

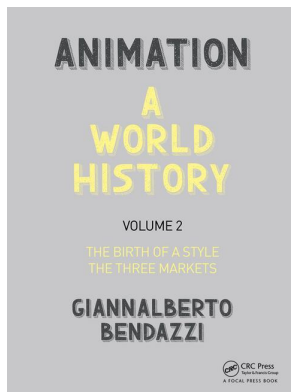
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15

AFRICA¹

For the inhabitants of some foreign continents, the civilization of Northern Africa is, or was, easily accessible. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt are constituents of the Arabian universe, connected since time immemorial with their Asian neighbour. Conversely, the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe spent centuries as part of the West, specifically Europe.

Yet for 2,500 years, the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa showed an astonishing ability to culturally resist alien civilizations (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Arabian and European) which came into contact or conflict with them. The Africans never attempted to imitate or to acquire the aliens' technology. They forbore from acquiring even a small part of their lifestyle. Above all, they refused to move from oral culture to writing.

In oral culture, the spoken word is a gift that goes beyond the information it transmits, whose meaning and value are to be measured in proportion to the man or woman who has spoken. The pure 'artist' is the wandering narrator, who goes from village to village, offering his or her never-ending stories to listeners of all ages.

In the two-and-a-half millennia historically available to us, sub-Saharan nations painted little, drew little, sculpted little. When they did, it was for ritual or spiritual reasons, not because of artistic inspiration. No wonder that the continent's southern cone remained a 'filmic desert' until the last decades of the twentieth century, according to the French historian Georges Sadoul's definition.

In the late 1930s, the continent had only three independent states: Liberia (which, in practice, was a US protectorate), Egypt and South Africa (which, in practice, were both British protectorates). The main colonizers, Britain and France, adopted different policies. Traditionally inclined

to spread their culture and assimilate foreigners, the French taught Africans their language and to some extent tried to Frenchify their possessions. In some cases (such as Algeria), they used mass immigration from France. The British, in principle, simply governed the territories, except for South Africa.

After the Second World War, London's Labour government rushed to decolonize the British world empire, mostly peacefully but often with little political foresight. France and Portugal fought to keep their colonies, but lost.

All national cinematography productions in Africa began after the achievement of political independence. African live-action cinema industry underwent interesting developments in the 1970s, both in quality and quantity. Production was especially rich in Egypt, which had enjoyed a much longer tradition of independence than other African nations. Yet African animation did not thrive, as did live-action cinema; instead, it was characterized by isolated production.

Algeria

The country's first animated film, *La fête de l'arbre*, was released in 1963. It was directed by Mohamed Aram (Hussein Dey, Algeria, April 1934), the founder of Algerian animation, a year after Algeria attained its independence.

Aram taught himself the techniques of animation, built his equipment, and directed in his spare time from his job (an assistant set designer at the national broadcasting company). His early works were educational, made in black and white. *La fête de l'arbre* was an invitation to replant forests destroyed by napalm. *Ah, s'il savait lire* (If He Knew

¹By Giannalberto Bendazzi and Cinzia Bottini.

How to Read, 1963) fought illiteracy, and *Les microbes des poubelles* (Microbes of the Garbage Cans, 1964) discussed health problems in the city.

In 1964, Aram formed his own team at the Centre National du Cinema and began working with colour. In 1967, he returned to television, opening his own studio in 1976. He focused on themes respecting Algerian sensitivity and tradition, and used human and animal characters which could be recognized locally. He was prolific (he made approximately thirty titles from 1963 to 1988), but his production wasn't trouble-free; he lacked support from the country's cinema bodies.

His other works include *H'Mimo et les allumettes* (H'Mimo and the Matches, 1965), *H'Mimo et le baptême* (H'Mimo and the Baptism, 1966), *Douieb au Sahara* (Douieb in the Sahara, 1967), *Fertoh et le singe* (Fertoh and the Monkey, 1971), *Les couleurs du diable* (The Devil's Colours, 1975), *L'olivier justicier* (The Olive Tree Who Loved Justice, 1978), *Adrar* (1979) and *Sema* (1983).

His collaborators included Mohamed Mazari and Menouar 'Slim' Merabtene. They worked as directors as well as comic artists, as did Aram. Mazari directed *Le mariage* (The Marriage, 1966), while Slim directed *Le magicien* (The Magician, 1965), *Gasba et Galal* and *Bouzio dans le train* (Bouzio on the Train).

Another Algerian animator worthy of mention is Mohamed Toufik Lebcir. He made *Rami* (1991, from *1001 Arabian Nights*) and *Atakor* (1993, the pilot for a series of the same name).

Tunisia

In 1968, Mongi Sancho directed *Le marchand de fez* (The Fez Merchant).

The French-educated Nacer Khemir (Korba, 1 April 1948) directed *Le bucheron* (The Woodcutter, 1972) and *Le mulet* (1975). Then he moved to live-action feature films: *L'ogresse* (1978) and *Les baliseurs du désert* (1984).

A special case was the short *M'hamdia* by Ahmed Benbens (1974), which alternates animation and documentary film to tell a barely known story of megalomania. In the nineteenth century, the ruler of Tunisia visits the French king Louis Philip, then tries to reproduce the Royal Palace of Versailles on Tunisian soil.

²[By Mohamed Ghazala and Giannalberto Bendazzi]

³Betzalel Frenkel was born in Russia, in 1876. His first son was Hershel, born in Russia as well, in 1900. Salomon and David were born in Palestine in 1911 and 1914 respectively.

⁴The short lasted ten minutes and needed about 15,000 sketches.

Zouhaïer Mahjoub (Tunis, 11 March 1945) released *Les deux souris blanches* (The Two White Mice, 1974, with animated cut-outs) from a Tunisian mediaeval tale, and *Le petit hibou* (1982, also with animated cut-outs). *Le guerbagi* (1984, with animated puppets), concerned a water vendor killed by the police during Tunisia's struggle for independence in the 1950s.

Samir Besbes (Sfax, 6 May 1949) made two shorts: *Les aventures de Jahjou 1* (Jahjou's Adventures 1) and *Les aventures de Jahjou 2* (Jahjou's Adventures 2, 1992). They featured Jahjou, the son of Jha, the mythical character of Northern Africa.

Other films include *Secourez-la, elle est en danger* (Help Her, She Is in Danger, 1988) by Mustupha Taieb; *La cigale* (The Balm Cricket, 1986) by Erzeddine Harbaoui; *Petite histoire d'oeuf* (Little Egg Story, 1975) by Mohamed Charbagi; and *Trip* (1977) by Claude Ballare and Jean-Jacques Le Garrec.

Egypt²

The pioneers of Egyptian animation were the Frenkel brothers: David, Salomon and Hershel, together with their father Betzalel.³ In 1936, during the National Festival of Egyptian Cinema, they showed eight black-and-white animated shorts, documentaries and advertising spots.

The Frenkel family settled in Cairo, where Mickey Mouse was appearing on cinema screens in the 1930s. The character impressed them so much that they decided to wholly devote themselves to animation. The Frenkels' first film, *Marco Monkey*⁴ (Marco Monkey, 1935) was strongly criticized by the daily newspaper *Al Ahram* in 1936. This led them to hire collaborators to improve their works, a decision rewarded with the success of *Mafish faida* (Nothing to Do, 1936) and *Mish Mish el shater* (Mish Mish the Brave, 1939).

The character Mish Mish Effendi was so successful that he was in demand for official spots and shorts. One was *Al difau 'al watani* (National Defence), a 1939 patriotic film ordered by the Ministry of War to sustain a loan meant to modernize the Egyptian army. *Al difau 'al watani* (National Defence) was screened in 1940, after many difficulties arising from the Ministry. Mish Mish's other films include *Bil Hana Wel Shifa* (Enjoy your meal!), a comic short set in a circus.

In the early 1950s, the family moved to Paris where they tried to make a French version of Mish Mish, with a beret instead of a fez, called Mimiche. Unfortunately, Mimiche was not as popular. The brothers continued producing a film a year; Mimiche found Jenny, a new partner who was later teamed up in turn with a character called Danny. These were children's films, their style evoking the Fleischers and Felix the Cat.

An advertisement, *Expérience atomique* (Atomic Experience), has a mad scientist throwing the world off balance, sending the Eiffel Tower, the Triumph Arc, the Pyramids and the Sphinx into the air. The Frenkel brothers' last work was *Rêve du Beau Danube bleu* (Dream of the Beautiful Danube Bleu, 1964), celebrating the centenary of Strauss's waltz.

Overall, the Frenkel family made more than thirty films. The ones belonging to the Egyptian period were rediscovered in 1995 and screened in Cairo the next year, at the second National Festival of Cinema.

Ali Muhib (1935–2010) and his brother and collaborator Husam boosted the cartoon department of Egyptian television, which began in 1960. There, the brothers worked with a group of young graduates from the Academy of Arts: Mahmud Abd Al Hasib, Noshi Iskander, Zakariya Agilan, Mahir Nisar, Faruq Urfah, Radhâ Giubran and Dalawr Husni. The group made very short strips and tunes for some TV programs, as well as two-minute animated sketches such as *Al askariyy wa al haramiyy* (The Soldier and the Bandit).

The ten-minute black-and-white film, *Nas fawqa wa nas tahta* (People Upon, People Down), tells the story of a king dethroned by the popular riot that starts 1952's July Revolution.⁵ Thanks to Ali's and Husam's success, the Department bought a new Oxberry camera, which it used to make its next film in 1962.

The White Line was a twenty-five-minute film that combined animation and live action; it was both a musical and a documentary on Egypt. A lively film, it made elegant use of the then-unusual split-screen technique, suggesting the paintings of Piet Mondrian.

⁵The Egyptian Revolution started on 23 July 1952, with a military coup d'état by a group of young army officers, who named themselves 'The Free Officers' Movement'. The revolution was initially aimed at overthrowing King Farouk I. However, it had ambitions that were more political and soon moved to abolish the constitutional monarchy and establish a republic.

⁶The 1960s were the best time for animated TV spots. Ali Muhib was the most important director in this field and his spots are close to stories. Among his works are *Rabsu*, *Ramsis*, *Amu Amin*, *Al milamin*, *Sigial*, *Khittab al fara'ina* (The Pharaoh's Speech, 1970), *Wah . . . wah*, *Kamsulatu* and *Sami Rafti*.

⁷Ali Muhib was a pillar of Egyptian animation, a model for co-workers and a great innovator. In animated commercials for the newspaper *Al Ahram*, he invented characters which become famous. His commercials were of a very high artistic level, with a short average production time' (Mohamed Ghazala, personal communication to Cinzia Bottini, 2009).

⁸Some of the episodes are *Nuh aleihi al salam* (Noah, the Prophet), *Musa aleihi al salam* (Moses, the Prophet), *Yusuf aleihi al salam* (Yusuf, the Prophet) and *Lu'lu'* (Shining).

After eight years of work in the department, during which he instructed several young colleagues, Ali Muhib devoted his career to advertising.⁶ He experimented with various techniques: conventional puppets, plasticine puppets and drawn animation. The last technique was used in some documentaries, such as *Al Suweis 73* (Suez 73), *Al Suweis 74* (Suez 74) and *Al ta'mir* (The Reconstruction). In 1979, Muhib directed the first animated Arab television series, *Mishgias Sawah* (thirty episodes).⁷

Mohammed Hassib (1937–2001), one of Muhib's pupils, went freelance in 1964 to focus on advertising, educational films and live-action feature films credits. He was a man of brilliant and versatile intelligence who was also a graphic artist and a journalist. As an animator, he worked on *Ma'lesh* (It Doesn't Matter, 1969), a ten-minute film directed by the visiting Czech Vladimír Lehký (1919–1984).

In 1967 he directed some animated spots, such as *Siku*, *Al barid*, *Kliubatra* and *Sikulan*. He was also in charge of creating the opening and closing credits for films: *Zawgiya li yawm wahid* (Bride at the First Day), *Al mukharribun* (The Saboteurs), *Al saman wa al kharif* (The Duck and the Fall), *Thurat al Yemen* (The Revolution of Yemen) and *Thalatha Iussus* (Three Thieves).

Working at the National Centre of Documentary Films, Hassib made *Amm furhat* (Uncle Furhat, 1969), a ten-minute film about an old man who behaves inappropriately in difficult situations. He then directed *Lih Kadh*, a two-minute short about making peace with an enemy, and *Ala qaddk* (At Your Size, 1971) which won an award from the Society of Cinema. He also made the animated portion of *Afrah* (Celebrations), a live-action feature film directed by Ahmad Badrakhan, based on the book *Kalila wa Dimna* (the Arabic name for the Indian collection of fables, *Panchatantra*).

During the 1980s, he directed an episode for the long animated series *Abu Al Taratir* (1986), produced by the National Centre of Documentary Films. He then devoted himself to live-action cinema until the 1990s, when he made a series called *Qissatu Aiya*⁸ (The Tale of a Koran

Verse). He died while working on an animated feature film, *Al faris wa al amira* (The Knight and the Princess).

The other important Egyptian animator was Noshi Iskandar (Cairo, 5 November 1938–December 2009). He was a member of the team working on early TV animation, a renowned caricaturist and comic artist. His first film was *One to Five* (1969) followed, in the same year, by *Is That True?* and *Question*. In 1974, he made *Room No. . . .*⁹ and *Where?*; in 1975, *Excellent*; in 1980, *Narcissus*. Of these films, *Mumtaz* (Excellent), which deals with the corruption in bureaucratic offices, won a special mention in 1976 at the Teheran Festival. In 1982, Iskander became head of the Special Effects Department at Egyptian Television.

A frequent collaborator of his was Radhá Djubran (1945–1997). In 1968, he collaborated with the already mentioned Czech director Vladimír Lehký as background designer and assistant editor in the film *Al Hudd* (Boundary Line), about the fight between Good and Evil. *Intibah* (The Awakening) was dedicated to the Palestinian question, characterized by an expressive use of colours. Djubran approached the problem of illiteracy in *Al ilm nuran*, made with basic sketches. Later, he directed the puppet animated shorts *Haddutat walad fashshar* (Story of a Brat, 1985), *The Lazy Sparrow* (1991) and *Al ussful al kaslan* (The Lazy Passenger, 1991).

Abdellalim Zaki (1939) made titles for television, live-action feature film credits, and over 100 animated advertising works for several countries in the region, such as Sudan, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. He also made educational films.

Ihab Shaker (Cairo, 15 August 1933) was a painter, illustrator, caricaturist and puppeteer. He was certainly the best-known Egyptian animator abroad. In 1968, he made *The Flower* and *The Bottle* in his country. Then he moved to France and met Paul Grimault. With his help, Shaker made *Un, deux, trois* (One, Two, Three, 1973), a collection of three stories: *La douche* (The Shower), *L'oiseau* (The Bird), and *La machine* (The Machine). Shaker used nonanthropomorphic drawings (in Shaker's words, the main characters had 'amoeba-like features'), with an anecdotal taste for the absurd.

In 1987, he made two shorts entitled *Chansons d'animaux* (Animal Songs) for Jean-François Laguionie's production house, La Fabrique. The shorts were *Le crocodile* (The Crocodile) and *Le corbeau* (The Crow). In 1993, he returned with *Love Dance*.

Ahmed El Metini (born in 1930) made the short film *Abu El Oreif* (The Pedant), in 1984. He was a graduate in Fine Arts, as was Violet Fahmy, who directed animated films at the Egyptian Film Centre. Fahmy's standout was *El Kaslan* (Lazy Kid) in 1988.

Seham Abdel Moneimj (born in 1963), graduated in 1977 at High Cinema Institute. In the next years, he taught in the animation department and made films which included *October* (1977), *Numbers* (1979) and *The Bulldozer* (1999).

Mali

This country's leading animator was Mambaye Coulibaly (Mali, 2 May 1955). A filmmaker and musician, he spent his life between his motherland and Paris, where he studied cinema under the guidance of Jean Rouch. His film *Le geste de Ségou* (Ségou's Deed, 1989) is the story of a child who challenges the wisdom of the king of Ségou. It won a prize at the festival of Ouagadougou.

As well as Coulibaly, animation was represented in Mali by a woman, Ouattara Oumou Goita. She told a children's story, *La poule et l'épervier* (The Chicken and the Sparrow-Hawk, 1993).

Niger

Moustapha Alassane (N'Dongou, 1942–17 March 2015, Ouagadougou) was one of the first filmmakers in his country who adopted 'primitive' techniques, such as drawing directly on film stock, to make up for the lack of equipment. He spent time in Paris and Montreal, getting recognition for his work as an animator. He also directed ethnographic documentaries and live-action fiction films.

His first animated work was *Le piroguier* (The Pirogue Paddler, 1962). It was followed by: *La pileuse de mil* (The Millet Grinder, 1962), *La bague du roi Koda* (King Koda's Ring, 1963), *La mort de Gandji* (Gandji's Death, 1965, an award-winner at the World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar), *Bon voyage, Sim* (Have a Nice Trip, Sim, 1966, a somewhat ironic pacifist film), *Samba le grand* (The Great Samba, 1978, with animated puppets) and *Kokoa* (1985, on a wrestling match between chameleons and leopards).

⁹It was awarded as the Best Animated Film by the Association of Egyptian Film Critics.

Senegal

In France, Ousmane Sow, a sculptor from Senegal, directed *Le Martien* (The Martian, 1969). It tells the story of a Martian arrived on Earth, and it is made by his famous sculptures, photographed frame by frame with his Pathé 16 mm camera. Only animator who made a film in the country was probably Soko Mehelo, with his film *Histoires de dettes* (Stories of Debts, 1978).

In Montreal, at the National Film Board of Canada, Babacar Camara made *Les mésaventures de Bath* (Bath's Misadventures). In Geneva, Ernest N'Goran, Simon Kassi and Noel N'Goran made two short films with the advice of Robi Engler. Both films appeared in 1977: *Tam Tam* and *Mensonges d'un soir* (One Evening's Lies).

Liberia

In this country, which has enjoyed a long tradition of independence, animation was introduced via television. A department of graphic arts, led by Jefferson Abruzzi Zeon (Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, 28 December 1958) operated within the Liberian Broadcasting System.

Other than the usual productions for the small screen, Zeon directed several educational and entertainment short films, displaying energy and ambition. His works include *Avoid Accidents*, *The Greedy Magician* (about a voracious man who eventually loses all his food) and *Don't Be Too Anxious* (about the struggle between Giant Rock and the Super Rocks).

Ivory Coast

Only filmmakers working abroad represent this country in animation. In Switzerland, Marcellin Brou and Abdoulaye Touré made *L'orpheline et la marâtre* (The Little Orphan Girl and the Stepmother) about a girl, her bad stepmother and the spirit of the river.

G'noan M'bala made *Kacou* (1984) at the National Film Board of Canada. Kacou is a small, stylized character who can't match with his shadow. Annick Assemian Laurence, one of the few African women in animation, made 1975's *Agresion* (Assault) followed by 1983's *Méto*, about female sensuality.

¹⁰ Though there was animation equipment at the Ghana Film Studios and the Information Service Department, there is very little record of animated productions from these institutions.

¹¹ The National Film and Television Institute is a school. Some of the first Ghanaian teachers were Isaac Laing Edward Abebrese (?) and David Ababio (?).

¹² Since its independence (1958) until 1980, the country was called Upper Volta.

Ghana

Animation started in the late 1960s. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany helped set up an Educational Television Unit for Ghana Television, shortly after the establishment of television in 1965. The Unit produced animation segments for science and educational programmes.¹⁰ In 1978, the Government established the National Film and Television Institute.¹¹ Since then, animation was mainly used for TV commercials.

During the 1980s, the National Film and Television Institute produced some animated educational films: *Road Safety Campaign*, *Drug Abuse*, and *National Mobilization and National Building*. The standouts were *From Genesis to Zero* (directed by Victorine T. Broohm) and *Trees for Life* (directed by Angelina Kotey).

Some former students of the Institute became professional animators, devoting their endeavours to advertising films but making personal films as well. Alex Bannerman made *Windfall* about two men and two pots. The moderate person takes the small pot and is happy to see that it's full of gold. The greedy person takes the big pot and discovers it contains a snake. *Don't Waste Water* was an educational film.

Bannerman also collaborated with Kofi Sarpong to make the pilot of a longer work by the title of *Ananse*. It featured a traditional character that is very popular across Africa (1988). David Ababio took this character for his film *Ananse Story*.

A Ghanaian animator, John K. Ossei directed the fable *Ananse's Farm* in 1973 in Montreal, under the aegis of the National Film Board of Canada.

Togo

The only animator in Togo was Clem Clem Lawson. His best-known film is *Voyage en Métropotamie* (Journey in Metropotamia, 1982), a satire of the Paris tube.

Burkina Faso¹²

In 1984, the National Film Board of Canada organized a workshop in this country, directed by Gaston Sarault. This resulted in *The Eagle and the Chameleon*, by the

Burkinese director Sanou Kollo, with the NFB producing the film.

Cameroon

Jean-Marie Téo was born in Bafoussam in Cameroon in 1954 but moved to France and made all his films there. The only animated one was *Hommage* (1985), about two friends who meet after many years and review their lives, one very traditional and the other oriented towards modernity.

Zaire¹³

The first animated films were made in this region when it was still a Belgian Crown colony called the Congo. Alexandre Vandenheuvel and Roger Tamar produced seven films of about ten minutes each between 1951 and 1956. Their umbrella title was *Les palabres de Mboloko* (Mboloko Chatter), and they were broadcast by Zaire Television as late as the 1980s.

The titles were *Malafu – le vin de palme* (The Palm Wine), *Ekolo – Le panier* (The Basket), *Bokasi – La force* (Strength), *Etalaka – Le gué* (The Ford), *Motambo – Le piège* (The Trap), *Kanda – La colère* (Anger) and *Mekana – Le concours* (The Competition).

In 1990, Jean-Michel Ndjaie Wooto Kibushi (Lubefu, Zaire, 3 August 1957) made his first film. *Le crapaud chez ses beaux parents* (The Frog Visits Its In-Laws, 1991) was made in Brussels with the Atelier Graphoui. A frog meets every kind of character on his way to his relations, and invites everybody to the party.

In 1992 the director made a sequel, *Le crapaud chez ses beaux parents – L'orange blanche* (The Frog Visits Its In-Laws – The White Orange). He also made an entirely different film, *Kinshasa, Septembre Noir* (Kinshasa, Black September) denouncing the atrocities of the military regime during the riots in the Zaire capital.

Another Zaire filmmaker (but living in Switzerland) was Mohamed Soudani. His only foray into animation was *Le secret du baobab: Le petit griot* (The Baobab's Secret: The Little Sorcerer, 1993).

Burundi

Joseph Bitamba was head of the Children and Young Adults Department of the national television station Radio TV Bujumbura. He directed *I comme image* (I for Image, 1989), a pilot for a never-made TV series.

In 1991, he organized a workshop for children with the Belgian Atelier Graphoui. Many very short films were created, and later edited together in an anthology called *Histoires Burundaises* (Burundi Stories).

Zambia

Production began in 1982 in television. Fordson Mobi Kolala deserves mention for animated works such as *Life Cycle of a Butterfly*, *Faces* and *Tube*.

Mozambique

There are two known animated films. *Na Estrada* (On the Road, 1984) is about a wounded guerrilla lying on the road for days until his comrades rescue him. *A lua e a filha que não sabia pillar* (The Moon and the Girl Who Couldn't Pound, 1984) is a legend about a man who asks for the moon's daughter as his bride. Both were directed by Mendes de Oliveira, the second with Anna Fresu.



Figure 15.1 Jean-Michel Ndjaie Wooto Kibushi, *Le crapaud chez ses beaux parents* (The Frog Visits Its In-Laws), 1991.

¹³ A former personal property of the king of Belgium, the Republic of the Congo became independent in 1960. From 1971 to 1997, its name was Zaire (a former word for the Congo River). Since then, it is the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mauritius

In this island, a tourist paradise and the home of the extinct Dodo, animation is represented by Veerasamy Galen Parinane (born in 1951), a professional live-action cameraman. His first animated film, three minutes long, was *Sow and You Will Reap* (1986). It uses plasticine animation to tell an educational story about preparing diligently for the future. His second film, *La magie des fleurs* (The Flowers' Magic, 1987) is a eulogy to beautiful Mauritian flowers.

South African Republic¹⁴

From 1960 until the launch of television in 1975, South African animation was characterized predominantly by shorts and animated newsreels. They were intended for cinema release, shown before the feature presentation. Once television was introduced in South Africa, the industry's focus shifted to children's programming.

On 5 January 1976, the South African Prime Minister BJ Vorster¹⁵ formally inaugurated the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC; SAUK in Afrikaans), the first television broadcaster. It is clear that the SABC's philosophy during the early 1980s was based on the principles of national security. The perception of the broadcaster as an arm of the apartheid government led the British Actors' Equity Association to start a boycott of program sales to South Africa. Most European countries (except France and Germany) also refused to air their programming on South African television.

Consequently, television in South Africa was dominated by programming from the USA, France and Germany. The imported French and German titles were mostly

dubbed into Afrikaans, whereas the American titles were mostly broadcast in the original English.¹⁶

Since the launch of television, the SABC was concerned about the effects of the medium on child viewers and mindful of developing programming that was rich in educational content. Particular attention was paid to presenting children's and nursery programs in an engaging way. In 1977, the objective for children's programming was 'to inform and instruct in an entertaining way'.¹⁷

Many programs, such as *Wielie Walie* and *Die Kraaines*, were used to 'promote good causes such as precautions against veld and forest fires, pollution, road safety, healthy eating habits etc.'¹⁸ The SABC's obsession with the effects of television on children eventually led to the self-censorship of material by producers and artists.

The SABC Animation Unit

The Animation Unit at SABC was created in 1975.¹⁹ At first it was headed by Butch Stoltz,²⁰ who was replaced in 1986 by Gerard Smith.²¹ The Unit's primary focus was creating content for children's programming,²² consisting of animated entertainment inserts and special effects. Celebrated works produced by Stoltz and Smith include *Wolraad Woltemade*, *Bremenstad se Musikante* and *An Introduction to Dickens*.

The Unit was responsible also for the creation of illustrations for Afrikaans children's programs, such as *Haas Das se Nuuskas*, the *Wielie Walie*'s²³ opening logo, the *Kraaines* opening logo, *The Invisible Grisbles* and the *Cabbages and Kings* opening logo. Stoltz supervised the production of *Oceano Jollo*, *Wolraad Woltemade* and *Die Bremenstad se Musikante*, all five-minute animations. Stoltz also animated both

¹⁴ By Shanaz Shapurjee Hampson.

¹⁵ The ruling Nationalist party of the time was very concerned with the 'deleterious effects' of the new-found medium of television. Because of a decade-long debate surrounding these effects, South Africa was the last country to receive television globally among those of comparable economic development (Harris VHS).

¹⁶ The SABC benefited greatly from US imports, as many of the program bundles that were purchased provided the Corporation with free animated programs for broadcast. This somewhat undermined the role of the broadcaster's Animation Unit, as international animated programs took precedence over local ones.

¹⁷ SABC Annual Report 1977.

¹⁸ SABC Annual Report 1976–78.

¹⁹ For more information about Johan Roos, see More About It 1.

²⁰ For more information about Butch Stoltz, see More About It 2.

²¹ For more information about Gerard Smith, see More About It 3.

²² Verna Vels (creator of *Liewe Heksie*) and Louise Smit (producer and director of *Liewe Heksie*) worked in the Children's Programming department as organizer and producer respectively. Many people describe them as energetic, enthusiastic and creative women, with an excellent working relationship with Roos and Stoltz (Stoltz and Roos interview 2008).

²³ Interestingly, the inspiration for *Wielie Walie*'s loveable characters Karel and Sarel came from cartoon sketches created by Johann Roos and Butch Stoltz, later turned into popular comic strips.

cartoon as well as live action inserts for the live-action series on Charles Dickens. Additionally, he created opening logos for adult series such as *Uit and Tuis*, *Dokter Dokter*, *Nommer Asseblief* and *Sing and Die Drie van der Merwes*.

The Animation Unit had its humble beginnings in a blue prefabricated building that stood on the lawn outside the SABC building, where the parking lot to the main building is currently located. At first the Unit consisted of Stoltz alone, who managed the production development and output; he was assisted by tracer and painter Shelley Panton-Jones. The temporary office had no camera facilities and all camera work was farmed out to James Reindorp, a freelancer working from a home darkroom in Orange Grove. The office did have all the animation equipment that was needed, as well as animation desks, which were made for the Unit by the SABC's carpentry shop (to Stoltz's specifications).

By 1977, additional staff was engaged by the Unit: Gerard Smith, Rudy Koopmans (from Holland) and Cherry Melvin (Wolverhampton, England, 26 October 1950). A year later Jerry Hille (trained in Canada) and Gerard Smith joined the Unit. Some years later, Gerrit Knipe joined as a junior animator, along with Johan Gericke (background artist), Revalle Beaton (Parsons) and two other animation assistants.

The exceptional set-building department meant that Stoltz and his assistants had good-quality drawing desks, tracing tables and layout boards. The SABC provided the Unit with a Nielson Hordell animation camera unit, operated by the animators themselves. (No specialized cameraman was recruited by the Unit.) The facilities at the SABC were on a par with international standards, with Stoltz enjoying unlimited access to the *téleciné* department, flat-bed suites and SABC studio space.

The animators at the SABC were very interested in developing new scripts for animation and whenever they had free time they generated new characters and stories. Unfortunately, time constraints and regular work routines meant these were not completed and therefore never broadcast. There would probably have been greater scope for creative work had the animators been able to

participate in the generation of scripts and programming content in the Production division. Unfortunately, the Unit was usually kept separate, with little to no interaction between the departments. Any scripts generated by the Unit had to be passed up the chain of command in the Production division, with delays due to stringent formalities and excessive paperwork.

This, along with the lack of staff being hired, is the reason why minimal expansion occurred within the Unit. Despite the bureaucracy, though, Stoltz and Smith (helped by Johann Roos) greatly influenced the producers and organizers of the Children's programming department, inspired by their love for animated characters and puppets.²⁴ Smith believed the lack of development and formal structure within the Unit was partly because the SABC was not very interested in establishing a full-fledged animation department.

Unfortunately, the SABC did not spend enough time analyzing the television medium or the art of animation. This indirectly hindered animation's development in South Africa as a legitimate art form, suitable for television broadcast. The Corporation cultivated and endorsed the view that animation is solely the province of children's programming.²⁵

In 1986, Stoltz finally resigned²⁶ from the SABC in pursuit of a career at his own private studio, Butch Stoltz Productions. He continued to do freelance work for the SABC Animation Unit in addition to private work he was getting from clients needing adverts and featurettes. He left Gerard Smith in charge of the Unit, now very understaffed due to resignations since Butch's departure. Smith continued producing animated work for the Corporation for about a year, but realized that the unit's future was bleak. The Corporation's lack of knowledge about animation, and its inability to understand and provide the necessary requirements of the medium, led to the Unit's shutdown in 1988. Another factor that influenced the closure was the Scenic and Décor department's issues with mismanagement, which encroached onto the Animation Unit, causing tension.²⁷ Smith ran the Unit down in a matter of seven to eight months; he ensured that the

²⁴ Stoltz and Roos interviews, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee in 2008.

²⁵ This misconception continues to be the case at the SABC. All the recent commissions for animation have been for the Children's Programming department: *The Magic Cellar*, *URBO-Pax Africa* and Anamazing Workshop's short films.

²⁶ Butch Stoltz and Cherry Melvin left the SABC from 1979–1980 to work at Annie-Marion Studios (see later).

²⁷ By 1986, the SABC was closely examining their financial records and the results, after a trial period of getting all departments to keep accurate records of expenditure and time, dictated that they needed to rethink their original plan of keeping the requisite staff under one roof. Rumours about this spread throughout the SABC and some of the Scenic Services staff members began putting out feelers for alternative employment or started their own businesses between 1986 and 1995 (Stoltz interview, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee in 2008).

animations that were in production were completed and that no new work was taken on by the Unit.²⁸

From its inception, the overall atmosphere within the Unit was one of creativity, inspiration and passion. This was perhaps in part because its internal hierarchy was very loose. Stoltz thought of his assistants and co-workers as equal artists with a shared goal.

Roos also used his authority in the Corporation to nurture the Scenic Service departments (which he managed), encouraging innovation and exploration. With his experience in advertising and publishing, Roos encouraged the Animation Unit to think like advertisers and to merchandise their already popular characters on stickers, mugs, hats, bags and books.²⁹

The Unit was responsible for the execution of briefs from both the Entertainment and Educational departments. Stoltz, Smith and their assistants principally employed the classical mode of production as used by Disney. It seemed appropriate; the output was primarily for commercial audiences and Stoltz had visited and observed animators at Disney Studios in 1979 and 1981. However, Stoltz and Smith were forced to modify the mode of production, according to the resources available.

Sketches were usually created by Stoltz and Smith, and character model sheets were devised by senior animators such as Cherry Melvin. Background layouts were usually drawn on paper by the junior animators and assistants.³⁰ The completed cels were then ordered and stacked according to the scene they belonged to, so Stoltz and Smith could begin the mammoth task of filming each cel individually.³¹

The Animation Unit shot on 16mm reversal film stock and the Unit's brief was to be a 2D department. No stop-frame or puppet animation was made there, as there were separate units for them in the Scenic Services department.

Alternative Animation Commissioned for South African Television (1976–1988)

Between 1976 and 1988, the South African Broadcasting Corporation was concerned with the establishment and growth of the broadcasting structure and its integration into the existing radio broadcast model. Despite the broadcaster's lack of direct interest in animation, many studios and individual artists contributed to the animated works on South African television. Four studios seem to have made the biggest impacts: Dave McKey Animation Services, Annie-Mation Studios, Glenn Coppens Cartoons and later Butch Stoltz Productions.

Dave McKey Animation Services

Dave McKey³² was a key player in the history of South African animation, producing commercials and shorts, including the well-known short, *The Story of Bath*. During the early 1960s, he joined the National Film Board in Pretoria; it is here that he understudied Nils Svenwall, a famous Swedish artist. He then joined Alpha Film Studios as an assistant animation cameraman, working with James Reindorp. In 1967, he resolved to become an independent artist through the creation of two pilot animated commercials, dubbed *Animads*. These secured him a contract with Ster Films that protected his full proprietary rights.

Englishman Denis Purchase was appointed Animation Director at the Dave McKey studio. Together with Gerard Smith, who later headed the SABC Animation Unit (1986), the studio became the 'major producer

²⁸ Smith, Roos and Stoltz interviews, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee in 2008.

²⁹ Roos and Stoltz were commissioned by the Army to create an animated mascot for the soldiers. The pair created Troepie, which now has now iconic status among many South Africans. Troepie was marketed within the army in the form of comics, stickers, mugs and other promotional material (Roos Interview 2008).

³⁰ It is important to note that at times the staff within the Unit did their own complete animated opening titles, including sound breakdown, storyboards, backgrounds, animation in total, cel painting and sorting, camera work, editing etc. After the transfer onto cels, the drawings were individually hand painted.

³¹ As an animator within the Unit, Cherry Melvin was often asked to assist with filming each cel individually also. Interview to Smith, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee in 2008.

³² In 1966, McKey was working as the new producer for Ster Films' advertising company, AdFilms. This company dealt with live-action commercials.

of animated cinema adverts in the country, averaging 7000 commercials per annum'.³³ It employed some highly talented animators, including Alex Bannon, Butch Stoltz, Glenn Coppens and the Durban-born Lawrence Moorcroft.

Annie-Mation Studios

This studio was founded by Gretchen Wilsenach. She left Rent-A-Studio³⁴ in 1978 in order to produce animated programmes and commercials for the nascent television market.³⁵ During 1978, Denis Purchase and Gerard Smith joined the studio and together embarked on the first big production, for SABC broadcast, called *Bobby the Cat*.

The 26 five-minute episodes took two years to complete, due to limited staff and funds. During production, the studio was creating animated commercials for the SABC to stay solvent. These included the famous Simba chips advertisements, Tinkerbelle commercials and the Smurfs advertising a major petrol company.³⁶

These commercials were enormously successful, giving the fledgling studio the capital to employ more animators. Soon Annie-Mation boasted the talents of Butch Stoltz, Riccardo Capecchi³⁷ (Mombasa, Kenya, 7 October 1956) and Henry Neville³⁸ from Australia. By 1982, the studio was established; ex-employees describe it as professional and well managed. It was fitted with state-of-the-art animation booths and desks and a Rostrum camera for shooting the animated cels. Wilsenach had also imported a Bellows lithographic camera for the studio, which allowed for the direct reproduction of line work onto cels. This

camera was identical to the one used by the Disney studios in its Golden Age.

In 1982, the studio released *Racheltjie de Beer*, the first full-length animated TV film in South Africa. It was the animated version of the famous Afrikaans story about the heroic nineteenth-century girl who sacrificed her own life to save her little brother from the cold.

During the early to mid-1980s, the studio worked also on two big projects: *Thandi*, a thirty-minute African themed story and an animated feature, *Jock of the Bushveld*. The talented Belgian-born animator Glenn Coppens joined the studio on *Jock's* preproduction. The pressure of such big projects was crippling and the studio spent heavily, enlisting the help of studios in Amsterdam and Australia.³⁹ Unfortunately, monetary circumstances, tight deadlines and insufficient staff caused the studio to close in 1987, and only a pilot for *Jock of the Bushveld* was made.

Glenn Coppens Cartoons

Glenn Coppens (Belgium, 3 March 1955) came to South Africa from America in 1982, following an



Figure 15.2 Glenn Coppens, *Jock of the Bushveld*, 1983.

³³ Kersh Sarienue, 'History of South African Animation', Screen Africa, 20 Nov. 1996, p. 23.

³⁴ Rent-A-Studio was a complete design facility in Johannesburg. It specialised in packaging, photography and all aspects of design. There was great demand for animation during the 1970s, and the studio opened an animation unit. Gretchen Wilsenach, Gerard Smith and Denis Purchase all joined in 1977.

The studio served primarily as a service unit to freelance advertising agencies and specialized in commercials for television (Wilsenach and Smith interviews, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee).

³⁵ The South African Broadcasting Corporation was officially in operation in 1976.

³⁶ According to Wilsenach, the studio was granted a contract from Belgium to use the trademarked Smurfs for the advertisement.

³⁷ Riccardo Capecchi is a talented South African animator who mastered his craft at the Civico Istituto del Cinema in Milan, Italy. He moved back to South Africa in 1982 and worked as an inbetweenner for Annie-Mation. In 1984 he moved to Durban where he opened Capecchi and Friends (1985), specializing in commercials. He later moved to Los Angeles to work for Disney's gaming department (Capecchi Interview, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee). In 1992, he started Capecchino Animation in Johannesburg, which specialized in commercials: Cadbury Chomp, Pillsbury Green Giant, Simba Chips and Cheetos.

³⁸ Henry Neville was born in Durban, South Africa, on 11 April 1937. He moved to Australia to work as an animator for the Hanna-Barbera studio in Sydney, before relocating to Johannesburg (Wilsenach Interview, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee).

³⁹ Studios in Amsterdam and Australia had access to cheap labour from animators in Malaysia, which is why Wilsenach tried to outsource work. (Wilsenach Interview, conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee).

apprenticeship at Disney in Burbank, California. In 1983, he was hired as a studio manager for the production of *Jock of the Bushveld* at Annie-Mation Studios (see above). There, Coppens had the chance to work with some of South Africa's best animators, exchanging skills, tricks and modes of production. When Wilsenach's studio closed in 1987, Coppens was forced to find work as a freelance at the Dave McKey studio, animating inserts for film commercials.

In 1988, he opened his own studio, Glenn Coppens Cartoons, to develop the animated commercials industry further. He recognized the lucrative potential of selling advertisements to the national broadcaster and began a symbiotic relationship with the SABC. (From 1975, South African studios had created many animated commercials for television, as the financial compensation was excellent.)

To cope with the immense workload, the studio employed sixty animators/artists. It was open for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with employees working 8-hour shifts.⁴⁰ Despite the long working hours and large staff, the studio was immensely pressured financially, going bankrupt in 1999.

More About It 1

Johan Roos (Johannesburg, SA, 22 November 1943), Head of Scenic Services, was the person responsible for the birth of the Unit itself. He began his career in the advertising industry and was eventually promoted to art director. His penchant for comics led to his later involvement in the publishing industry. Roos became quite a businessman and established his own publishing company, which bought titles such as *Outspan* and *Dagbreek*. He saw these titles as outlets in which he could continue to publish comic strips.

In 1974, Roos heard from his political contacts that the SABC was interested in starting a television broadcast facility, so he approached the SABC for a job. He was interested in the development of an animation/comic department within the Corporation, which he wanted to manage himself. Unfortunately, Dr. Schutte, the Head of Television Services and later the CEO, did not seem sold on Roos's suggestion. He, together with the board members, could not see the connection between comic strips, animation and television.

Instead, Schutte suggested that Roos attend the Producers course being run by Mike Leesten-Smith at the Goudstads College. It lasted about three months, during which time the participants had the opportunity to create a full-length drama and

variety program. After the course was completed, Roos decided not to accept the SABC's offer to become a producer, as the salary offered was too low. Dr. Schutte personally asked Roos to accept the offer. The Corporation was desperate to assemble a group of personnel with the relevant artistic, business and technical skills necessary for television broadcasting, and Roos seemed a good all-round candidate. After much negotiation and deliberation, he was appointed Head of Television Centre. His responsibilities included the running of all the studios, scenic services, generators and news departments.

More About It 2

Butch was born in Johannesburg in 1937 and christened Matthys Andries Stoltz. He adopted the name Butch after Butch Jenkins, a famous child star of that time, who displayed the same enthusiasm and flair as he did. Stoltz was a very creative child, spending his days drawing pictures. However, as he grew older, he tired of sketching static pictures and embarked on a journey of exploration to learn how to make them move.

His early inspiration came from classic Hollywood films, as well as from the Disney, Fleischer and Warner Bros. animations. Stoltz spent his youth gathering knowledge about the processes and equipment involved in producing animated film, from books he examined critically. By the time he was 12, he was adept in animating. When Butch was 14, he made contact with Denis Purchase at Alpha Film Studios and asked if Purchase would mentor him. Purchase declined. He was adamant that Stoltz should learn animation techniques directly from British studios, with their apprenticeship system and their reputation for professionalism.

On 4 January 1955, after working briefly as a sound controller for SABC Radio, Stoltz left South Africa and moved to Britain for three years. His first apprenticeship was with Polytechnic Film Studios in Taplow, from January to December. As a novice animator, his first job was to assist senior artists with television commercials. He was then allowed to make advertisements of his own: Mr. Therm, Remington Razors and Robertson's Marmalade. During 1956, he joined George Merino Productions in London, as an apprentice.

George Merino was an ex-Walt Disney employee, involved in the effects animation on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. At this studio, Butch had the opportunity to assist senior animators working mainly on commercials. Stoltz's last period of apprenticeship was with Guild Television Services in London, from January to December in 1957. Here, he made a Rinso Soap Powder advertisement on his own.

The three years abroad gained Stoltz a comprehensive understanding of the methods and practices of studios in London and the freedom to put his theoretical knowledge into practice.

⁴⁰ Glenn Coppens Cartoons animated memorable advertisements for such products as Shipmates Shampoo, the Good and Clean and Fresh washing detergent, Simba Chips, Gabriel shock absorbers, Lillets tampons and Emprazol-A cold and flu medication.

Stoltz returned to South Africa in 1957 and immediately joined Alpha Film Studios. There, he created and produced 'film advertisements of the week' for cinema release. He also designed and helped build sets for live-action advertisements with Bruce van Staden.

In 1968, he left Alpha Film Studios and joined Panorama Films in Pretoria. He started its animation division, producing retail drive-in cinema advertisements. Stoltz remained at Panorama until about 1973 when Thys Heyns, one of the owners, decided to resign. Stoltz followed Heyns and worked with him for two more years. The new company, Heyns Films, was understaffed and Butch found himself carrying most of the workload.

Fortunately, around the early 1970s, there was talk of the introduction of television to South Africa. This piqued Stoltz's interest, as he had always been a big fan of the medium (Stoltz interview conducted by Shanaz Shapurjee in 2008).

In March 1975, Johann Roos (HOD Scenic Services at the SABC) interviewed Stoltz for the position of Animation Unit Manager. Roos had heard of Stoltz's talent for animation and illustration from Pieter de Bruyn (Head of Television), who had contacts at Panorama Films where Stoltz had worked. Roos hired Stoltz, who joined the SABC in April 1975, initially as an illustrator.

His first job was to design the SABC opening logo used for the first public test broadcast. In 1976, he received the Artes award for the best contribution to Scenic Services. In 1979, he had the opportunity to visit The Walt Disney Studios together with colleagues Cherry Stoltz, Koos Theron and Hannes Odendaal to gather knowledge and contacts. From 1979 to 1980, Stoltz left the SABC and joined Annie-Mation Studios, where he worked on animated advertisements such as Mazda 323 and Harpic. He returned to the SABC in 1980, continuing to produce animated material of a high standard until 1986, when he resigned.

After that, Stoltz opened his own business and continued to do freelance projects commissioned for television broadcast. These included the First World Rugby Cup promotion, as well as animated advertisements including Citruséal, Mum for Men and Simba Chips.

More About It 3

Gerard Smith (13 August 1948, Glasgow, Scotland) was originally from the United Kingdom, where he created special effects on the optical printer. He moved to the Anson Dyer Studios in 1965, where his artistic aptitude let him rise through the ranks quite quickly. He then accepted a job in Brussels with Belvision, animating on cinema films: *Asterix and Cleopatra*, *Pinocchio in Outer Space*, *Tintin and the Prisoners of the Sun* (the French title translates to *Tintin and the Temple of the Sun*), and the beginning of *Lucky Luke*.

During *Lucky Luke's* production, Smith left Brussels and travelled to Munich and Hamburg where he worked for a short time. After his experience in Germany, Smith was preparing to leave animation to focus on his other passion, geology. Having already completed his A-levels in the subject, he travelled to Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1969 to participate in a geological survey. Whilst in South Africa, Smith studied medicine for four years, then abandoned that and focused on a BSc degree in physics. He gravitated back towards animation in the 1970s.

Smith apprenticed at Dave McKey Animation Services and worked as Denis Purchase's assistant for eight months. His determination and natural talents, and his strong working relationship with Purchase, helped the studio gain fame in the competitive South African commercials industry. Smith was part of a very skilled group of animators: Purchase (head animator), Butch Stoltz (freelance animator), Elsabie De Jager (inker and painter), Ruth Farber (inker and painter), and Sydney Charmer (assistant). Dave McKey imported the Higashimo animation camera from Japan and operated it for all the commercials and shorts created by the studio.

In 1978, Smith left for Rent-A-Studio as a resident animator in the studio's newly established animation department. Later, he and Gretchen Wilsenach (Johannesburg, SA, 26 December 1940) joined the newly formed Annie-Mation studio to work on *Bobby the Cat*, *Rachel De Beer* and a series of commercials commissioned by the SABC. In 1979, Smith heard the Unit at the SABC was looking for animators and promptly joined Butch Stoltz.