and limited representation because of the aforementioned social climate. The chapter goes on to look at early puppet animations as well as post-apartheid animations such as *Magic Cellar* (2006), *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), *Supa Strikas* (2008), *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012), *Khumba* (2013), and *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020) as a collective case study to paint the scene and provide a foundation in which *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) by Jonas Lekganyane and *Seal Team* (2021) by Triggerfish will be individually analysed as the primary case studies of the research.

3.2 The development of the animation industry in South Africa

Animation has been an integral part of South African history since the early 20th century (Bendazzi, 2015). The first animation created in the country was titled *The Artist's Dream/The Artist's inspiration* (1915) by African Film Productions. The film was directed by American director Harold Shaw, who is also credited with directing one of the first South African epics *Die Voortrekkers* (1916) which is also the oldest surviving South African full-length film during the silent era of cinema (Africa in Motion, no date) (Sahistory.org.za, 2011). The film, *The Artist's Dream/The Artist's inspiration* (1915), details an artist's journey along with his animated drawings. The film utilized a mixture of live action and animated drawings to create the final product. The film challenged notions of reality and illusion both within the film and towards the audience viewing it (Bendazzi, 2015a). The studio, African Film Productions, was founded by Isidore Schlesinger in Killarney north of Johannesburg. (Bendazzi, 2015a) Although the studio produced five more animated short films in 1917, *The Adventures of Ranger Focus*, *Don't You Believe*, *Crooks and Christmas*, and *The Adventures of Ben Cockles*, unfortunately, all of them were lost over time (Parsons, 2009) (Bendazzi, 2015a).

In the 1940s, African Film Productions changed its name to Killarney Film Studios and started primarily creating special effects animation. This change came at a time when the use of animation in movies was becoming more prevalent, and the film industry was evolving. During this period, Alpha Film Studios emerged as one of the biggest studios in Africa. The studio's owner Bill Boxer convinced English animators to move to South Africa and join his studio to help create animated commercials for the studio (Bendazzi, 2015a). Unlike Killarney Film Studios who shifted their focus to using animation as a tool to enhance films in the form of special effects, Alpha Film Studios continued to produce hand-drawn cell

animation. Interestingly, during this period, animation in South Africa was mainly directed at the more mature, adult cinema-going audience, unlike in other parts of the world where it was mainly aimed at children. This could be attributed to the fact that animation in South Africa was initially used as a tool for special effects and was considered a more sophisticated form of filmmaking (Bendazzi, 2015a). It is also noted that the training and mentoring for South African animators at the time was provided by foreigners, predominantly Americans and Europeans. This had a huge impact as it influenced their approach to animating as well as the socio-political ideologies of their foreign counterparts. One of the challenges that South African animators faced during this period was the lack of professional animation equipment in the country. As a result, conditions at Alpha Film Studios were largely improvised. For example, cellophane was used in place of traditional cels, this meant the animators had to create a laborious spring system to flatten the wrinkles out of each sheet before every frame was taken. Between 1960 and 1975, before the introduction of television in South Africa, animation was predominantly produced as shorts and newsreels created by Alpha Film Studios and effects and title cards created by Killarney Film Studios (Bendazzi, 2015b). These animations were created for theatre release and were predominantly played before a feature presentation. The animations were mainly used for commercial purposes, such as advertising and promoting products.

The introduction of television in 1976 led to a shift in the focus of the animation industry in South Africa. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was formally introduced to South Africa in January 1976, and the animation industry in the country shifted its focus to children's programming. However the country soon ran into issues as most European countries refused to sell programs to the country because of the apartheid-led social climate of the country at the time. This led to a shortage of foreign programs, which the SABC had to replace with local programming (Bendazzi, 2015). The SABC created a special effects and illustration unit for Afrikaans children's programs, the Animation Unit. The SABC pivoted from the trend of cel-based animation towards a live-action puppetry as a medium primarily because it was cheaper to produce (Walker, 2019). Though the puppet animations did become the primary productions created by the Animation Unit, they did create a few cel animation works which were each around five minutes in length. With South Africa being a diverse and multicultural nation living under a government that enforced a racial hierarchy amongst the people living in it, this also meant that the animations and tv programs produced at the time primarily catered to a few groups, with the majority of the shows being Afrikaans children shows like *Wielie Walie*, *Haas Das se Nuuskas*, *The Invisible Grisibles*, *Oceano Jollo*, *Wolraad Woltemade* and *Die Bremenstad se Musikante*⁴, extremely limiting representation within the medium (Shapurjee, 2008). Animation continued to mainly serve as a medium to entertain and educate children, with a number of the shows featuring narratives and themes that promoted good causes and precautions against forest fires, pollution, healthy eating, road safety etc (Shapurjee, 2008). However, the Animation Unit was not expanded into a full animation department, and there was not enough research done in animation beyond children's entertainment at the time (Bendazzi, 2015b).

A new studio, Klaybow Films, was founded by Ted Berenson in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1981. The studio primarily created stop motion animations (Haycock, 2010). The studio

⁴ There are no dates available for these animated works

trained young South African artists in model animation and produced its first significant production, *The Adventures of Dr. Kleiman*, in 1981. The series was well-received and led to a commission for a second series, *The Wonderful World of Dr. Kleiman*, in 1982. Over the next few years, the studio grew substantially and employed new staff, including several artists who would be involved in the South African animation industry in the 1990s. Berenson's primary concern during this period was developing ways to move the camera in puppet animation filmmaking. In 1985, Klaybow produced its most successful and important work, *Bimbo's Books* (1985), which was a multimedia mix of clay, cel, and cut-out animation created by Taiwanese animator Min Cha Lin. The series was commissioned by SABC's English Channel and consisted of thirteen 15-minute episodes (Bendazzi, 2015b.) The show revolved around a robot, a clown, and a talking bookend joined forces in comedic interpretations of fairytales (Haycock, 2010). Besides primarily catering to the Afrikaans audience with a few animations made for the English Channel, the South African Animations made during this time were mainly stop motion or featured stop motion elements in them, with Haycock noting that there is not much evidence to suggest the medium was explored before the 1980s (Haycock, 2010).

The 1990s marked not only a new age for the country but for representation within the SABC, allowing for more than just Afrikaans and English representations. SABC 1 primarily focuses on Nguni languages with English, SABC 2 features Tswana, Sotho, Afrikaans and English, and SABC 3 is mainly English (Shapurjee, 2008). Though this era saw a new age of representation in media as a whole within the country, there was a decrease in locally produced animated shows commissioned by the SABC in favour of purchasing older American animation shows, which were cheaper to acquire than commissioning new shows from the local studios (Walker, 2019). This forced a number of the studios working at the time to turn to advertising, and with the sanctions against South Africa lifted, studios could work with international clients again. Several independent studios at this time were birthed and produced animations, including Klaybow Films, XYZoo, Triggerfish and Sunrise Productions (Walker, 2019). Visually, animation in South Africa evolved from animated drawings to cel animations to stop motion animation within the periods. This period offered a minimal representation of South Africa and only created animations that catered primarily to a specific Afrikaans group within South Africa. In contrast, moving into contemporary times, the following decades offered more diverse and inclusive representations within local animation.

3.3 representation in Contemporary Local Animation

3.3.1 Representation in Contemporary SA Animated TV Series

The representation of South African identities in animation has been the subject of academic inquiry. Jane Batkin argues that animation can be used to represent diverse identities and challenge stereotypes (Batkin, 2017). However, Joseph Azi contends that the representation of African identities in animation can be problematic and reinforces negative stereotypes (Azi, 2012). Both sides of the argument can be seen through contemporary South African animated works in TV series and feature films. In recent years, animation has become a global industry, with countries like Japan, South Korea, and the United States

dominating the market. However, the animation industry in Africa is still developing, with limited representation of African cultures and identities.

Animation has been used for entertainment, cultural representation, and education in various parts of the world. South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa with a developing animation industry. Representation of a South African identity and education within local South African animation can be seen primarily in the television (TV) series that was produced in the mid-2000s with titles like *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006) by Clockwork Zoo, *Magic Cellar* (2006) a Canadian South African collaboration with Chocolate Moose Media and Morula Pictures, and *Supa Strikas* (2008) by Strika Entertainment to name a few. The use of animation as a medium of cultural representation is particularly important in South Africa, given its complex and diverse cultural context. The country has 11 official languages and a rich history of indigenous cultures, colonialism, apartheid, and post-apartheid transformation. Animation provides a unique opportunity to represent and celebrate this diversity and to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

In South Africa, most of the animated TV series were aimed at children and young audiences and were used as a tool for cultural representation and education. For example, the animated series *Magic Cellar* (2006) has been hailed as a ground-breaking animation representing South African identity and culture. (Azi, 2012) The series uses a combination of traditional African folklore, music, and storytelling techniques, combined with modern animation technology, to create a unique and authentic representation of South African culture. Cultural representation refers to the way that media and art forms portray and depict different cultures and their associated values, beliefs, and practices. *Supa Strikas* (2008), which follows the journey of a soccer team, has a cast of multi-national characters alongside South African characters, exploring the diversity and openness of the country. The series capitalises on soccer being one of the most popular national sports in South Africa as well as it being popular among the youth within the country. These animations feature colourful and playful characters that appeal to children's imagination and sense of wonder. At the same time, animation teaches children important life lessons about creativity, perseverance, and empathy (Boshoff and Prinsloo, 2008). In addition to incorporating cultural elements into its storytelling, the animated TV series of the mid-2000s also challenge stereotypes and negative representations of African cultures that mainstream media have perpetuated. They did so by promoting a more nuanced and accurate representation of African cultures by presenting a diverse range of characters who embody positive values such as kindness, courage, and teamwork. Furthermore, the use of animation as a medium allows for creative and imaginative visual representations of African cultures that might not be possible in live-action media. This includes the use of vivid colours, innovative character designs, and creative storytelling techniques that draw from African cultural traditions. The series promotes a more harmonious and inclusive society by showing characters who are kind and respectful towards one another. This is especially important in a country like South Africa, which has a complex history of social inequality and racial division.

In South Africa, engendering childhood in animation has been an important goal for creators of children's media. For example, the animated series *Magic Cellar* (2006) features a diverse

cast of characters, including both male and female protagonists, who are depicted in positive and empowering ways. The series also incorporates traditional African gender roles and cultural practices in its storytelling while also challenging stereotypes and promoting gender equality. *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), like *Magic Cellar* (2006), also features a diverse cast that extends to Robots. The female characters are presented in a strong front and promote empowerment, community, and friendship. The visual designs of both shows, primarily through the character designs, displayed a diverse cast of boys and girls of multiple races make up the cast. The characters are designed to visually represent the range of children found across the South African population. See Figure 4. The same can be seen in *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), as seen in Figure 5.1, which featured a multiracial cast of children and adults representative of the contemporary landscape of South Africa through the show's lens. The world of Pax Afrika is set in a dystopian future, and the series does not refer to it as South Africa. Still, it does not need to, as the intro visually accomplishes that by showing Table Mountain as a backdrop to the environment design, which places the city in Cape Town, see Figure 5.2.



Figure 4. Character designs from Magic Cellar, (Chocolate Moose Media. 2006)

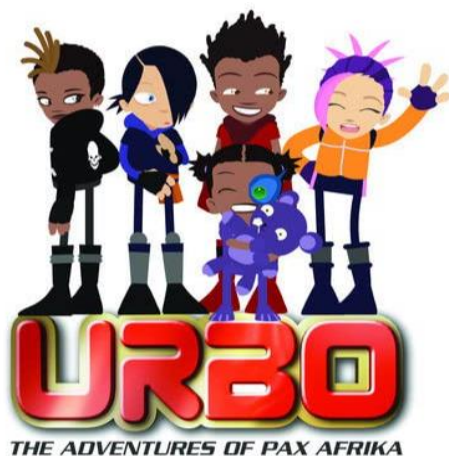


Figure 5.1. *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006) Character Designs, (Clockwork Zoo, 2006)

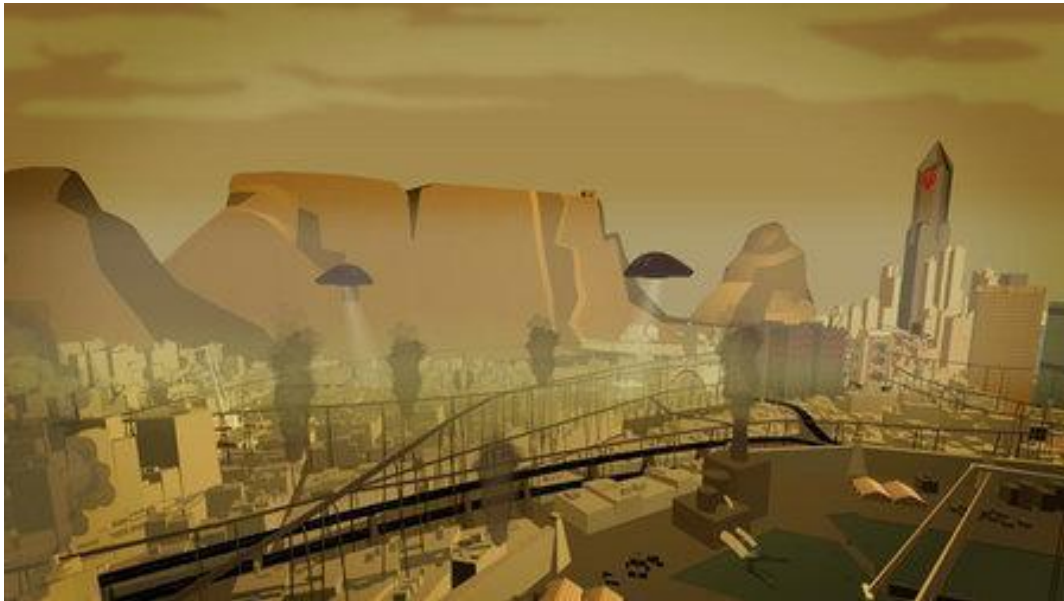


Figure 5.2. Still from URBO: Cape Town after the ecological disaster, (Clockwork Zoo, 2006)

Another important theme explored in *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006) is the consequences of greed. The show's villains are often motivated by a desire for power and wealth, and their actions have negative consequences for the community. The show emphasises the importance of responsible economic development and the need to balance economic growth with environmental preservation. This theme is significant in South Africa, a country that has experienced the negative effects of unchecked greed and exploitation. A similar theme is explored in *Supa Strikas* (2008), where the episodes are typically centred around the opposition team finding underhanded methods to win the soccer match and the Supa Strikas team finding a way to overcome and win the match. This adds to the theme of education and animation explored in *Magic Cellar* (2006) and other animated TV series in the mid-2000s.

3.3.2 Representation in Contemporary SA Animated Film

The 2010s marked a new era for South African animated works moving into feature films and fully embracing 3D animation. The films have great animation, and a few have gone to see international and financial success, which is good for the overall animation industry in South Africa. Still, when it comes to representation of South Africa, there seems to have been a decline in that front in favour of a more global and universal identity. Most films are animal-based, which can be argued to have an overall African Identity, but very little specifically points back to South Africa. A different perspective is that their existence within the general space of animation by default means that South Africa is represented as animated films produced in South Africa. Still, the content's overall global identity makes it hard to look at the content itself and identify South Africa within it.

Using animals in animations has been a common practice, not only in South Africa but throughout the history of animation. One of the reasons for this is the romanticisation and personification of animals to enhance their visual appeal to the audience. By humanising animals, animators can create relatable and endearing characters, making it easier for viewers, especially younger audiences, to engage with the story. (Stanton, 2020).

One significant advantage of using animals in animation is the ability to tackle heavy themes and social commentary while maintaining a light-hearted and accessible tone. By disguising serious or complex subjects behind cute and lovable animal characters, animators can address important issues in a way that children can easily understand and empathise with. (Barajoun, 2015) This approach allows for the delivery of valuable lessons and moral teachings in an entertaining and educational format providing a balance between entertainment and enlightenment. The influence of animal-based animations can be traced back to the animation medium's early days. *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), a pioneering animated film released in 1914, was one of the first examples of animal-based animation and is credited with influencing subsequent animal-centric films produced by Disney. (Brush, 2013) (Taggart, 2022) Disney, known for its diverse animation catalogue, has created numerous beloved animal characters and stories over the years. However, in South Africa's animated feature catalogue, animal-based narratives seem to dominate, thus, giving the country a limited identity regarding animated film products.

While the use of animals in animation has its roots in the early days of the medium, it continues to be a popular and effective storytelling device. Using animals as protagonists or main characters, animators can create universal stories that transcend cultural and language barriers. Additionally, animal characters often possess distinct traits and behaviours that can be easily exaggerated or stylised, adding to their appeal and allowing for creative storytelling possibilities. These characteristics were explored and pushed in the making of South African animated feature films, especially between the years of 2011 and 2020, when a number of 3D animated films were produced in South Africa. The features included but were not limited to *The Lion of Judah* (2011) by Sunrise Productions, *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012) by Triggerfish, *Khumba* (2013) by Triggerfish, and *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020) by Sunrise Productions, all of which used animal characters as the driving force for their narratives.

These films' character designs and environments represent African animals and safari or African jungles, giving them an African identity. See Figure 6, city of Zambezia, and Figure 7, environment shot in *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020). Though somewhat accurate to where these animal characters would be found in the real world, this could feed into the stereotype that Africa is one big jungle with minimal civilisation. Though the character designs make it easier to drive narratives to young viewers, it hurts the overall representation of South African people if the animated stories told in South Africa they are mainly told and articulated through the use of animal creatures within the animation.



Figure 6, Still from *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012); Tree city of Zambezia, (Triggerfish, 2012)



Figure 7, Still from *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020); Environment shot, (Sunrise Productions)

The narratives of these animations have been seen to have global themes revolving around family, friendship, and working together. With the lack of visual character design that calls to South Africans, as is typically the nature of animal-based animations, or themes and plot lines that represent South Africa or the culture, it becomes very difficult to find a South African identity within the films. Blaeser (2017) provides a postcolonial analysis of Triggerfish's animated films, including *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012) and *Khumba* (2013). Blaeser argues that the films contain colonial representations that reinforce stereotypes of race and gender. For example, Blaeser notes that *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012) portrays the African continent as a wild and untamed land, reinforcing the Western perception of Africa as a primitive and backward place. Similarly, Blaeser argues that the film's portrayal of female characters reinforces gender stereotypes, with female characters often being relegated to secondary roles. (Blaeser, 2017)

These films are created by South African Animation Studios with South African directors, but the films' content is global despite their local creators. Though if you look at the topic of a South African identity from the angle of "animations produced" in South Africa, the narrative changes as we look at the animation within a global sphere in which South Africa is represented. This would raise the question, should the identity of South African animation be judged by the content within the animation produced or the overall type of animation produced?

3.3.3 Chapter 3 Conclusion

This chapter examined a brief history and evolution of representation in South African animation utilising a collective case study method. It looked at how animation in South Africa first developed with independent studios and their use of traditional cel- animation in either short narratives or advertisements and title screens for live-action shows. The chapter examined how with the introduction of Television in South Africa in the 1970s, and the birth of the SABC, animation was looked at primarily as a medium to entertain and educate children. Mainly due to the country's apartheid climate, these animations mainly catered towards an Afrikaans audience, with a few shows being commissioned for the English Channel. This limited the representation within the medium at the time. The workflow in the 1980s also shifted to the multimedia workflow that leaned a lot into stop-motion animation. The 1990s saw a time when the SABC prioritised purchasing old American animated shows as they were cheaper than commissioning local studios to produce the animations. Looking at the animations created in the post-2000 South Africa saw an increase in representation of identity, with animations like *Magic Cellar (2006)* showcasing diverse South African cultures and identities while challenging the stereotypes of African cultures. They had a predominant 2D digital animation scene with a few digital 3D productions during this period. The 2010s saw a rise in 3D animated films, expanding South African content to a global audience. The content moved towards global themes shown through animal-based characters while also representing less of a South African identity within its content.

Chapter 4: Key Developments within the South African animation Industry and the impact on representation

4.1 Overview:

This chapter looks at the current climate of the South African animation industry, examining key aspects and developments like globalisation of the animation industry, insourcing and outsourcing, and Afrimation and how they impact the representation of South African Animation. Globalisation refers to the growing interconnection and interdependence between nations and cultures worldwide (Roudometof, 2019, 1-17). Globalisation is a crucial aspect in the animation industry as a whole, not just within South African animation, which directly affects the representation of the content within the animation. Globalisation is also seen as the driving force of outsourcing and insourcing. Outsourcing and insourcing involve the shuffling of skills within the industry, whether companies are sending work off to another studio to utilise their skills or bringing those skills in-house (Tschang and Goldstein, 2004). Tschang and Goldstein's *Production and Political Economy in the Animation Industry: Why Insourcing and Outsourcing Occur (2004)* argue that economic considerations primarily drive outsourcing and insourcing practices in the animation industry. Companies outsource specific tasks to external service providers to take advantage of lower labour costs and tax incentives. Insourcing is often used for jobs that require a high level of expertise or creativity, as it allows companies to retain control over the production process. Afrimation is important in the discussion of the representation of South Africa in South African animation as it promotes African animation made by Africans for Africans (Azi, 2012). Afrofuturism refers to a movement that showcases Africa, or Africanness, in a futuristic and sci-fi manner. Afrofuturism will be briefly examined in a discussion of the upcoming *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire (2023)* series. This chapter examines these topics within the context of animation and South African animation to further analyse the representation of South African animation.

4.2 Globalisation of the animation industry

Animation has become a significant player in the global entertainment industry, and with the advent of digital technologies, it has gained a foothold in almost every corner of the world. Animation production requires significant investment in both time and resources, which has led to the rise of outsourcing and insourcing as key concepts in the industry. Outsourcing is the transfer of certain tasks or operations to an external service provider. At the same time, insourcing refers to performing those tasks or operations within a company or organisation (Tschang and Goldstein, 2004). The animation industry has widely adopted these practices to optimise production and minimise costs.

The globalisation of the animation industry has been a major driver of outsourcing and insourcing practices. The growth of digital technologies has allowed for the easier transfer of data and resources across borders, enabling companies to outsource certain tasks to external service providers. Hyejin Yoon's *Globalization of the Animation Industry: Multi-Scalar Linkages of Six Animation Production Centers (2017)* argues that the animation industry has become increasingly globalised, with production centres in various regions

worldwide. The industry has become more interconnected, with companies collaborating and outsourcing work to external service providers to optimise production and minimise costs (Yoon, 2017). The globalisation of the animation industry has transformed how animation production is done, with multiple linkages developing between animation production centres worldwide (Yoon, 2017). Globalisation has led to new markets for animation content and increased competition among animation studios. The animation industry has become increasingly integrated into global value chains, with outsourcing and insourcing practices playing a key role in optimising production processes and minimising costs. The globalisation of the animation industry has been facilitated by advances in digital technology, which have made it easier to produce and distribute animation content worldwide. The development of the internet and other digital technologies has made it possible to work on animation projects remotely, with teams in different parts of the world collaborating on the same project. This has led to the emergence of global animation production centres, where tasks are outsourced to service providers located in different parts of the world. This also led to the emergence of new centres of animation production, with countries such as South Korea, India, and China emerging as major players in the industry (Lee, 2011). These countries have developed animation industries, producing content reflecting their cultural heritage and identity. This has led to a diversification of animation content, with different styles and approaches emerging from different parts of the world.

However, the globalisation of the animation industry has also raised concerns about the impact of outsourcing on local animation industries. Outsourcing can lead to a loss of control over the production process and can result in a dependence on external service providers. This can have negative consequences for local animation industries, which may struggle to compete with the lower production costs of external service providers. The development of local talent and expertise may also be hindered if outsourcing is relied on too heavily.

4.3 Outsourcing and insourcing within the SA industry

Outsourcing and insourcing have significant implications for the South African animation industry. As noted earlier, outsourcing has been a common practice among South African animation studios, allowing them to access specialised skills and expertise, reduce costs, and increase efficiency. However, this practice also has some negative implications, such as a loss of control over the production process and a potential decline in quality. The impact of outsourcing and insourcing in the South African animation industry is complex and multifaceted. While outsourcing can provide access to specialised skills and expertise and reduce costs, it may also result in a loss of local talent and a decline in quality. On the other hand, insourcing can promote the development of local talent and expertise and ensure a higher rate of animation production. Still, it may also require significant investments in infrastructure and technology. Ultimately, the decision to outsource or insource production in the animation industry must be weighed against these various factors to determine the best strategy for promoting the growth and development of the industry.

One of the main implications of outsourcing is the potential for losing local talent and expertise. When animation studios outsource their work to other countries, they may miss out on the opportunity to develop local talent and expertise in the animation industry. This can negatively impact the industry's growth and development, as local animators may be forced to seek work in other countries where opportunities for development and growth are more plentiful (Tschang and Goldstein, 2004). On the other hand, insourcing has the potential to create jobs and develop local talent and expertise. By keeping the production process in-house, animation studios can create a pool of skilled animators and technical experts who can contribute to the growth and development of the industry. This can also help promote the development of Afrimation content and support the growth of the industry. Outsourcing and insourcing also impact the quality of the animation produced. Outsourcing to countries with lower labour costs may result in a lower animation quality due to a lack of expertise or technical infrastructure (Tschang and Goldstein, 2004). This can have a negative impact on the reputation of South African animation studios and their ability to compete in the global market. Conversely, insourcing can ensure a higher animation quality by keeping control over the production process and maintaining the expertise and technical infrastructure necessary to produce high-quality animation. Another implication of outsourcing and insourcing in the South African animation industry is the potential impact on cultural representation and diversity. Outsourcing to other countries may result in a lack of representation of South African cultural themes and stories, which can be a disadvantage in promoting the development of Afrimation content. In contrast, insourcing can allow local animators to tell stories from their cultural perspectives and promote diverse representation in animation. Moreover, outsourcing can also have an impact on the overall economic development of South Africa. While outsourcing can reduce costs for animation studios, profits may not be reinvested in the local economy. This may be a missed opportunity for South Africa to develop a competitive advantage in the animation industry and create jobs and growth locally.

On the other hand, insourcing can contribute to the overall economic development of South Africa by creating jobs and developing local expertise. The growth of local animation studios can also stimulate the growth of complementary industries, such as gaming and visual effects. In this way, insourcing can contribute to the broader economic development of South Africa. It is also important to note that outsourcing and insourcing are not mutually exclusive strategies. Animation studios can choose to outsource specific tasks while keeping others in-house. This approach can provide the benefits of outsourcing while retaining control over the overall production process and maintaining the expertise necessary to produce high-quality animation. In the South African animation industry, outsourcing has been a common practice, particularly for tasks such as animation production and post-production (Walker, 2019). This is often done to take advantage of the lower labour costs in other countries, such as India, the Philippines, China, and other countries in Asia. However, outsourcing has also presented challenges for the South African animation industry. Azi argues that outsourcing can lead to a loss of local cultural identity and dependence on foreign expertise, limiting the development of local talent and creative vision. Outsourcing can also create logistical challenges, such as managing multiple time zones and coordinating work across different locations (Azi, 2012). However, there have been efforts to develop local talent and expertise, and some studios have started to bring specific tasks in-house to maintain greater control over the production process. On the other hand, outsourcing has

been seen as a strategy for developing local talent and expertise in the South African animation industry. JoonKoo Lee explains that the South Korean animation industry, which has achieved significant global success, relied heavily on insourcing in the early stages of development. By maintaining in-house production capabilities, South Korean studios were able to develop a deep pool of local talent and expertise, which helped them to create distinctive creative styles and expand their global reach (Lee, 2011)

A prime example of outsourcing in South Africa can be seen through *Supa Strikas (2008)*. In the case of *Supa Strikas (2008)*, the show's production is a combination of insourcing and outsourcing. The show's original concept and development were done in-house by the South African production company Strika Entertainment (Greig Cameron et al., 2008-2020). However, the animation is outsourced to a Malaysian animation studio, Animasia Studio (Animasia, 2022). Outsourcing animation production can be a double-edged sword when it comes to representing cultural identities. On the one hand, outsourcing can bring new perspectives and techniques to the creative process. On the other hand, outsourcing can result in losing control over how cultural identities are represented in the show. In the case of *Supa Strikas (2008)*, outsourcing animation production allows for the incorporation of different animation styles and techniques, but it also poses the risk of misrepresenting South African culture.

Azi argues that African animation can promote African cultural heritage in a digital age. *Supa Strikas (2008)* attempts to do just that by incorporating traditional African music, dance, and folklore into the show's narrative (Azi, 2012). Furthermore, *Supa Strikas (2008)* incorporates conventional African art and design into its animation style. The show's visual style draws on traditional African patterns and motifs, such as geometric shapes and bold colours. This incorporation of classic African art and design is visually appealing and celebrates and promotes African culture and heritage. Another way that *Supa Strikas (2008)* represents South African identities is through its portrayal of soccer as a popular and influential sport in South Africa. Soccer is a sport widely played and followed in South Africa, and *Supa Strikas (2008)* showcases South Africans' passion and excitement for the sport. However, the show's multinational production process may result in cultural inaccuracies and misrepresentations. The show also is not limited to portraying South African identities and has characters from other countries such as Kenya, Jamaica, and Japan, to name a few. These identities, which all need to be represented respectively, are shown through various episodes set in the respective countries and feature storylines that reflect those cultures. With this, an argument can be made that a multinational production process may be beneficial for representing multiple cultural identities. The global appeal of *Supa Strikas (2008)* is also noteworthy. The show has been broadcasted in over 120 countries, reaching audiences beyond South Africa and Africa. The show's success in appealing to diverse audiences is attributable to its high production values and captivating storylines. It also reflects the growing interest in African culture and entertainment worldwide. The global recognition of the show serves as a testament to the quality and cultural significance of African media content.

The impact of outsourcing on cultural representations and identity is a complex issue, particularly in the context of global media and entertainment. However, the acquisition of *Supa Strikas (2008) International* by Moonbug, a global entertainment company, in 2020

raises questions about the representation of South African identities in the series. The acquisition raises concerns about the potential homogenisation of cultural identities and the impact on the authenticity of the show's portrayal of African culture. Overall, *Supa Strikas (2008)* is a successful South African animated television series that showcases diverse cultural identities and relevant themes to African audiences. Its global appeal highlights the quality and cultural significance of African media content. However, the acquisition of *Supa Strikas (2008)* International by a worldwide entertainment company raises important questions about the representation of South African identities in the series and the impact of outsourcing on cultural authenticity. As such, further research is needed to examine the implications of such acquisitions for representing cultural identities in global media and entertainment.

4.4 Afrimation and the Promotion of Africa's Cultural Heritage

Afrimation, or African animation, is a term used to describe animation created and produced in Africa or featuring African themes, characters, and stories made by Africans for African audiences. Afrimation is a growing industry that has the potential to promote Africa's rich cultural heritage and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about the continent (Azi, 2012). Afrimation is a powerful tool for promoting Africa's cultural heritage because it allows creators to represent African cultures uniquely and authentically. Afrimation encourages focusing on localisation and can incorporate traditional African folklore, music, storytelling techniques, and modern animation technology to create a visual and narrative representation of African culture that is both engaging and informative. Through Afrimation, creators can promote understanding and appreciation of Africa's diverse cultures and traditions. For example, Afrimation can showcase the rich cultural heritage of African countries, including their unique music, dance, and art forms. It can also promote the value of African languages and dialects, an essential part of Africa's cultural heritage. Afrimation can also challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Africa, particularly those perpetuated by the media. By featuring African characters and stories Afrimation can challenge the negative stereotypes of Africa that Western media has promoted, such as poverty, disease, and conflict. It can also promote positive images of Africa, such as its rich history, cultural diversity, and natural beauty.

The South African animation industry has emerged as a critical player in the development of Afrimation, animation made in Africa by Africans, with several animation studios producing content that highlights African culture and heritage. Afrimation has become an essential tool for promoting African culture and heritage in a digital age (Azi, 2012). The South African government has recognised the potential of the animation industry in promoting the country's cultural heritage and has provided support for the industry through funding and tax incentives. The development of Afrimation has been seen as a way to promote cultural diversity and encourage local talent in the South African animation industry. Joseph Azi's *Appraising the Role of Afrimation (African-Animation) in Promoting Africa's Rich Cultural Heritage in a Digital Age (2012)* argues that Afrimation has the potential to create a distinct identity for African animation and to promote the use of local languages and cultural

references (Azi, 2012). This can help to make more inclusive and diverse representations of African culture and challenge the dominance of Western animation. However, the development of Afrimation also presents challenges for the South African animation industry. Azi notes a lack of funding and support for Afrimation initiatives, making it difficult for local studios to compete with established Western animation industries. This has resulted in a shortage of skilled animators and technical expertise, which can limit the quality and scope of Afrimation content (Azi, 2012). To address these challenges, the South African government has established initiatives to support the development of Afrimation. For example, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) has created funding programs and training initiatives to support local animation studios and promote the development of Afrimation content. Additionally, provincial universities have established animation programs to train and mentor young animators and provide them with the skills and expertise needed to develop Afrimation content.

Triggerfish has been one of the leading studios in South Africa and Africa in terms of representing the country and continent within the animation world. The company has also outsourced its studios to other countries in recent years. *The Revolving Rhymes Part One and Part Two* (2016) is a British two-part animation series produced by Magic Light Productions and Triggerfish Animations, with Triggerfish supplying the animation. The series successfully won multiple awards, including Best Animated Special Production in the 2018 Annie Awards. (IMDb, 2018) This highlights the talent and skill of South African animators and the Triggerfish team. Still, when discussing the topic of Afrimation, external works cannot be looked at as they were not created for an African audience. Triggerfish has also worked with Disney in making an episode titled *Aau's Song* (2023) for the second season of their Disney+ anthology series *Star Wars Visions* (2021). Though the episode was made as part of an international franchise for another country, it opened up a key opportunity for Triggerfish to supervise another anthology series by Disney Plus that would focus on African animation and telling African Stories by Africans.

4.5 Afrofuturism Explored in *Kizazi Moto*

Afrofuturism is a term, movement and genre that is important when discussing the future of South African animation, especially when viewed alongside Afrimation. Afrofuturism combines sci-fi, fantasy, and historical elements with African art forms (Barnes, 2020). Afrofuturism in this paper is only looked at briefly as it links to upcoming South African and African animations that promise to tell African narratives, thus increasing and expanding the South African identity in South African animation. South African artist, Lillian Gray, describes Afrofuturism as "a movement that explores the intersection of African culture with science fiction and technology. It is a way of imagining a future for Africa that is not bound by the past but rather embraces the possibilities of what could be" (Gray, 2020). As such, we can look at Afrofuturism as the visualisation of Africa and Africans in a futuristic and fantastical context. In a way, Afrofuturism addresses the history of misrepresenting black people or people of African origins in the science fiction genre by displaying them in re-imagined scenarios involving high tech of fantasy and magic within the arts and animation. This goes

directly against the stereotype and narrative of Africa being wild and undeveloped. And when we look at animation and representation, we move away from African narratives focused on wildlife and the jungle, as seen in *Adventures in Zambezia* and *Jungle Beats: The Movie*, in favour of futuristic high-tech and fantasy stories that will be explored in the upcoming *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire (2023)*, anthology series.

Afrofuturism imagines a future where Africa was left to develop without any form of oppression and negative outside influences. Within Afrofuturism, you find stories that look at African history and retell a future if certain events did not occur. An example would be a story examining how South Africa would have evolved and developed if the British had not sailed down or if Apartheid was not a thing. Still, there was a peaceful union between all the people living in South Africa. Mohale Mashigo also asks if things would be different without the corruption that has plagued South Africa. Would the future of technology in the country develop differently if the youth had more influence? (Mashigo, 2020) Narratives like that in an animated format not only tell a new type of story from a South African viewpoint but allows the viewers of the content to not only see themselves represented in animated content but see themselves represented in the science fiction genre told by South Africans. In a way, Afrofuturism can be viewed as a way of decolonisation and with Afrimation, we look at visualising what that would look like in an animated context. (Becker, 2019)

Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire (2023), produced by Peter Ramsey, co-director of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, will be Disney Plus's second anthology animated series to premier in 2023, alongside *Star Wars Visions (2021)* season 2. Triggerfish will lead the series, bridging the gap between the South African and other African directors and Disney+ as they have worked with each other in the *Star Wars Visions (2021)* series. This upcoming series features ten unique African Stories; of the ten episodes, 5 of them are stories told by South African directors, and the remaining five will be by directors from Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Egypt. (Vourlias, 2021) The series is slated to include the following titles.

- *Stardust* (by Ahmed Teilab, Egypt)
- *Mkhuzi: The Masked Racer* (by Simangaliso Sibaya and Malcolm Wope, South Africa)
- *Hatima* (by Terence Maluleke and Isaac Mogajane, South Africa)
- *Enkai* (by Ng'endo Mukii, Kenya)
- *Moremi* (by Shofela Coker, Nigeria)
- *Surf Sangoma* (by Nthato Mokgata and Terence Neale, South Africa)
- *Mukudzei* (by Pious Nyenyewa, Zimbabwe)
- *First Totem Problems* (by Tshepo Moche, South Africa)
- *Herderboy* (by Raymond Malinga, Uganda)
- *You Give Me Heart* (by Lesego Vorster, South Africa)

(Spiller, 2021)

Ramsey mentions that the episodes, which run as separate individual short films, explore sci-fi topics such as other worlds, alien life forms, and time travel, which are not new to sci-fi but are now told through an African lens, making them fresh and unique. (Egan, 2023) Looking back at Dafna Lemish's *Children and Television: A Global Perspective* (2007), which highlighted the impact of representation in animated content, *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire* (2023) presents animated content in which South African children are not only represented, but the representation is pushed beyond the stereotype of Africa's underdeveloped and 3rd world status to new advanced worlds only limited by imagination.

The telling of these stories not only expands the representation of South Africa within animation but also builds on the identity of African and South African animation through visuals and narratives. At the time of writing, the series is yet to premiere, but key visuals and a teaser trailer have been released; see Figure 8 and 9, which showcases a glimpse at the visual language used in each episode. They feature bright, vibrant colours synonymous with Africa, along with character designs of African individuals, as seen by the African directors that head the ten individual stories. (Egan, 2023) Figure 9 showcases an integration between herding cattle and technology, further expanding the possibilities of representation within this format. A quick look at the IMDb page for the upcoming series also reveals several South African artists and actors who lend their voices as part of the cast, further extending and pushing the South African representation within the upcoming anthology series. (IMDb.com, 2023)



Figure 8: Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire concept artwork (Disney+, 2023)



Figure 9: Snapshot of Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire Teaser (Disney+, 2023)

This anthology series bridges the gap between localisation and globalisation. The directors and animators tell global stories with already established themes within the sci-fi genre but from a local African perspective. Triggerfish being the leading studio supervising all the animations, working with other animation centres across the continent and the world led by African directors, the anthology lends itself to being a good example of Afrimation, African animation by Africans for Africans, despite the series being made for Disney. (Animation Magazine, 2023) The series is created to be viewed exclusively on Disney +, which exposes the narratives and African visuals to a global audience using Disney's already established identity within the animation world, but because the content and majority of the production being done within the African continent, the series aims to maintain the advertised African identity within all the stories.

4.7 Chapter 4 conclusion

This chapter examined the developments and conversations within the South African animation industry. This examined the conversation around South African animated content within the animation industry. Insourcing and outsourcing are one of important topics when looking at the animation industry as it looks at either getting external help with creating and producing certain aspects of the animation by shipping the work off to another country or an animation hub to take advantage of cheaper labour or bringing in external talent into the company to utilise the skills in-house. Localisation and globalisation in animation is an essential aspect of the animation industry and significantly impacts the cultural relevance and accessibility of animated content. Changes to the story, character design, environment design, and themes can help to make animated content more accessible and appealing to local audiences while preserving the essence of the original content. In the South African context, localisation and globalisation in animation is a crucial

aspect of the animation industry, as animators seek to create content relevant to local audiences while also appealing to international audiences. The works of Victor Roudometof, among others, demonstrate the importance of studying localisation and globalisation in media, including animation, and their impact on cultural identity and cultural exchange. This examination led to the topic of globalisation and post-colonialism, in which content caters more towards a global theme, stripping the local identities and cultural aspects within the animation. This chapter highlighted the importance of local content and the idea of Afrimation by Joseph Azi, which means African animation, specifically those that are created by Africans and focus on promoting African cultures and identity, creating narratives for Africans. South Africa has also been seen as the leader in the Afrimation conversation. Still, the discussion of globalisation, outsourcing and insourcing within South African animation makes it hard to label all South African Animations as crucial examples of Afrimation. This chapter also highlighted the upcoming animated series Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire (2023), an anthology series featuring ten original stories told by Africans for Africans, which could be a great example of Afrimation.

Chapter 5. Representation of SA Identity: Detailed Analysis of The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013) and Seal Team (2021)

5.1 Overview

This study aims to evaluate the South African identity depicted in South African-produced animations. We will be examining *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* by Jonas Lekganyane and *Seal Team (2021)* by Triggerfish by analysing their visuals, themes, narratives, and use of language. A qualitative content analysis approach will be used to analyse the selected series episodes and the film *Seal Team (2021)*. This approach involves examining the series' content and identifying patterns, themes, and meanings. The research design for this study will be qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is particularly suited to studying complex social phenomena, such as cultural identity because it allows researchers to explore and understand people's experiences, perceptions, and attitudes in-depth. This research aims to understand how *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* and *Seal Team (2021)* represent South African identity through their visuals, themes, narratives, and language.

A purposive sampling technique will be used to select episodes of the animated series by Jonas Lekganyane to go along with the feature-length film *Seal Team (2021)* by Triggerfish Animation Studios for analysis. The episodes will be selected based on their availability on online platforms and popularity among South African audiences. For *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)*, four episodes from different seasons will be analysed: *Lockdown Shandis (2020)*, *Not Today Satan! (2017)*, *Electricity is my thing (2016)* and *The Interview (2015)*. The entire *Seal Team (2021)* film will be analysed on the other side. This is to get a sample from the series and feature film world of recent South African animation. The visuals, use of language, themes, narratives, and overall representation of South Africa and

South Africans will also be analysed by watching the episodes and film and taking notes on their content. This sampling method will ensure that the data collected is relevant to the research question and allows the researchers to explore the topic in-depth. The data collected from the episodes will be analysed through content analysis.

The data analysis will be guided by the social identity theory, mainly through the lens of Richard Jenkins and the representation in animation, mainly through the guidance of Paul Wells. Social identity theory and the concept of representation will be used to examine how the web series and movie's visual, thematic, narrative, and linguistic elements contribute to the construction and representation of South African identity.

5.2 Adventures of Noko Mashaba

Within the past decade, one of the most influential proudly South African animated works has been Jonas Lekganyane's *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) from his Ram Comics studio. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) is a South African animated web series that follows the adventures of a fictional character named Noko Mashaba, who is often caught up in various satirical and humorous situations that reflect South African society's social and political issues. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) has garnered much attention for its representation of South African identity. Unlike other shows that only make a few references to South African culture and identity, *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) fully embraces its roots by incorporating various elements such as language, visuals, narratives, and themes that reflect the everyday lives of South Africans. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) is primarily a web series that premieres on the Ram Comics YouTube page. Still, it has had runs within TV stations such as Soweto TV and Ekurhuleni TV. The episodes, on average, are between 3 and 5 minutes long, but some are split into parts and combined for a much longer run time. The series has a massive following, with episodes reaching millions of views from audiences across the globe. YouTube's global reach allows for the South African culture represented in the animation to be available to South Africans as well as a global audience.

The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013) represents a unique and complex South African identity that reflects the country's rich cultural heritage, complex history, and ongoing social and political struggles. The series' use of humour, satire, and social commentary allows it to engage with these issues in an entertaining and informative way. The series' popularity and critical acclaim suggest that it has resonated with audiences both within and outside of South Africa, *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) has received positive critical reception for its use of humour and satire to address critical social and political issues. The series has gained a significant following in South Africa and beyond, with viewers praising its high production values and the quality of its animation (Sidogi, 2021). The series has also been praised for its use of African languages, which helps to promote the diversity of African cultures.

The success of *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) also speaks to the power of online animation as a medium for cultural expression and representation. The series has been able to reach a global audience through its online distribution, allowing it to connect with

audiences who may not have access to traditional media outlets (Sidogi, 2021). This highlights the potential for online animation to provide a platform for diverse voices and perspectives worldwide. However, it is also essential to acknowledge the limitations of *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) in representing a South African identity. While the series provides a rich and complex portrayal of South Africa's cultural heritage and social issues, it only represents some South Africans' experiences. The series primarily focuses on the experiences of black South Africans and may not reflect the perspectives of other communities in the country.

Visually, *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) is a 2D animated series with unique and somewhat caricatured character designs of typical South African residences. The show makes use of everyday South African visual trends that help link the show back to South Africa. Noko is often spotted wearing his standard green shirt with the African continent on the front, whereas his uncle, Dons, is often seen wearing a plain white vest, commonly referred to as a wife beater, as seen in Figure 10. A recurring character within the series, Phusu, the show's resident "sangoma" or witch doctor, is seen wearing the traditional sangoma attire featuring beads on his head and sports a South African flag as a pin to tie his garment together, see Figures 11 and 12. The environment design of the show changes depending on the episode but generally visually represents a part of South Africa that the episode is based on. The episode *Electricity is my thing* (2016) has an environmental establishing shot which shows a city skyline in the distance and features semi-rural neighbourhoods, showcased through the distance between the neighbours, and pans to the Mashaba residence, which has a mountain backdrop symbolising how far it is from the city, see Figure 13. Figure 14 also shows us Phusu's home, which is a traditional South African thatch hut. The show does not hide its South African references, but it embraces them and makes them part of the show's identity. In the same episode, we see the Mashaba's watching the news, and the weather report is on. The visuals within this episode are a direct translation of a typical weather report from the SABC channel, see Figures 15 and 16, including an accurate South African map and abbreviations of various South African cities across the country.



Figure 10, Still from *Lockdown Shandis* (2020); Dons (Left) Noko (right) (Ramscomics, 2013)



Figure 11, Still from *SO2 Shenanigans* (2020); Phusu (African witch doctor) on a broom, (Ramscomics, 2013)



Figure 12, Still from *SO2 Shenanigans* (2020); Phusu (African witch doctor) using a portal, (Ramscomics, 2013)



Figure 13, Still from *Electricity is My Thing* (2016); The Mashaba residence (Ramscomics, 2013)



Figure 14, Still from *Izinyoka Mess* (2016); Phusu residence (Ramscomics, 2013)



Figure 15, SABC weather forecast, (The Observer, 2008)



Figure 16, Screen shot from episode *Electricity is My Thing* (2016); The Mashaba residence (Ramscomics, 2013)

The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013) satirises various themes related to South African society, such as politics, social inequality, racism, corruption, and crime. Though these are global/ universal issues that viewers from other regions can relate to, Jonas Lekganyane tackles them specifically within the South African context. The series does a great job at mirroring the reality of South Africa and often bases its episodes on trending topics within the country that can be seen through various articles and campaigns. The series does an excellent job at representing a South African Identity as it visualises current South African topics in a satirical manner, which helps create and facilitates more conversation and understanding on specific topics and also helps educate and bring awareness to even more serious issues the country as a whole might be going through.

The series often takes a humorous approach to these serious topics, using exaggerated characters and situations to provoke critical thinking and raise awareness about important issues. One of the main themes in *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* is political corruption. The series satirises politicians and government officials who engage in corrupt practices, exposing their greed and selfishness. For example, in the episode " *Not Today, Satan!* (2017)," Noko Mashaba exposes a corrupt traffic officer who demands a bribe from him in exchange for not issuing a traffic ticket. The episode highlights the prevalence of corruption in South African society and encourages viewers to speak out against it. Corruption within the South African Police Service is widely known by South African residents and has been covered in multiple articles across the decades. The two pieces examined are *Joburgers Open Up About Cop Corruption (2012)* and *Investigating Cold Drink Bribes in Law Enforcement (2019)*, featured on the Corruption Watch and Power 98.7 sites, respectively. According to the sources, bribery and corruption are widespread problems within the South African Police Service. The first article describes how some police officers accept bribes in the form of "cold drinks" from motorists to overlook traffic violations (Corruption Watch, 2012). The second article provides more insight into the issue, with Joburg residents describing how they regularly encounter police officers who demand bribes, whether for traffic violations or more serious crimes (Shazi, 2019). The articles suggest that corruption within the police force is driven by low salaries, a lack of training, and a culture of impunity that allows officers to engage in corrupt practices without fear of consequences. The second article notes that corrupt officers are often protected by their colleagues and superiors, making it difficult to hold them accountable (Shazi, 2019). The consequences of police corruption are profound, with residents describing how it erodes trust in the police and undermines public safety. The articles suggest that the problem is pervasive and requires a comprehensive response, including better training and oversight, more robust disciplinary measures, and efforts to address the root causes of corruption within the police force (Corruption Watch, 2012). The episode " *Not Today, Satan!* (2017) " features a high-speeding Noko Mashaba who claims to be running and driving away from the devil as he gets stopped by the traffic police. One of the first lines the police officers say to Noko includes, "Young man, I hope you have a licence to kill, or you will quench my thirst" (*Not Today, Satan!*, 2017), alluding to the possibility of being bribed to let them go without any issue. He also later lets them know that this situation will be solved "fast fast", further implying or setting the stage to be offered the "cold drink". The situation worsens when Noko reveals that he forgot his licence at home, and the police officer responds, "You see, now you've made me thirstier". Not a typical response given the situation, but one that

South Africans are familiar with and the show exaggerates and pokes fun at by having Noko's Uncle, Dons, casually respond, letting the officer know he doesn't have money on him at the moment only cards and enquires if the officer has a speed-point machine. The show pokes fun at how blatant and absurd the corruption is that it has even gone digital within the context of the show. The icing on the cake comes when the police officer is understanding of them driving without a licence but is more outraged by them not carrying "cold drink money" and attempts to give them a ridiculous fine before he, the police officer, is caught by the devil and is sent to the trending pages of Twitter as his punishment, further poking fun at the justice system within the country.

The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013) also does an excellent job of tackling severe issues plaguing South Africa over the years. South African residents have had various battles with Eskom over the years, but it has not been a one-way street. Many people misuse electricity, and some even steal power through various means, with a few of those cases ending fatally for the people involved. The show does an excellent job of addressing this issue. For example, in one episode titled *Electricity is my thing (2016)*, A cold front hits South Africa. The Mashaba household struggles to keep warm, creating a makeshift heater using multiple dangerous components plugged into one socket. This causes a blackout in the whole neighbourhood, forcing a representative from Eskom to go check it out. Before the representative's arrival, Dons, Noko's Uncle, tries tinkering with the electrical box and gets electrocuted. With the arrival of the Eskom agent, all the electrical faults were pointed out, including exposed wires, tangled plugs and tinkering with the box without authorisation. The episode uses humour to highlight the importance of electrical safety and green power usage, which is an important topic at the moment in South Africa. This episode visualises the message of electrical safety that Eskom has been campaigning for, for several years, mainly in August, the national electrical safety month in South Africa. In 2019 Eskom had the "Ska' Baiza" campaign, which translates to "don't do anything foolish", with an aim to educate more people about electrical safety. The campaign was modelled after South African "township lingo" and spread throughout schools and communities in South Africa in hopes of relating more to the schools and districts in the townships where a large number of electrical injuries are found. Within this campaign, Eskom covered many topics, including electricity/cable theft, vandalism, illegal connections and meter tampering, to name a few. Their main message was, "U-Ska Baiza – don't overload your plugs, don't take chances with unsafe and illegal connections and don't touch exposed cables" (Crown Publications, 2019). This campaign urged communities to get back to basics and use electricity safely. It was a point of importance for the drive to target schools. This was both for increasing safety education within the youth and because the kids are the future members of the communities. Building a good foundation of safe electrical use amongst the young would benefit the communities and the country as a whole.

The episode *Electricity is My Thing (2016)* echoes the messages and campaigns by Eskom. It delivers the news with humour that makes the content more relatable and digestible to local and township residents of South Africa. The episode, which was released on the 24th of August 2016, was sponsored by Eskom to promote electrical safety and was able to deliver the message without feeling like a direct advertisement or campaign. The episode still kept the show's natural and satirical humour, exposing the flaws and wrongdoings of people in South Africa and even poking fun at Eskom as they did in the year that this

episode was made. In an article on the 9th of December 2016, it was reported that Eskom was on the hunt for electricity thieves as they were the cause of a lot of physical harm to people in the communities' these crimes were taking place in. Eskom had cited 29 Deaths and 89 injuries within the three years before the findings were made in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal alone (African News Agency, 2016). This further enhances the need for electrical safety content and campaigns circulating nationwide. Because Eskom cannot go to every community, episodes like *Electricity is My Thing* (2016) are very important as they are accessible to anyone who has access to the internet across the country. The episode stays on the platform for as long as the creator leaves it up. At the moment of writing this paper, the episode has over 2.79 million views and counting. Even though the episode was released more than six years ago, it still has people watching it with its latest comment on the video made in March 2023. This shows that the episode continues to reach a broad audience across South Africa and the rest of the globe. This is important on topics like these as this is an issue Eskom is still dealing with. In 2022, Eskom confirmed to City Press a minimum of 24 deaths in the City of Johannesburg alone within the previous two years due to tampering or attempting to steal parts. (Majavu, 2022).

The series tackles the theme of discrimination in a compelling manner. This is particularly relevant in the context of the UNAIDS campaign, "Right Access - Movement for Social Justice," which aimed to encourage young people to speak out and empower themselves against discrimination and judgment related to HIV and AIDS and access to healthcare. The UNAIDS is a joint program of the United Nations that has made international efforts to combat the HIV and AIDS epidemic. South Africa has widespread misconceptions, judgment, and ignorance surrounding HIV and AIDS and people living with the virus. This has resulted in numerous campaigns to educate people about the subject and empower those living with it to stand up for themselves and lead positive lives (UNAIDS, 2023).

The series offers a vivid example of discrimination in the episode *The Interview* (2015). In this episode, Noko is interviewed for a job as a delivery driver for his favourite chip company. However, upon mentioning that he is from Limpopo, the interviewer immediately discriminates against him by assuming that he has HIV and is involved in witchcraft. This discrimination is common in South Africa, where people with HIV and AIDS are often stigmatised and ostracised. The episode does an excellent job of highlighting discrimination and using satire to expose its absurdity. Noko, in response to the interviewer's assumption, tells him that he will call his friend "Phusu," who is not like the CCMA (Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration) but more like Harry Potter on steroids, leaning into the witchcraft stereotype. This remark helps the interviewer change his attitude and give Noko the job. The episode also educates the audience about HIV and AIDS patients. In the next scene, a young girl walks into a clinic to collect ARVs (antiretroviral) but is denied by the male nurse on duty and judged by both the nurse and the pastor in the room. Both characters make baseless assumptions about the young girl, assuming she got the disease from sexual intercourse and suggesting that she would not be accepted in heaven because of her behaviour.

This scenario is a realistic example of the discrimination and judgment uneducated people give to those living with HIV and AIDS. However, with the arrival of Noko in the room, the situation is defused, and the two men are called out for their ignorance and judgment. The

show uses humour and satire to address serious social and political issues in South Africa. The series engages and entertains viewers by using humour, while the humour helps expose and criticise the underlying societal problems. The series is particularly effective in its use of exaggeration and irony, which help to highlight the absurdity and injustice of the situations being portrayed. Overall, discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS is a significant problem in South Africa, and the series highlights it excellently. By using humour and satire, the show manages to entertain while educating viewers about the issue. Through its exaggerated depictions of discrimination and the use of irony, the series exposes the absurdity of the underlying problems and helps to promote positive change in society.

One of the recurring themes in *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* is the portrayal of traditional African practices and customs. The show often depicts the use of traditional medicine and beliefs in witchcraft, which is a common theme in rural South Africa. The show's approach to this theme is unique, as it uses satire to poke fun at these stereotypes while still respectfully portraying them. For instance, the character "Phusu" is a recurring character in the show who claims to have a degree in "Loying engineering," which translates to "Bewitching Engineering." This character exemplifies how the show plays with the witchcraft and dark magic stereotype prevalent in South Africa. The character's absurd claim of having a degree in "Bewitching Engineering" is a humorous way to comment on this stereotype. Moreover, the episode *Izinyoka Shandis (2016)* showcases the show's approach to traditional African practices. The episode features Noko and Dons taking a recently electrocuted character, "Ske," who also happens to be a pastor, to Phusu for healing. Phusu tells Ske that he can help him out of everything but at a cost, which is an arm and a leg in the literal sense. This episode showcases the humorous portrayal of traditional medicine and beliefs in witchcraft while maintaining a respectful approach. In addition to its use of humour and satire, *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* also places a strong emphasis on traditional African values and customs. The series often depicts Dons engaging with traditional practices, such as using traditional medicine, participating in traditional rituals, or requesting traditional help to overcome certain situations. This emphasis on traditional African values and customs helps to reinforce a sense of cultural identity for South African viewers. Furthermore, the show's ability to explore various social issues in South Africa through humour has made it popular among South African viewers, with multiple episodes having over 3 million views. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* represents a South African identity by emphasising traditional African values and customs. The series uses humour, satire, and cultural references to create a sense of authenticity and relatability for South African viewers. Through its portrayal of traditional African values and customs, the series offers a positive representation of African identity and challenges dominant cultural narratives that emphasise the dominance of Western culture and the marginalisation of indigenous cultures.

The show is a fine example of how comedy can be used to comment on serious issues while providing entertainment. In particular, it demonstrates how television can be used as a platform to reflect on current situations and provide a voice for people to express their opinions on issues affecting them. The year 2020 was marked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on people's lives globally. South Africa, like most countries, was forced to implement a lockdown to curb the spread of the virus. During this period, the government banned the sale of alcohol, as it was believed to be one of the

main drivers of the virus's spread, mainly as it led to the flouting of social distancing regulations (Matzopoulos et al., 2020). The episode *Lockdown Shandis* (2020) explores the lives of South Africans during this time and how they dealt with the government's ban on alcohol. In this episode, Dons, like many South Africans, was desperate to buy alcohol but could not do so legally due to the ban. He was forced to buy alcohol illegally from people willing to risk selling it but at exorbitant prices. Dons buys a small amount of alcohol, which costs far below R100, but he ends up paying R450 for it because everything else is beyond his "tax bracket." This episode resonated with many South Africans who could relate to the struggles of obtaining alcohol during the lockdown. Some even experienced the same treatment from backdoor sellers, as highlighted in an article by Mpumi Kiva (2020) on the News24 site, which covered the homemade alcoholic brews that people resorted to making due to the extremely high prices from backdoor sellers. One interviewee in the article cited that the lockdown had taken them back to the Apartheid times when they had to make their own alcohol (Mpumi Kiva, 2020). This episode highlights the struggles faced by South Africans during the pandemic and how they had to resort to illegal means to obtain necessities. Furthermore, it provides a commentary on the government's handling of the pandemic and the measures put in place to curb its spread. The episode also demonstrates how television can be used as a tool for social commentary and reflection. By making light of the situation, the episode creates a sense of camaraderie among its audience, providing a much-needed source of entertainment during a difficult time.

The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013) is unique in its use of local South African languages and slang. The series is primarily in Sepedi, a South African language mainly spoken in the northern regions of South Africa, including Gauteng, Limpopo and parts of Mpumalanga. The show also incorporates elements of English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, and other South African languages, as well as slang and informal expressions commonly used in South Africa. The use of local languages and slang in *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) helps to represent and promote South African culture and identity. By incorporating elements of different South African languages, the series reflects the country's linguistic diversity and fosters a sense of pride and identity among South African viewers. The use of slang and vernacular expressions also helps to create a sense of authenticity and realism, making the series relatable to viewers from all walks of life. In addition to promoting South African culture and identity, local languages and slang also make the series more accessible to local audiences. South Africa is multilingual, and many viewers may not have English as their first language. By incorporating elements of local languages, the series becomes more relatable and accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not speak English fluently. Using local languages and slang also adds to the humour and satire in *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013). The series uses humour to address serious social and political issues, and using local languages and slang helps enhance the comedic effect. The use of local languages and slang in the series also has the potential to promote cultural exchange and understanding. The series has gained a following in South Africa and other parts of the world. By incorporating local languages and slang elements, the series provides viewers with a glimpse into South African culture and promotes cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. All four episodes examined, and the series as a whole lean heavily on the use of vernacular and everyday township slang to create an authentically South African series. Another critical aspect of the show is its use of South African indigenous languages mixed with vernacular. This not only adds authenticity to the show but also promotes the different

cultures in South Africa, as it is home to many different cultures. However, it is essential to note that the show does not represent all of South Africa's cultures and people, as there are other cultures and people the show does not touch on, like the Afrikaans farm culture.

It is worth mentioning that the series is set in the sub-rural parts of Limpopo, which may be why certain cultures are not represented fully within the show's context. However, the show does an excellent job of representing the cultures that it can within the realm of possibility of the show. As the series is ongoing, there is no telling what could happen next and which culture could be represented next. This makes the show an exciting representation of South African identity that continues to evolve. Moreover, it is crucial to note that *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* serves as an excellent platform for promoting South African culture. The show's ability to reflect on everyday South African lives provides valuable insight into the country's culture and traditions. This is especially important for audiences who may not be familiar with South African culture or those who are looking to learn more about it. Furthermore, the show's ability to tackle sensitive issues through humour is commendable. It creates a safe space for audiences to engage with and discuss these issues without feeling overwhelmed or uncomfortable. In doing so, it plays a vital role in promoting education and understanding amongst South Africans and does so in more than the globally accepted English language.

Overall, *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* is an excellent representation of South African identity that fully embraces its roots in language, visuals, narratives, and themes. One of the most striking aspects of the show is how it portrays an exaggerated mirror of what a typical South African would go through. This is achieved through narratives that tackle issues that are very close and dear to the South African public. These issues range from corruption, discrimination, sexual education, and electrical safety. While the show leans into a few stereotypes for comedic purposes, it offers far more educational content that balances the show's identity. While it may only represent some of South Africa's cultures and people, the show does a fantastic job of representing the cultures that it can within the context of the show. Its ongoing success is a testament to its ability to reflect everyday South African lives and promote South African culture while tackling sensitive issues through humour.

5.3 Seal Team (2021)

Seal Team (2021) is a beautifully animated 3D animated film that premiered on Netflix and was released to an international audience in December of 2021. The film movie produced by Triggerfish Animation Studios and directed by Greig Cameron and Kane Croudace. The film follows a young seal, Quinn, who lives in a community plagued by the scarcity of fish as well as a constant looming threat of vicious sharks that attack periodically. Quinn gets help from a retired HMMF (Hydro-Marine Military Force) captain, Claggart, voiced by J.K Simmons, in the fight against the dangerous sharks. The movie was made in South Africa and had numerous South African Easter eggs⁵ sprinkled across the animation that may go unnoticed by the uninformed viewer. However, the film has an overall international feel with its universal narrative and themes throughout the story. The film showcases the power of teamwork and friendship as misfit seals band together to save their home from the ruthless sharks that threaten their existence.

There are a number of visual references that link the film back to South Africa and help tie it to a South African Identity to balance out the global theme and narrative. This can be seen in both the characters and environmental designs. The main characters of the animation, the seals, are South African fur seals, which are mainly found off the southern coast of Western Cape. The rest of the characters which include sharks, seagulls, and dolphins are all sea creatures that can be found within the same waters. See Figure 17. The animals are then personified and given human-like qualities to make them more visually appealing to a younger audience and fit within exaggerated animation styles as opposed to representing realism.



Figure 17, Still from *Seal Team (2021)*, (IMBD, 2021)

The majority of the animation takes place within the waters off the coast of Cape Town. The home of the seals, Seal Island, is based on a real island in False Bay Cape Town of the same name. The film draws a lot from False Bay and Cape Town for its representation of characters and environments. False Bay is home to a herd of fur seals living on Seal Island as

⁵ Easter Egg- is a term used to describe a message, image or feature hidden in media

well as great white sharks who hunt the seals for food. The sharks not only hunt the seals underwater but in False Bay the Sharks leap out of the water with great accuracy to catch the seals mid-air and go crashing down in the water with them. This is something the movie draws direct inspiration from (Southafrica.com, 2019). The two main environmental designs that tie it to Western Cape and help give the film a South African identity are, the Ship, The Good Boy, that Claggart lives in and the V&A Waterfront harbour. We are told in the beginning of the film that this is near Cape of Storms where the ship presumably crashes after the explosion caused by Claggart cutting the wrong wire while trying to defuse a



bomb, which is a visual reference to the crashed ships on the Southern points of the coast of Cape Town. See Figures 18 and 19.

Figure 18, Arniston shipwreck (Flax, 2021)



Figure 19, H.M.M.F Goodboy shipwreck, (Mahlangu, n.d.) (Triggerfish, 2021)

The Cape of Storms is a treacherous stretch of coastline located at the southernmost tip of the African continent. It is known for its unpredictable weather conditions, strong currents, and rugged terrain, which have contributed to countless shipwrecks over the centuries. This area, also known as the Cape Peninsula, is an important landmark that has played a significant role in shaping the history of South Africa. Over the centuries, the Cape of Storms became known as one of the most dangerous stretches of water in the world, with treacherous currents, unpredictable weather, and rocky shorelines claiming countless ships and lives. The area is home to more than 20 shipwrecks, many of which are still visible today. The Inside Guide website provides a comprehensive list of these wrecks, including the *Sao Jose Paquete Africa*, the *SS Thomas T Tucker*, and the *SS Kakapo* (Capepoint.co.za, 2019) (Flax, 2021). The shipwrecks off the coast of the Cape of Storms serve as a reminder of the danger that sailors faced when navigating these waters. The area is known for its strong winds, unpredictable currents, and large waves, which make it one of the most dangerous stretches of water in the world. The Cape of Storms has deep cultural significance for the people of South Africa. It is a symbol of the country's history, resilience, and natural beauty. The area is home to a number of cultural landmarks, including the Cape Point lighthouse, which was built in 1859 and was operation until 1919. *Seal Team (2021)* borrows from this historical setting and incorporates it within their animation infusing a South African identity within the film. Though they do not touch on the history behind the area or the shipwrecks but rather create their own new story and use these visual and narrative elements as “Easter eggs” for those who know about the significance and importance of these elements. The other visual indication is in a scene towards the end of the film where the team have to go to the harbour in V&A Waterfront, which is in Cape Town. This is visually represented through the designs of the building and architecture, see Figure 20. This is also backdropped by the Table Mountain which is a National Landmark in South Africa, and one that is recognised internationally. The Cape of Storms may be not as widely known by people outside South Africa, but the use of the Table Mountain as a backdrop for the setting immediately visualises and communicates that the film takes place at the very least near the oceans of South Africa, see figure 21. The majority of the film takes place underwater, which is hard to pin and locate to a specific region. This lends itself more to its international identity as the seas are a place that universally people can locate and understand and, to some extent, even relate to.



Figure 20, Cape Town, V&A Waterfront Harbour, (Mahlangu, n.d.) (Triggerfish, 2021)



Figure 21, Cape Town V&A Waterfront Harbour, (Secretcapetown.co.za, 2020)

The 3D visualisation and personification of the seals in *Seal Team (2021)* shares similarities to how Disney personified their animal characters throughout their animations. This is a large factor that contributes to the films international appeal and identity despite South African references. The process of personifying animals in animation begins with understanding how the animal being represented moves and behaves in its natural environment. For example, in the Disney film *The Lion King (1994)*, the animators studied the movement and behaviour of real lions to create the character of Simba. They observed the way lions move, how they carry themselves, and how they interact with other animals. They then used this knowledge to create a character who felt authentically like a lion, while still being relatable and engaging to audiences.

The same attention to detail was applied to other animal characters in the film. For example, Timon and Pumbaa, the meerkat and warthog duo, were given exaggerated, comical movements that were inspired by the real-life behaviour of these animals. By understanding the unique traits and personalities of these animals, the animators were able to create characters that were both entertaining and believable. Animal personification is not limited to realistic depictions, however. In the world of animation, animals can be given human-like personalities and behaviours, making them even more relatable and engaging to audiences. For example, in the classic Disney film *Bambi (1942)*, the title character is a young deer who is given human-like emotions and experiences. Through Bambi's eyes, audiences are able to experience the joys and challenges of growing up, while also enjoying the cute and endearing qualities of a young deer, see figure 22. One of the key elements of personifying animals in animation is to give them distinct personalities. This can be achieved through the use of movement, facial expressions, and vocal inflection. For example, in the Disney film *The Lion King (1994)*, the character of Simba is given a playful and carefree personality through his movements and playful interactions with other characters. Similarly, Scar, Simba's uncle and also the villain of the show, is depicted as cunning and manipulative through his sharp movements and menacing expressions.



Figure 22, Still from *Bambi* (1942), (Disney, 1942)

The use of anthropomorphism does not only include giving animals the ability to speak but extends to wearing clothes and or engage in human activities. In the Disney film *Zootopia* (2016), for example, animals are depicted as living in a city and engaging in various human-like activities, such as going to work and attending school. This use of anthropomorphism allows audiences to connect with the characters on a deeper level and relate to their experiences. In *Seal Team* (2021), the Seals typically move like seals and behave more like humans to further bridge the gap and enhance the anthropomorphism. Their distinct personalities exaggerate their performances and we see the human within the animal. The character designs are also enhanced to help sell this. The Seals are given various human features which range from a moustache, human accessories, like goggles, they all have human teeth as well as eyebrows to help them with their expressions. Geraldo, who refers to himself as “The Great Geraldo”, personifies an overly confident and egotistic character. One of his selling features is his perfectly symmetrical features. The character design leans towards a “beefy Jock” character type, as they redesign his face, like all the other seals, to have more human like features and they give him a silky “wet hair” hair style, see Figure 23. The character in mannerism has similarities to Jonny Bravo from the *Jonny Bravo* (1997) Cartoon Network cartoon (Partible et al., 1997), see Figure 24. Though the character is not an animal, it speaks to *Seal Team* (2021) for delivering a non-human character that has the personality of a human character. These features within the various character designs give the film overall an international, or global identity as the characters do not try to visually represent a specific group of people, but rather use animals to make the content easily relatable.



Figure 23, Still from *Seal Team* (2021); Geraldo, (Triggerfish, 2021)



Figure 24, Still from *Johnny Bravo* (1997), Johnny Bravo, (Hanna-Barbera Productions, 1997)

The theme of teamwork carries the film and shines from the beginning when Quinn meets his mentor figure, Claggart, who rescues Quinn from a shark attack, leading to Quinn

wanting to learn from him. Claggart agrees on the condition that Quin gathers a team. This notion of a team and working together, utilising people's strengths and weaknesses to overcome impossible scenarios like going up against a shiver of sharks. The film's theme of teamwork is delivered through cross-species cooperation, which is important in the conversation of diverse perspectives that also reflect global trends in contemporary media. This is also important in the context of South Africa, a diverse country with a segregated history, to promote themes of teamwork. Another important theme of the film is the idea of perseverance and determination. The seals face numerous challenges and obstacles in their fight against the sharks but refuse to give up. This is a theme that transcends borders allowing audiences across the globe to relate and see themselves within the characters. These themes, being driven by animal creatures, further provide a universal and global interpretation of the characters as they do not specifically visually represent a specific identity regarding nationality and race. The use of animal creatures also allows for the message to be delivered in a light-hearted tone that will entertain and educate younger and older audiences alike (Barajoun, 2015).

The narrative follows a group of seals who want to fight back against their natural predators who hunt them for food. This is based on reality for all seals worldwide and that of the South African fur seals living in False Bay and their great white predators. This is also further explored when the sharks decide to team up and become an even bigger threat to the seals than they were originally. At the end they are beaten by the seals because of a few reasons but one of them being because they did not work together as a team at the end. The film's narrative follows the theme of teamwork throughout, carrying familiar tropes seen throughout media of having a member sacrificing themselves to save the crew with a big action sequence where the remaining team members have to work together to push through the impossible, further highlighting the theme of teamwork.

This leads to the voice acting and character Performance of *Seal Team (2021)*. Voice acting is an essential aspect of the animation industry (Björklund, 2009). It brings animated characters to life and enables them to communicate with the audience. The voice actor is responsible for creating a believable and memorable performance that complements the character's appearance, personality, and emotions. Voice acting in animation requires a unique set of skills and techniques that differ from those used in live-action films. One of the most significant benefits of voice acting in animation is the ability to create unique and memorable characters. When a voice actor is able to create a distinct and recognizable voice for a character, it can help to make that character stand out and be more memorable to viewers. This can be especially important in a crowded market, where there are countless animated shows and movies vying for attention. Voice acting is also essential for conveying emotion and nuance in animated characters. Animated characters have a broader or more exaggerated range of facial expressions and body language than live-action actors. But animation still needs skilled voice actors to convey a range of emotions through their vocal performance. This can help to make animated characters feel more human and relatable, even if they are not physically human. Another benefit of voice acting in animation is the ability to create diverse and inclusive characters. With voice acting, a character's ethnicity, gender, and physical appearance can be more fluid, allowing for greater representation and diversity in animated media. This can help to make animated media more inclusive and reflective of the real world.

Representation is an important issue in animation, as it can shape how different groups of people are portrayed on screen. Voice actors can play a significant role in promoting diversity and inclusivity in animation by creating authentic and nuanced performances that accurately reflect different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. One way that voice actors can promote representation is by researching and understanding the cultural and historical context of the character they are portraying (Björklund, 2009). For example, a voice actor portraying a character from a different country or culture should take the time to learn about that culture's language, dialects, customs, and history. This can help them create a more authentic and nuanced performance that accurately represents that culture. Another way that voice actors can promote representation is by advocating for diverse casting and production practices in the animation industry. They can use their platforms to promote the importance of diversity and inclusivity in animation, and encourage studios and production companies to hire more diverse talent both in front of and behind the camera (Giesen & Khan, 2017).

When it comes to the voices of the characters in the film, which is an important part of the animation's identity, *Seal Team (2021)* moves further away from a South African identity in favour of a global identity. The majority of the main cast is voiced by Hollywood actors who have already played or voiced iconic characters in popular series that are distributed globally. This gives the characters in *Seal Team (2021)* a distinct American identity, which is familiar and recognizable to audiences worldwide. While there are some South African voice artists involved in the production, the American actors take centre stage in terms of roles and screen time. J.K. Simmons, Patrick Warburton and Kirsten Schaal, to name a few, are some of the main Hollywood stars that voice in *Seal Team (2021)*. They are all highly accomplished and respected American voice actors whose performances contribute significantly to the American identity portrayed in *Seal Team (2021)*. The familiarity and recognizability of their voices provide the characters they play with an international and even American identity, making them stand out to viewers worldwide. We recognize their voices and accents to be American, and as such, the characters they portray project an American identity similar to those of the many American movies and tv shows they have been in. The film does feature South African voice actors with a few of the big names being Sharlto Copley and John Kani who voice two side characters, Switch and Brick, respectively. The other South African voice actors voice South African characters which have very minimal roles within the film like, the tour guide, the security guard and the harbour seals. These characters are designed to reflect the South African identity enhanced by the South African accents. These characters add the much-needed diversity to the film.

Despite its distinct South African elements, *Seal Team (2021)* also has a global identity. The film's animation style uses 3D animation techniques to create a visually stunning film that appeals to a global audience. The storyline features universal themes of teamwork, perseverance, and overcoming adversity that are relatable to audiences worldwide. Furthermore, the film's distribution on a global platform like Netflix also highlights its global identity. According to [Actorspaces.co.za](https://actorspaces.co.za) (2022), *Seal Team (2021)* made it onto Netflix's global top 10 films for the week ending January 9th, 2022, suggesting that it has found an audience beyond South Africa. The fact that the film has resonated with viewers around the world speaks to its broader global appeal and suggests that its themes and storytelling resonate with a diverse audience. Overall, *Seal Team (2021)* is a fun and engaging animated

film that combines action, humour, and important messages. It is a great example of how Triggerfish Animation Studios portrays more global themes in their animations but still contributes to the growth of the South African animation industry and showcases the country's unique identity to the world.

5.4 *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013) and Seal Team (2021) Comparison*

In recent years, South Africa's animation industry has experienced tremendous growth, with various productions aimed at a global audience with animated works utilising the mediums representative nature to further the South African Identity within the space. They achieve this both in terms of ownership, as discussed in Wells' *Animation: Genre and Authorship (2002)*, and by representing the social identities of South Africans within the content visually, narratively, linguistically, culturally, and thematically, themes which are discussed in Wells' *Understanding Animation (1998)* in combination with the theory of social identity discussed by Richard Jenkins. Both Jonas Lekganyane's *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* and Triggerfish's *Seal Team (2021)* are good examples of South Africa's contemporary animation scene, with the former prioritising the South African Identity within its content delivering content that could be seen as a great example of Afrimation. The latter represents South Africa in the commercial space, showcasing less of a South African identity within the content in favour of a more global and universal identity within its content.

Looking back at Well's work on *Understanding Animation (1998)*, in which he breaks down the medium and the various means by which animation conveys meaning within its inherently representative nature, we explore the role in which visuals convey an identity (Wells, 1998). *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* features a unique yet simple visual style based on South African caricatures, which works with 2D animation techniques. The animation style is simplistic yet effective, allowing for easy consumption and relatability. The series also uses various South African cultural references and iconography, such as traditional clothing, South African uniforms, prop and environmental designs, to add to its authenticity (see Noko's and Phusu's clothing in Figures 8 and 9, respectively) (Sidogi, 2021). This gives the show an overall South African Identity before considering its narrative, use of language or themes. With closer inspection, though, it is also clear that the show and its visuals are from a black South African's perspective. Thus, you could further classify the show as having a black South African identity as the country is multiracial, and though it does touch on the other races within the country, the focus is on the black community.

The visual style of *Seal Team (2021)* has a more global appeal and identity within its designs. The film is rendered with high-quality 3D graphics and attention to detail. The movie's underwater scenes are particularly impressive, showcasing the animators' technical skills. The movie also features a diverse range of characters, including various sea life creatures, adding to its visual appeal (The South African, 2022). Though most of the animals in the films can be found in South African waters, and the film is set near the shores of Cape Town, giving it that South African identity, the style in which the characters are rendered are within the same design language used in international animations. An example can be seen in the character designs of the seals in the animation as they share many visual similarities with Lucille, the seal character from Disney Junior's *Jake and the Never Land Pirates (2011)*. The seals in *Seal Team (2021)* have big round eyes, soft features, a human-like smile, and teeth that are human-like, which is quite different from real-life seals. However, these features were added to make the characters more relatable to the audience, and this technique is common in many Western animations. Despite *Seal Team (2021)* having a

different overall design, the visual language used is similar to Lucille's (see Figures 25 and 26).



Figure 25, Still from *Jake and the Never Land Pirates* (2011), Lucille the Seal, (Disney Junior, 2011)



Figure 26, Still from *Seal Team* (2021); Beth, (Triggerfish, 2021)

Visuals do not make up the whole representation spectrum in animation. Paul Wells elaborates within his book *Understanding Animation* (1998) that animation reflects cultural values and themes while representing social identities (Wells, 1998). We see this through the narratives, themes and use of language used in the animation in collaboration with the visuals, and both of these animated works tackle these identifiers differently. South Africa has 11 official languages, each with its own cultural and historical significance. The use of different languages in media, literature, and everyday life reflects the country's linguistic diversity and helps to reinforce the importance of multilingualism as a cultural value. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba's* (2013) use of language allows for a deeper connection with

the audience, as they can relate to the characters' speech and cultural references. Additionally, the series' primary use of the Pedi language is a form of cultural preservation, ensuring that the language remains relevant and used in modern media (Sidogi, 2021). Another important aspect of South African identity is its cultural heritage, which includes music, dance, food, and traditional beliefs. These elements often reflect the country's diverse ethnic groups, such as the Zulu, Xhosa, and Pedi. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* not only incorporates but embraces and promotes multiple South African languages and traditional beliefs, providing a glimpse into the cultural practices of one of South Africa's ethnic groups. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* explores various themes relevant to South African society, such as corruption, social inequality, and political satire. The series uses humour to address these issues, making it accessible and appealing to a broad audience. The narratives in the series are also relatable, often drawing from real-life events in South Africa (Sidogi, 2021). *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* addresses and shines a light on under-represented social groups like the people dealing with HIV and AIDS while educating the viewers on the topic as a whole. The show does an excellent job of confronting and breaking the negative stereotypes surrounding the virus. This further illustrates Wells' writing on understanding animation, allowing us to see past animations' entertainment value and see the medium as a tool for representing and fighting against negative stereotypes and narratives (Wells, 1998).

In contrast, *Seal Team (2021)* does not use any indigenous South African languages in its dialogue and does not explicitly explore South African themes. *Seal Team's (2021)*'s narrative revolves around friendship, and teamwork, themes that have been established throughout the history of the medium and used widely as they are universal themes that can be understood across the globe. The movie addresses these issues through the story of the seals and their fight to save their home from destruction. Although the movie does not explicitly explore South African themes, its message is relevant to the country and the rest of the world (The South African, 2022). Though the movie does not highlight South African themes, narratives and languages, it does however, feature a few South African voice actors behind a largely South African production team at Triggerfish, contributing to the country's industry within the global animation world. The use of local talent also reflects the growing animation industry in South Africa, which is slowly gaining recognition on a global scale. This is based on the idea of authorship presented by Wells, in which individual animators, teams or production studios are highlighted alongside the animation. In this case *Seal Team (2021)* is recognised as part of the Triggerfish collection of films, giving the film ownership amongst audiences. Triggerfish's status enhances this as one of the leading animation studios not only in the country but in the continent of Africa. Thus, despite the film's content being largely globalised, because it is a Triggerfish film, it carries an overall South African identity through the sense of authorship.

In conclusion, South African identity is shaped by a range of factors, including language, themes, visual language, and narrative. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba (2013)* and *Seal Team (2021)* both contribute to South African identity in different ways. While the two animations have different ways of expressing these factors, they both reflect important aspects of South African identity. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba's (2013)* focus on representing a black South African identity while also touching on traditional beliefs, political and social issues highlights the country and its people in a way that reflects their

identity. In contrast, *Seal Team* (2021)'s emphasis on collaboration and team reflects a more globally recognizable theme but one South Africa, at a global level can also relate to considering the use of interspecies collaboration within the film that does not restrict the representation. With *Seal Team's* (2021) international release it exposes South African animators to the international commercial world further promoting South Africa in the animation world.

Chapter 6: A practice-led analysis of *Midnight Escapade*

In South Africa, there exists a budding short-animated film industry encompassing a variety of studios that create unique and diverse works. This industry is primarily funded by government organizations such as the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), which provides an open application process for funding to both individuals and companies. Additionally, the Kwa-Zulu Natal Film Commission (KZNFC), similar to the NFVF, financially supports and provides guidance to both individuals and companies in their efforts to create media content.

One noteworthy collaboration between TriggerFish and the NFVF resulted in the funding of several successful projects, including the 2021 feature-length animated film, *Seal Team* (2021). Such partnerships between the government and animation studios have enabled the industry to thrive and produce high-quality works. Katanimate Animation Studio is another such company that has received funding from the government, securing funds from the KZNFC to create and complete the animated short film, *Midnight Escapade* (n.d.).

Between late 2019 and the end of 2020, I was part of a group of individuals that had the opportunity to work for Katanimate Studios in Durban. We completed the short-animated film, *Midnight Escapade* (n.d.) in that timespan as well as work on a few other animated projects. This film tells the captivating story of a toy ballerina named Antionette, who resides in an old clock drawer within a shed filled with old tools, magazines, and other forgotten items. The magical powers of the moon awaken Antionette at midnight for only 15 minutes, during which she spends her time dancing and practicing a particular move that is the finale of her dance piece. (See Figure 27 where Antionette is about to begin her dance) Figure 28 shows the environment within the old shed with an old bicycle, toys and various items. One fateful night, while practicing this move, she accidentally spins too close to the edge of the drawer and falls out.



Figure 27, Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Antionette in clock drawer, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)



Figure 28, Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Environment, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)

As Antionette falls out of the drawer, she immediately begins to lose the magic that sustains her life, and she must quickly jump back into the drawer before her time runs out. Due to this experience, she developed a fear of ever leaving the confines and safety of the box again. The next day, a human walks into the room and drops a box filled with old toys. It is at this point that we meet the second character, Fernando. He, like Antionette, is also a dancer who awakens thanks to the power of the moon. Figure 29 shows Fernando under the moonlight with the magic bringing his toy body to life. The moon magic channels through Fernando's hat and filters down, bringing the character to life. Figure 30 shows the magic of that brings him to life glowing from his hat. Upon witnessing Antionette's graceful movements, he invites her out of the box to join him in a space that is more conducive to their mutual passion for dance, see Figure 31.



Figure 29, Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Fernando, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)



Figure 30, Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Fernando Close up, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)

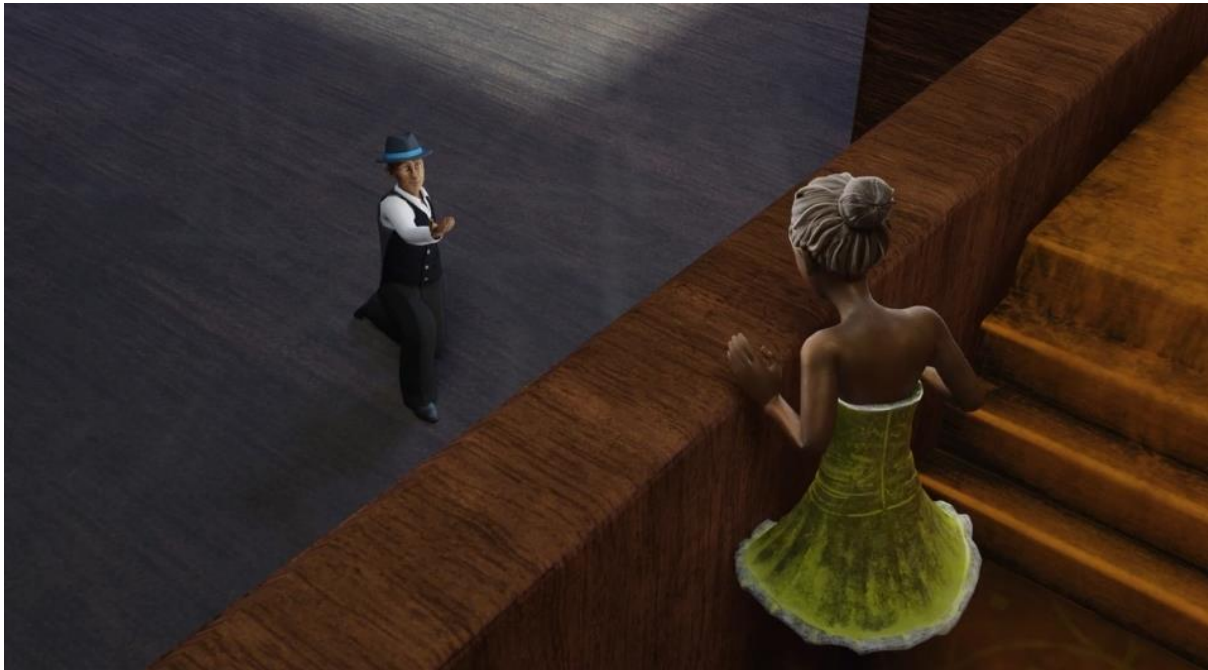


Figure 31, Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Fernando(left) inviting Anionette(right) Out of the box, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)

The production of the film was made possible through the generous financing provided by the Kwa-Zulu Natal Film Commission (KZNFC), which has been steadfast in its commitment to supporting and encouraging the growth of the animation industry in South Africa. In particular, the KZNFC has sought to foster the development of this industry within the province of KZN, thereby creating job opportunities and contributing to the economic prosperity of the region. As one of the beneficiaries of this initiative, I had the privilege of working alongside a team of interns on the creation of an animation that meets the high standards of the industry in terms of quality and available tools.

Moreover, the fact that the studio was situated within the KZNFC building gave us access to numerous talks and presentations by renowned professionals within the animation industry, providing invaluable insights into the latest techniques and trends. However, the KZNFC did not simply fund animations or films made within KZN without any stipulations; rather, the content of these productions was required to have some sort of relationship to the province. This was intended to promote and celebrate local culture and narratives in a media space that is inundated with global content.

With regard to the content of our film, the character designs were inspired by toys. For instance, the character Antionette was modelled after a bronze ballerina toy, adorned in a yellow gold dress, as depicted in Figure 32. Meanwhile, the character Fernando was designed to resemble a wooden toy wearing pants, a shirt, a formal vest and a fedora. Interestingly, the clock in the film was also depicted as a character in its own right, with the power of the moon, imbuing the leaf designs attached to it with life and personality.



Figure 32, Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Antionette Close up, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)

Although the characters did not have any distinctive South African ties, they represented toys that could be found in any middle-class household. However, the environment design of the animation provided a clear indication of ties to South Africa, particularly the city of Durban. The animation takes place in a small shed at the back of a yard, surrounded by tropical vegetation typical of the Durban or coastal KZN region. Additionally, an old Durban number plate within the shed and several old South African magazines in the background helped to give the short film a distinctively South African identity.

The animation exhibits a visual language that leans towards realism. The high-quality textures and realistic designs of the characters and props that make up the scene lend the animation a life-like quality. In addition, the animation was created using human reference, with some motion-captured scenes that were cleaned up to achieve smooth and realistic movements. This attention to detail in the animation design not only adds to the visual appeal but also allows the audience to engage with the story more deeply. Narrative-wise, the animation has a foreign identity that transcends geographical boundaries. The inclusion of Fernando, the tango dancer, is an example of this. Tango is a ballroom dance with Latin American origins, but Fernando's use of magic to recreate the streets of Buenos Aires as a setting to show off his dancing further solidifies his global identity. This character and his cultural identity serve to introduce audiences to a culture that they may not be familiar with while also contributing to the overall theme of the story. The underlying theme of the animation is about breaking free from the constraints that society puts on individuals and pursuing one's dreams despite them. This theme is delivered through the eyes of a female character, Antionette, who must challenge the gender norms and oppression that women have faced throughout history. The theme is not limited to one gender, and it is a universal theme that people worldwide can relate to. This universal message is delivered visually in several ways throughout the animation.

For instance, Antionette dances in a small drawer, and her magic only keeps her alive as long as she remains in the box. When she accidentally leaves the drawer, the power that was giving her life begins to disappear, and it only returns when she returns to the box. Later in the story, Antionette wakes up to find Fernando has fallen off the table leaving behind his hat, the source of his power. In an attempt to save Fernando's life, Antionette must willingly leave her drawer and retrieve Fernando's hat, hoping it will help him regain his power. This was a painful experience for the character both mentally and physically as she had to overcome the fear from her previous experience outside the box as well as the physical pain of the power that keeps her alive slowly leaving her. Upon retrieving the hat, it grants her the ability to survive outside the box and bring Fernando back in a new form. The mode of communication employed in the animation does not involve spoken dialogue, but rather relies on sound effects, music and miming which can be universally understood. This technique avoids alienating any region and can be enjoyed by a global audience without the need for subtitles or dubbing into different languages. This is similar to the *Mr. Bean* (2002) animated series, starring the globally recognised Mr. Bean as he does not rely on dialogue to be understood (Boyle, 2002).

Working on the animated film was an enormous learning experience, primarily due to small size of our twelve-person team. The size of this team meant that each member had to play multiple roles and perform tasks in various areas of the animation production pipeline. This arrangement enabled me and my colleagues to learn and grow rapidly, thus contributing to the South African animation space. In particular, my involvement in the animation, visual effects, scene setup, and rendering, phases has expanded my knowledge and skills, has helped expand my knowledge of the working of the animation pipeline⁶. Thus, this experienced has aided in creating individuals who are more versatile in the field, and will go on to strengthen our nations animation industry.

The success of this animated short film is a testament to the thriving industry in South Africa, which is supported by the government through funding and guidance. As such, animation studios in the country can continue to create unique and diverse works that captivate audiences worldwide. Overall, the KZNFC's support has been instrumental in promoting the growth of the animation industry in KZN, and in providing opportunities for budding animators and filmmakers to produce high-quality content that reflects local culture and narratives. *Midnight Escapade* is a testament to this support, showcasing the potential of South African animators to create world-class content with unique and captivating narratives. This animation presents a global identity through its character design of Fernando and its narrative, as well as delivering a universal theme that many people can relate to. The attention to detail in the animation design and the use of visual storytelling add to the depth of the story, making it a compelling and engaging work of art. The animation's mode of communication through sound effects and gestures contributes to its global identity. The team-based approach to animation production has provided opportunities for learning, growth, and collaboration; making valuable contributions to the South African animation space.

⁶ A production plan/ layout that details the different sections of animation production that work together to convert concepts into finished animations.

6.2 Creating Midnight Escapade

The Midnight Escapade project at Katanimate Studios began before my employment, during which time the pre-production was developed. This included the script, concept art, storyboard, a couple of drafts of the animatic as well as asset creation for the film. The asset creation included rough drafts of all of the main components of the animation. These included rough models for Antoinette and Fernando (the two main characters), the clock and drawer, and a few other props that would make up the room. These models were not the completed models used in the finished product but drafts to use in the later stage of previsualization (pre-vis) (after the animatic). The lay-out stage within the studio happened after the storyboarding team had completed their final draft of the storyboard and the editor had completed a few drafts of the animatic. The layout would be rudimentary movements applied to the models in a 3D space to give the animatic a sense of timing and movement that static imagery does not have.

The primary software that the studio utilized for the animation was Blender. Blender is a free open-source 3D software that is capable of creating 3D animation, visual effects and compositing, among other things. The program has a large community of users that contribute to building and developing it. The studio utilized Blender version 2.8 for the majority of the animation; which included pre-vis, animation, rigging, lighting, some texturing, and rendering. Other software used included Substance Painter for the majority of the texturing, Premier Pro and After Effects for editing and compositing, and Autodesk Maya for troubleshooting issues that could not be solved in Blender. One of the primary reasons the studio used Blender was for the new and innovative ways of creating animation that the program was introducing. Another reason was cost reduction as buying studio licenses for other software was too costly for a small studio at the time.

The team makeup at the time of my joining was very small from my time of joining with 9 South African members including myself, which comprised four departments. It was important that the core members of the team be South Africans that resided within KwaZulu Natal as the project was funded by the KZNFC. The visual development department (vis-dev) was comprised of two members that focused on creating the preliminary artwork, concept designs, and prop designs as well as creating some of the assets to be used in the pre-vis. The animation department, which also had two members, assisted the vis-dev department in asset creation and modelling, later moving on to basic rig creation and test animation to be used in the pre-vis stage. The technical department consisted of one member who was looking into researching UV and texturing tools that would work with Blender 2.8. The post-production department - which handled all the editing and compositing - was also a one-man department, and at the time was focused on creating the animatic and updating it as more art was generated. Our technical director and director made up the remaining two members of the team. With such a small studio it was common for roles to shuffle around and have members pick up multiple skills in order to help whichever department needed it. I joined the team as they were towards the end of the pre-vis part of the development process, and joined the animation department to help complete the pre-vis and boost the numbers of the department as it was getting ready to

begin the animation process. This gave me time to study the pre-production and the pitch bible that was already complete, as it influenced and guided every step of the production that would follow. A pitch bible is a primarily visual document that has all the necessary information about the project, from character designs to the environment and prop designs and concept art. (Bizofan, 2021)

I joined the team fresh off my honours year in Digital Art in which we had been working and animating in Maya. As such, my first challenge was familiarising myself with Blender 2.8. The second challenge came as in as I was tasked to clean up motion capture (MoCap). Having only worked on creating animation from scratch, this gave me a new perspective on animating in an animation studio that was not available during my years of study. Though the studio had access to some motion capture technologies, it did not provide clean, smooth results that could be inserted directly into the animation. Rather, it took you 50% of the way but still required an animator to fix issues that ranged from broken limbs to jitters within the movement and adjust the animation as per the animatic.

The clean-up process involved working almost exclusively within the graph editor of Blender. The task involved analysing the movement in the animation and comparing it to the keyframe representation of the movements in the graphs. The clean-up process boiled down to repositioning the keyframes for every movement that was not smooth. This is done in sections, as each bone of the character rig has keyframes from the motion capture that may or may not need cleaning. The movements that would need cleaning up were usually easy to spot as the curve on the graph representing its movement would not be smooth. Upon completion of the clean-up, the keyframes are adjusted to match the mannerisms of the character as dictated by the pitch bible and animatic.

The animation process was not limited to Motion Capture animation, with more than half of the animation within the film manually animated. This process typically involved the animation department using any available humans within the office as actors, filming them when requiring reference for specific movements. While animating we would typically only have untextured characters, a ground or object that would represent the floor, and a camera in the scene, as it would help keep the Blender file light and thus optimize-workflow and reduce lag.

In the beginning of 2020, the team grew to add four additional members. Similar to my roles within their studio, their roles were also flexible and assisted in the department that needed the most help at the time. Though we were moving towards the end of the production phase and into the post-production, the members of the vis-dev department moved on to begin working on the pre-production of the next animated project. This highlighted how, within the industry, studios do not just focus on one project at a time but use the production pipeline in a streamlined fashion where once the vis-dev department finishes the preproduction of one project and is no longer required for that project, they move on to the next project and start creating the visual development as the rest of the team finishes production of the previous project.

Within the year 2020, I moved more into manual character animation as it was more time efficient than cleaning up MoCap and using it for the animation. This is primarily due to the MoCap technology available to us at the time being limited and presenting more issues than solutions. While animating Fernando, it was important to showcase his confidence and love for dance. As such, the references we took for his movements were from our confident co-workers who could more easily portray that personality. This helped in saving time and getting the physicality of simpler motions done quicker with better accuracy. We also had to examine a number of Tango dancers and Spanish performers in order to visualize his performance. These were from clips collected to as reference prior to animating. With Antionette, we utilized the same methods of using co-workers for quick references, but the majority of her references came from ballerina performances that were archived, like with Fernando's dance references, in preparation of the film.

2020 was also the year that the world was halted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Like many countries, South Africa went into lockdown, and we could not continue working in the office. We also did not have enough time to set up complete home stations for the whole team, and as a result, we had to sit tight and work on improving individual skills until such a time that we could get back to the office to pull files from the computers and set up a streamlined workflow with the team from our homes. As was the case for many companies, Zoom became an important part of work-from-home life, as we would have reviews and meetings on the platform. This presented a new challenge, as you could no longer get instant feedback or have a senior animator quickly help with a technical issue. As the year continued, we were able to, in waves, return to the office, while doing our best to maintain the Covid-19 regulations set out by the president. This allowed us to quickly get back on track with our animation process.

Once the main character animation was nearing completion, I moved on to animating the leaf characters which were attached to the clock. The characters were rigged using a Bendy Bone rig system which had to go through testing before it was sent to the animation team. Bendy Bones or B-bones are a chain of interconnected bones that make up a rig, with each bone having influence over the bone above and below it in the hierarchy See figure 33. (Blender, 2023). These bones function similarly to a curve and allow for smooth and stretchy animation. Though the leaves are mainly background characters, it was important that they were animated so the scenes with them do not appear too still. They also provided reactions to the actions that were happening within the scene, see Figure 34. It was important that these leaf characters had human emotions as they would help with creating and maintaining the mood of the scenes they were in, similar to personified inanimate objects in Disney films. The shapes of the leaves meant I was limited in the animating process to using general personas as opposed to specific identities.

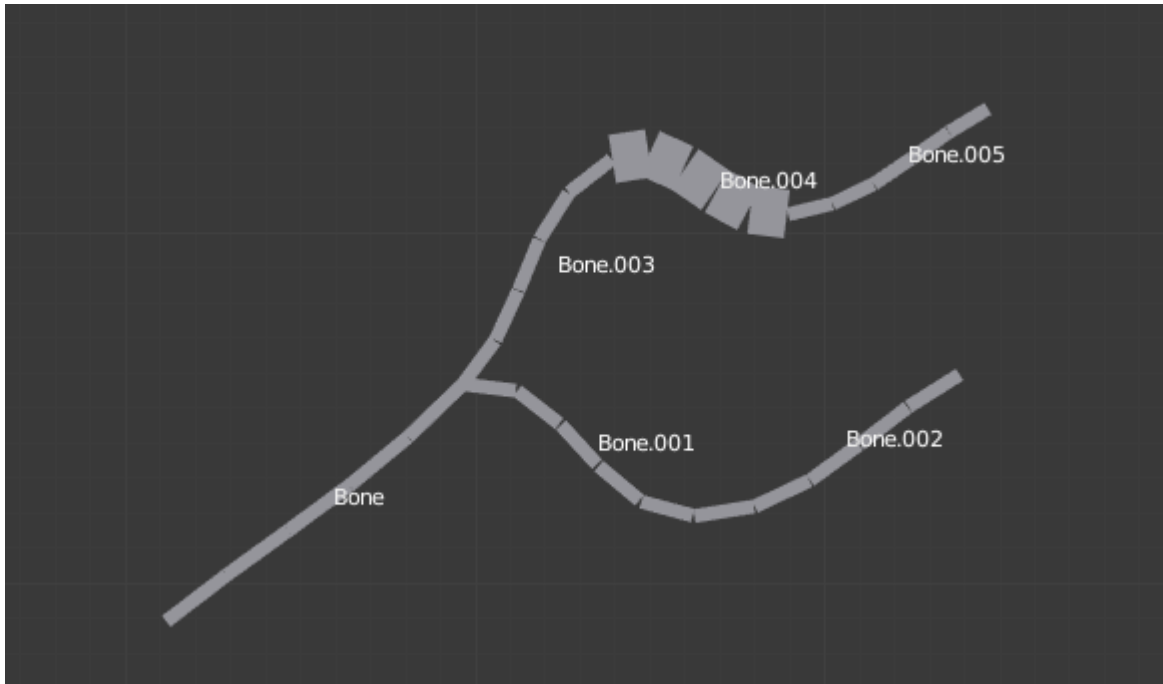


Figure 33. Blender Bendy Bone Example (docs.blender.org, 2023)



Figure 34. Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Leaf character, (Katanimate Studios, 2021)

Aside from character animation, camera animation was the second most important part of the animation process. The relationship between the camera and the animation had to be seamless, as the camera is the window through which the audience would view the world that is *Midnight Escapade*. For most of the scenes in which the camera was animated we had to treat it as if it were a third character within the scene. A by-product of this meant that we had to “animate for the camera”. This meant that we had to make sure the animation looked good and achieved the desired outcome within the eyes of the camera as

it moved, which often meant putting the characters in positions that were not anatomically correct but looked good from the camera's point of view. The camera was also a useful tool within the animation department as we often used it to "hide our sins", a term that became popular within the animation department as the deadline came closer. This is where we would purposefully only animate the sections of the character that were in view of the camera leaving the remaining sections stationary.

Toward the end of the animation process, I was moved into the scene setup department as we needed to start preparing the scenes to be lit and rendered. Scene setup involved recreating the environment in a new Blender file where all of the old and stand-in props and environment pieces are replaced with the final textured models. The animated characters would then be moved and placed into the scene, and finally the scene would be lit up. Because of the size of our team, not only did we all have work spanning across departments, but some of the work was also outsourced to freelancers to help bridge the skill gap and help us maintain deadlines. The two main tasks that were outsourced were the final model of Antionette, along with her UVs and textures, with the same treatment applied to Fernando.

Ordinarily, this would cause a huge issue, as you should not change a model halfway into the animation process as the rig would have been custom-built to work with the geometry of the model and changing it would interfere with the functionality of the rig. However, it worked for our pipeline as the rigging process was done in-house which made it possible to find a workable solution. A new section was added to our animation pipeline within the scene setup section in which we had to transfer the animation from the old rigged models into the new models. A technique called 'baking' was important for this process. Baking in animation is the process of taking information, typically movement, and converting it into a keyframe that can be applied to an object without the need for a rig. This process records the movement from the rig and freezes it may be applied directly to the geometry of an object without the need of the rig (HANDLEBAR3D, n.d.). To accomplish this, the rigged animation had to be taken to Maya, baked out, and re-imported into Blender. You can then apply the baked information to the new character which had an identical naming system. Without the rig in the scene, the baked animation is applied to the individual pieces of geometry that make up the characters, resulting in a faster workflow that enhances render speeds. This process was applied to all the animations with very few hiccups, with the only notable one being the need to touch up the weight painting of the characters. Weight painting is the process of adjusting the extent of influence each bone has on a portion of the geometry. (Blender, 2023).

Throughout the animation process the characters, environments, and props were used in the scene without textures to make the animation process lighter on the program and the computers running it. The textures had either been created by our in-house vis-dev team or outsourced to freelancers. Within the scene setup phase, we needed to collect all the latest textures for the characters, props, and environment, make sure they are properly labelled, and then link them to all the scenes we were setting up for rendering. Within this process, we had to not only ensure that the textures of the characters were correct, but be especially careful to make sure that the textures of the South African magazines and the Durban number plate were correct and detailed, as they were primary features of the animation

that would link the project to South Africa and KZN, see Figure 35 and 36. Along with adding the textures, we had to add the lighting setup that the technical team had previously created and tested in the scenes. Lighting was important in giving context to the scenes as it dictated their mood and tone. One example is when something tragic happens to the character, the lighting could become a cold blue to help represent or enhance the emotion and mood of the scene giving it a sad tone.



Figure 35. Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Getaway magazine showing Kwa-Zulu Natal (Katanimate Studios, 2021)



Figure 36. Still from *Midnight Escapade Sneak Peak* (2021), Durban ND numberplate in scene (Katanimate Studios, 2021)

In the scene setup and rendering stage of the production we worked closely with the editor, as we needed to render the image sequences and passes that he needed to composite the shots together to create the full animation. Within the rendering process, we would not render the whole animation as one image but had multiple passes which included the base image pass, ambient occlusion pass, depth pass, and a lighting pass to name a few. This method allowed for more control over the final image as the editor would be able to adjust and edit the sequence easier as he had more to work with.

Overall, the animation process of *Midnight Escapade* enlightened me on how an animation studio in South Africa created 3D animation. The software may differ from studio to studio, but the pipeline is often similar. Working for a small studio, Blender being a free open-source 3D software meant the company could keep costs low but still be able to create work that is of a high quality. Working in a small studio allowed me to not only experience the animation process within the animation pipeline, but also the pre-vis which came before animation, as well as the scene setup and rendering which happened after the animation phase in post-production. The subject matter and themes of the animation, like that of *Seal Team* (2021), is more global than it is South African, which meant it can relate to more people across the globe while still showcasing elements of South Africa through the visuals. This gives the film the global identity whilst being based at South African location.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The South African Identity in South African animation is a subject that needs much examination and a large sample size which is the main thing South Africa does not have at the moment. With the animated projects made in South Africa by South Africans, a close examination on their visual language, themes, and narratives and use of language to see if an aspect of South Africa is represented within the content.

In order to examine the South African identity in animation, it was important that we looked at identity theories, more importantly, how people identify themselves. This is to help understand how characters in media that represented certain groups would affect those watching. This is why we looked at theories around social identity and how social identity is represented within media. Richard Jenkins is the key theorist we examined to help us understand the importance of the theory. Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains how individuals develop their sense of self in relation to their social groups. It suggests that social identity is based on personal and social categorizations, and individuals derive self-esteem from their group memberships. SIT has been used to understand various social phenomena

and has important implications for media representation. Media content that portrays certain social groups positively can enhance individuals' self-esteem and promote positive social identity, while negative or stereotypical media content can lead to negative social identity and social exclusion (Hogg, 2016). Media representation shapes social identity and can reinforce or challenge cultural norms and stereotypes. Understanding this role can inform strategies for promoting positive social change and challenging dominant cultural narratives and stereotypes (Jenkins, 2008).

When discussing media representation of identities, it was vital to discuss stereotyping. Stereotyping is the creation of oversimplified and exaggerated mental images of a particular group of people based on limited or incomplete information. The mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion by transmitting stereotypes to a large and diverse audience. Walter Lippmann defined stereotyping as a shortcut for understanding and interpreting the world but can also lead to misunderstandings and prejudice (Lippmann, 1922). The impact of media on stereotypes has been the subject of much research and debate, with some arguing that media exposure can reinforce existing stereotypes and lead to more significant prejudice and discrimination. In contrast, others suggest that media can challenge and change stereotypes by presenting a more nuanced and diverse perspective.

Looking at animation as a medium, we had to examine the works of a few theorists, including Paul Wells, who is a significant theorist in the discourse of the representation of race and ethnicity in animation. Looking at early animations, we see that animation has been used to perpetuate negative stereotypes. However, Wells argues that animation can challenge these stereotypes and offer more positive and nuanced representations of racial and ethnic groups. It is argued that animation can help people understand and relate to those different from themselves, promoting empathy and awareness of diverse identities. Animation is a unique medium that allows for the personification of inanimate objects and animals, offering more possibilities for representation. However, it is essential to be aware of the historical context of representation in animation, from its earliest days to the present, in shaping cultural attitudes and perceptions. (Wells, 1998; Thomas et al., 1995; Batkin, 2017).

Representation in animation has evolved significantly over the years. Early animations are limited in terms of quality and scope of representation, often relying on stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, and gender. Disney's early films have been criticized for portraying racial stereotypes and offensive character designs. However, there has been a shift in representation from the 1960s and 1970s, marked by the civil rights and women's liberation movements in the United States of America, leading to more nuanced depictions of diverse identities. Characters like Fat Albert and The Simpsons marked a turning point in the representation of racial and ethnic diversity in animation, challenging previously held notions. Similarly, gender roles played a significant role in the representation of identity in animation, with early female characters being portrayed as damsels in distress or love interests for male protagonists. However, female characters like Wonder Woman and She-Ra challenged traditional gender roles by portraying strong, independent female characters who could hold their own in combat. Recent animated films, such as *Brave* (2012) and *Moana* (2016), have further challenged these stereotypes by depicting strong, independent, and capable female characters. (Gargini, Mugnaini, & Tic, 2022; Schwartz, 1972; Wells,

2002; Wetzler, G. et al., 1985). Overall, the depiction of identity in animation has transformed over the years, reflecting changing attitudes towards social categories such as race and gender. The early days of animation depicted racial stereotypes and gender roles. Nevertheless, contemporary animated films present a diverse cast of characters. The way identity is represented in animation has a significant impact on how people perceive themselves and others. Despite the need for more progress in promoting diversity and inclusion in animation, the industry has made strides in challenging stereotypes and promoting empathy and understanding.

Visual identity as an essential concept that had to be examined as it is an integral part of the representation and identification of identity. A visual language is a form of communication that uses images and other visual elements to convey meaning. It is universal and can be understood by people regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The concept of visual language has been explored in various fields, including art, design, advertising, education, and animation. Eubanks argues that art is a visual language that allows people to communicate their thoughts and emotions in a non-verbal way (Eubanks, 1997). Marriott and Meyer propose a theory that explains how visual elements convey meaning, consisting of a set of visual signs and symbols organized into visual grammar (Marriott and Meyer, 1998). Visual language has many applications, including creating works that convey emotion and meaning beyond their physical appearance, products that communicate brand values and identity, campaigns that capture audiences' attention and communicate key messages and visual aids and diagrams that help students understand complex concepts and ideas.

In animation, visual language is used to convey characters' emotions, personality, and relationships, as well as to create the world and atmosphere of the story. The primary visual elements in animation are colour, shape, line, and texture. Each element can be used to communicate a character's personality, create a sense of movement and action, convey movement and action, and create texture and depth. Western animation and Japanese animation (anime) are two of the most well-known styles, and they differ in their visual language, which is the system of symbols, shapes, and colours used to convey meaning in a visual medium (Bendazzi, 2015).

This paper examined the South African animation industry, first looking at its history pre-1994 and then how it has evolved in the post-apartheid era. South Africa's animation industry has been influenced by historical and political factors, such as apartheid-era policies that limited black representation, but the post-apartheid era has seen more diversity. South African television (TV) series such as *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006), *Magic Cellar* (2006), and *Supa Strikas* (2008) have demonstrated the representation of South African identities in animation. However, there has been a decline in South African representation in animated films, which have gained more international and financial success. These include *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012), *Jungle Beats: The Movie* (2020) amongst others. The idea of the South African identity was analyzed through two main animated works *Seal Team* (2021) and *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013). Both works are evaluated on their representation of South African life visually, thematically, narratively and linguistically. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) is a South African animated web series created by Jonas Lekganyane, that portrays various aspects of South African culture and society, such as traditional beliefs, politics, and social issues. *Seal Team* (2021) is an

animated feature film about a group of seals who embark on a mission to save their home and people from Sharks. While it does not explicitly explore South African themes, it does feature various South African easter eggs like the wrecked ship from the Cape of Storms and Table Mountain. The movie, much like *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) was animated in South Africa which contributes to the country's animation industry. The identity of South Africa is shaped by factors such as language, cultural heritage, history, and social and political struggles. *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) highlights the country's linguistic and cultural diversity, while *Seal Team* (2021) showcases local talent in the animation industry. Although the two animations have different themes and narratives, they both reflect important aspects of South African identity.

South African animation currently lacks a distinctive visual style that represents the people of South Africa due to the limited number of commercial animation products available and the large influence of the global identity that has populated South African televisions for decades. The increased accessibility to media and the importation of animated content from other countries has heavily influenced the visual language of South African animation towards a more global identity rather than a distinct local one. Some South African animations, such as *Seal Team* (2021) and *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012), follow a visual style similar to Western animation, particularly Disney animation, and lack a unique South African identity. However, the visual identity of characters and environments in 2D animation in South Africa is an interesting area of study that deserves further attention. In contrast to 3D animation, the character designs of 2D animation tends to be more representative of South African people and culture. This is evident in the fact that many 2D characters visually resemble South African people and help create a unique visual identity that can be associated with South Africa and Africans as a whole. This is not the case with 3D animation, where the focus is mainly on animals, and the visual identity leans more towards internationally recognized styles. This is visible through the studies of *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013), *Supa Strikas* (2008), and *The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006).

In conclusion, South African animation is yet to establish a distinct visual style that represents or visualizes its people. Due to the limited number of commercial animation products available, it is difficult to conclude that there is a visual style that is unique to South African animation. However, some of the available South African animations do follow a similar visual style to Western animation, which has a more global identity. Therefore, exploring and establishing a unique visual style representing South African animation is necessary, which will differentiate it from other global animations. The character designs of 2D animation in South Africa are notable for their unique and representative visual identity. The styles employed in shows such as *Supa Strikas* (2008) and *URBO* (2006) offer fascinating insights into the use of realistic and simplistic design approaches and the use of colour to create an impact. While the prevalence of imported animated content in South Africa has contributed to the overshadowing of a distinct local identity, the emergence of unique and distinctive South African-produced animated content on YouTube offers hope for a redefined local identity. The specific visual language of *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) offers a refreshing perspective on South African animation, portraying a local identity relatable specific African audience while incorporating unique cultural elements. Further research into the character designs of 2D animation in

South Africa is warranted and may shed more light on the visual identity of South Africa and its people.

Limitations

The study is limited in scope as it only analyzes a small sample of episodes from each series along with a small sample of animated films and does not cover all forms of South African animation. However, it provides a detailed analysis of the selected works and contributes to the understanding of how the South African identity is depicted in animation.

The first limitation of this study is the focus on only two works of animation. While *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* (2013) and *Seal Team* (2021) are both significant examples of South African animation, they may not be representative of the entire spectrum of animation produced in the country. There may be other works that could provide additional insights into the portrayal of South African identity in animation.

Another potential limitation is the lack of representation of diverse perspectives within the research team. As this is a master's paper, I do not represent all of the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences in South Africa. Just one of a black man within the South African animation space. This could result in a biased interpretation of the works and their portrayal of South African identity.

Lastly, it is important to note that the portrayal of South African identity in animation is a complex and multifaceted topic that may not be fully captured by this study. The portrayal of identity is influenced by many factors, including historical, political, and social contexts, which may not be fully explored in the analysis.

In summary, the limitations of our study include the focus on only two works of animation, the potential for subjectivity in the analysis, limitations in data and resources, the lack of diverse perspectives within the research, and the complex nature of the topic. By acknowledging these limitations, we hope to ensure the validity and reliability of our findings and contribute to a better understanding of the portrayal of South African identity in animation.

Midnight Escapade Vimeo link
<https://vimeo.com/515372521>

Kizazi Moto Teaser link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmXLzJLwiHw>

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