

**Hermeneutics and memory
in selected works by Willem Boshoff**

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By

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submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for MFA at Rhodes University

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*Make your own notes.
NEVER underline or
write in a book.*

Declaration

I declare that this study is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Date:

7/12/06

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Pencil, ink, markers and
highlighting pens work
for other readers.

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Introduction

Willem Boshoff was born in Vereeniging, South Africa, in 1951. The son of a carpenter, Boshoff developed an early interest in art. Although never taught formally by his father, he nevertheless acquired a knowledge of the craft of carpentry, a skill which he continues to utilize in much of his art-making today. Boshoff studied at the Johannesburg College of Art, and obtained a Master's Diploma in Technology in Fine Art in 1984. He taught at that institution for twelve years, becoming a full-time art practitioner in 1996. He produced some significant works prior to and during the time of his teaching tenure, including his *KykAfrikaans* visual poetry in 1979-1980, *Bangboek* between 1977-1986, and the researching and writing of the *Dictionary of Perplexing English* in 1986 (ending in 1999).

In this study I will discuss Willem Boshoff's careful employment of language and materials, through which he propagates his "study of ignorance" (Williamson and Jamal 1996:148). I will investigate two major works by Boshoff, namely *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet* in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. Both of these installations are concerned fundamentally with the subversion of power relationships and elitism. As I will show, both works offer an opportunity to investigate their objectives in relation to discourses surrounding language and hermeneutics. My study includes a third chapter, in which I discuss my own work entitled *The Bread of the Presence* in relation to Boshoff's own methodologies. As will be demonstrated with particular reference to *The Blind Alphabet* and my own work, a discussion of memory proves to be of some relevance within this dialogue.

A significant amount of literature has been produced on the work of Willem Boshoff. Such writings range from a book devoted entirely to his work, entitled *Willem Boshoff* (2005) by Ivan Vladislavic, to unpublished dissertations and online reviews. Having made myself familiar with this material, I have chosen to introduce here the three sources which I found to be most helpful to this study.

Vladislavic's book offers the first concise overview of Boshoff's work and provides many pertinent insights about his concerns and methods of working. Also useful is the discussion of Boshoff's works in *Art in South Africa: the future present* (1996) by Sue Williamson and Ashraf Jamal. Perhaps most informative, however, is Boshoff's own website, <http://www.art.co.za/willemboshoff/default.html> which contains several pieces of his own writings, including essays which discuss *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet*. Selected passages from these essays are cited throughout my study to support my arguments. But while all of the literature I have accessed and referenced has been of great use, none appears to have investigated Boshoff's *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet* in relation to established theories surrounding the subjects of hermeneutics and memory. It is such an investigation which forms the purpose of my study.

Despite its significant dimensions, *The Writing in the Sand* (figure 1: 2000) is a fragile and temporary installation. The work resembles a large open book, its pages constituted of white sand. Upon these long, rectangular "pages" are written, in black, perplexing English words such as *toxophilism*. The explanations of these words follow in any one of the nine newly recognised official languages of South Africa, such as Xitsonga. Essentially the work demands that arrogant English speakers

converse with speakers of more vulnerable tongues in order to interpret the work (Vladislavic 2005: 64). Concerned as it is with notions of linguistic superiority and the vulnerability of specific languages in South Africa, the work, I believe, permits some measure of investigation into language and communication as governed by hermeneutics. It is with this in mind that I begin my discussion in Chapter 1.

In order to competently investigate *The Writing in the Sand* in relation to the above concerns, I have depended primarily on J. Servino Croatto's work entitled *Biblical hermeneutics: toward a theory of reading as the production of meaning* (1987), Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976), translated into English by Gayatri Spivak, and Graham Ward's *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory* (2000).¹ Having defined through these sources those hermeneutical and communication processes typical to language, I turn my discussion to those aspects of *The Writing in the Sand*, both lingual and material, that permit comparison.

For Derrida, "language is always trying to overcome the deferral of meaning which it continually inscribes" (Ward 2000: 14). One understands this continual deferral of meaning as being tied to the polysemy of all texts, both written and oral (Croatto 1987: 22). It is the process through which meaning in language is dispersed, deferred and interpreted that constitutes the broad subject of hermeneutics. The word itself, as Croatto points out, means "interpretation", and stems from the Greek word *hermeneuein*, "to interpret" (Croatto 1987: 1).

¹ I found this work particularly helpful as it concisely discusses the writings of many significant contemporary theorists, such as Derrida, Ricoeur, Foucault and Kristeva.

The Writing in the Sand, requiring as it does that individuals speaking different languages co-operate in order to generate an understanding of the words in the work, is essentially a complicated exercise in interpretation. In Chapter 1 I discuss those elements in language that permit effective communication and a common interpretation. I show how Boshoff manipulates these processes in order to subvert notions of lingual supremacy. Important to this process, as I make clear, is the manner in which Boshoff utilises sand to act as a linguistic and conceptual signifier. The fragility of sand in this work allows for a brief exploration into the absence of a “stable identity” (Ward 2000:15) in language. Consequently my discussion turns to notions of social identity as threatened by language, a concept fundamental to the objectives of *The Writing in the Sand*.

As Vladislavic has pointed out, the conversation-generating process of mutual co-operation which *The Writing in the Sand* employs is of much significance in contemporary South African society. Elaborating, he remarks that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is often understood as a conversation through which our new society was talked into existence (Vladislavic 2005: 64). Considering this pertinent function of *The Writing in the Sand*, I have introduced into my discussion an essay by Njabulo Ndebele entitled “Memory, metaphor, and the triumph of narrative”. Discussing the narratives resulting from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ndebele calls for a distinction to be drawn between a remembered fact and “the revelation of meaning through the imaginative combination of those facts” (Ndebele 1998: 21). Having discussed the polysemy and instability of language in relation to Boshoff’s objectives, I explore such notions as they pertain to Ndebele’s concerns

surrounding narratives and recollection. It is with such concerns in mind that I begin my investigation, in Chapter 2, of *The Blind Alphabet*.

The Blind Alphabet (figure 2) is an installation daunting in its numerological scope (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 150). The work is comprised of numerous² wooden sculptures encased within black steel mesh boxes (figure 2b). The boxes containing the sculptures are installed in long, low columns, forcing participants to stoop in order to investigate their contents. The objects themselves form a “tactile literature”, attempting to articulate terms “poached from the English dictionary, namely those from the field of morphology” (Vladislavic 2005: 54). The work has been described as “readable wood”, a book which simultaneously reveals and conceals its contents (Vladislavic 2005: 54).

Sighted participants are prevented from removing the objects from their boxes and appreciating their tactile attributes. The explanation for each word that an object represents is written only in Braille and, as such, is unintelligible to most sighted participants. In this way the work operates to reverse the “usual orders of precedence and preference”, in subverting the power relationships that ordinarily exist between the sighted and the blind (Vladislavic 2005: 61). In addition, the work aims to promote touch and proximity as a means of mending “the social chasms of the past” (Vladislavic 2005: 61). The significance of the restrictions placed on the sighted, in terms of my investigation, lies in the fact that sighted participants are forced to rely upon association in order to generate an object’s meaning. It is the issue of association which leads to a discussion of memory as it pertains to the work.

² Begun in 1991, the project is a work in progress. By 1994, the first three letters of Boshoff’s alphabet had been completed, consisting of 338 sculptures.

In order to critically establish such notions of memory, I have focused on writings by both Penny Siopis and Annette Khun. In an essay discussing her video work entitled *My Lovely Day* (circa 2004), Siopis elucidates Khun's assertion that our own histories are often constructions of our memories (Siopis circa 2004: 4). In addition, Siopis reminds a reader that memory is in itself fragmentary (Siopis circa 2004: 3). In her work entitled *Family Secrets- Acts of Memory and Imagination*, Khun describes the manner in which memories are generated in a constant flux between the past and the present, and as such exist intertextually (Khun 1995: 12). It is the notion of memory as a fragmentary, intertextual construct that leads me to investigate *The Blind Alphabet* in relation to Patricia Davidson's arguments surrounding "authorised versions of the past" (Davidson 1998: 145).

In an essay entitled "Museums and the reshaping of memory", Davidson describes the manner in which institutions of preservation such as museums operate to selectively authenticate histories. Consequently, as she makes clear, those histories can become a sort of public memory. It is the manner in which memory can be authorised and propagated on a collective as well as an individual front that enables me to discuss both notions as they relate to *The Blind Alphabet*. Concerned with touch, and therefore proximity, the work promotes the immediacy of encounter by refusing itself to sighted participants. Through this deprivation, the sighted are called to re-evaluate their pre-supposed position of superiority over the blind. The gaze, or the process of regarding, can be understood as linked to notions of possession and authority. In *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, Norman Bryson discusses the dynamics and implications of such visual possession. Within the fifth chapter of his book, "The

Gaze and the Glance”, Bryson points out that in both English and French, the term *vision* can be understood as implying vigilance and mastery (Bryson 1983: 93). Furthermore, he writes that to *regard* something, etymologically, is to “actively seek... to confine” (Bryson 1983: 93). It is of some interest to consider Boshoff’s work as operating metaphorically to subvert those notions of authority and status implicit in the act of seeing, in light of Bryson’s observations.

Additionally, in *The Blind Alphabet* the sighted are invited to consider the manner in which personalised histories are oftentimes reliant on the sort of problematic collective memories which Davidson investigates. Essentially, *The Blind Alphabet* offers an opportunity to examine the ways in which memory can construct history and, at the same time, be a construct of an authorised past.

Having made clear the ways in which Boshoff’s *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet* operate materially and linguistically in order to convey their objectives, I introduce a discussion of my own work in Chapter 3. *The Bread of the Presence* (Figure 3: 2005) consists of twelve sheets of unleavened bread, arranged in two rows of six upon the floor. Raised flat at a height of approximately 5 centimetres, each sheet is embossed with a subsection of an amnesty application (figures 3e, f and g). The work invokes reference to, both materially and numerically, the ancient practice of the weekly grain offering described in the Old Testament (Leviticus 24: 5-6). This practice was crucial in the Tabernacle processes of atonement, and it is the subject of atonement with which my work is fundamentally concerned.

The Bread of the Presence's inclusion of written testimony is of some interest to this study. It provides an opportunity to discuss a distinction between all written and spoken texts. For Saussure, that distinction is significant. He demotes writing to be an event almost entirely outside of language (Ward 2000: 12). Conversely, Derrida argues that the written word, rather than being secondary to the pure and immediate representation of meaning which the spoken exemplifies, in fact "involves us in representation, in mediated meaning and process" (Ward 2000: 12,13).

It is with such conflicting views in mind that a reader might better consider established distinctions between written and spoken testimony. It is to this end that I have introduced writings by both Lawrence Langer and James Young. Both writers discuss the subject from the perspective of Holocaust testimonies and their lingual restrictions. For Langer, written testimony all too often distances a reader from the severity of the experience recounted through the reassuring construct of form. Writing in *Holocaust testimonies: the ruins of memory* (1991), he states that the immediacy of oral testimony lacks that assurance of form and containment which structured writing facilitates (Langer 1991:17). Similarly, in a work entitled *Writing and rewriting the Holocaust: narrative and the consequences of interpretation* (1988), Young argues that distanciation is implicit in written testimony. A writer's absence from his or her account of the past "becomes the absence of authority for the word itself, making it nothing more than...a fugitive report" (Young 1998: 24).

As I have stated, *The Bread of the Presence* is concerned with notions of atonement. By considering the amnesty application which the work incorporates, the subject of selective and constructed memory again presents itself, particularly as it pertains to

concepts of sincerity. It is the idea of constructed memory that leads me to consider the work in light of archaeological notions of reconstruction. For this purpose I cite Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), as discussed by Ward. For Foucault, archaeology is partly concerned with discovering and reconstructing the systems and structures which enabled an historical artefact to emerge (Ward 2000: 60). It is both the idea of imaginative reconstruction, and the overlapping and juxtaposition of those systems which facilitated historical artefacts (Ward 2000: 60), that will prove most significant to my discussion in terms of memory and hermeneutics respectively.

The conceptual concerns of *The Bread of the Presence* are distinct from those evident in *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet*. All three works, however, are reliant on language and specific material considerations through which they convey their objectives. I conclude my discussion in the third chapter by reiterating this point, with particular emphasis on the role of hermeneutics in the process of polysemy in language. In this way the discussion returns to the notion of material as Derridian signifier, first introduced in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1

The Writing in the Sand

The dynamics of effective communication are determined by several fundamental elements. In his work entitled *Biblical hermeneutics-toward a theory of reading as the production of meaning*, Croatto identifies these elements as the “sender”, the “receiver” and the “context” when describing their respective functions in the communicative process (Croatto 1987:14). The “sender”, he writes, “selects the signs (words, sentences, codes or literary genres possible in a given language) to transmit the message.” The “receiver” is one to whom, simply, “the message is addressed”, and who is able to “decipher it”. The “context” Croatto describes as a “horizon of understanding, common to the sender and the receiver, enabling them to ‘coincide’ in the reference or denotation of the message” (Croatto 1987: 14).

The processes through which effective communication is made possible becomes problematised, however, when one considers all discourse as “inseparable from a continual movement of displacement and dissemination”, which Jacques Derrida has called “supplementation” (Ward 2000: 15). It is partly supplementation, understood as being embroiled within the general function of hermeneutics, which orchestrates the demise of a fixed or singular meaning within all texts. Croatto writes that the plurality of meaning within text results from the fact that all discourse involves a multitude of codes and systems. Each reading of a text edits and gives a particular structure to those systems, producing meaning. It is this process which ensures that text becomes polysemic (Croatto 1987: 22).

Whilst this polysemy permits new readings of text, it also of course negates the possibility of concretised or fixed meaning. Much communication is constructed of signs. “Signs”, writes Ward, “must be repeatable if they are to mean anything, if they are to gain social currency. [Yet] the very repeatability of signs destabilizes their meaning by setting up differences and deferrals of meaning or identity” (Ward 2000: 16).

Derrida writes that “...language, or any code, any system of reference in general, becomes...constituted as a fabric of differences” (Ward 2000: 14). Discussing the role of the “signifier” in this “fabric of differences”, Derrida writes in *Of Grammatology*:

“Signifier of the signifier” describes...the movement of language: in its origin, to be sure, but one can already suspect that an origin whose structure can be expressed as “signifier of the signifier” conceals and erases itself in its own production” (Derrida 1976: 7).

Understanding a signifier to be that which points towards something signified, a “signifier of a signifier” can be considered a limitless process of allusions to allusions. In addition to understanding that all written and spoken “codes” are “signifiers”, materials too can assume the function of allusion. Ward describes the allusionary process as being constantly “*in media res*”, a state of flux between an irrecoverable and irreducible origin, and a conclusion which can never be ascertained. He describes a reader as occupying a precarious space within the “shifting sands of semiotic systems” in which we are “haunted by the possibility of presence and stable identity, but forever unable to produce it” (Ward 2000:15).

The Writing in the Sand (Figure 1) is a text-based installation comprising a subset of a previous endeavour by Willem Boshoff, namely the *Dictionary of Perplexing English* (1999). Vladislavic describes the work as comprising of “the dictionary of –ologies and –isms, which lists obscure fields of learning such as *caliology* (the study of birds’ nests) and *pognology* (the study of beards)” (Vladislavic 2005: 64). As a work the installation is temporary. The names of the fields of study mentioned above are stencilled, in English, in black upon two large areas of white sand on the floor. Explanations for these names follow in the nine newly recognised official languages of South Africa. The dimensions of the installation are variable and yet remain large. For example when installed at the 7th Havana Biennale in Cuba in 2000, each rectangle of sand upon which the text was stencilled measured 5.8m by 11.5m, and as such covered a significant area of floor space within the gallery. The text itself appeared at a height of 10 cm.

Vladislavic has written that “Boshoff... is interested in the power relationships inscribed in and through language, in the way languages privilege or exclude” (Vladislavic 2005: 64).¹ Discussing *The Writing in the Sand*, Boshoff writes:

The... abstruse terms [written in sand] are selected to perplex and confuse the English intelligentsia. Privileged English speakers, used to dictate and patronise those in the ‘lesser’ language groups, become frustrated by *Writing in the Sand* because they cannot identify the difficult words in their own tongue and the explanations are given in a tongue they do not know (Boshoff nd).

¹ Boshoff’s deliberate use of language as a means to confound has its origin, it would seem, in a personal arena. Whilst teaching a Perceptual Studies course at the Witwatersrand Technicon in the eighties, he became angered at his English colleagues’ presumption that because he spoke with an Afrikaans accent he was “stupid and uncouth” (Vladislavic 2005: 48). In a form of intellectual retaliation, Boshoff began the dictionary research for which he is now somewhat renowned, compiling endless definitions of lost English words nobody will ever need to use.

Much of Boshoff's work is dedicated to "the study of why one does not know" (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 148). *Writing in the Sand* uses language and materiality in order to subvert power relationships and nullify presumptions of superiority in language. As such the work, I would argue, provides an opportunity to explore Boshoff's methodologies in relation to discourses surrounding language and hermeneutics.

The capriciousness of sand and the ease with which it can be disturbed and disrupted seems to point towards the threatened position of the languages the work incorporates. *The Writing in the Sand* utilizes a strategy evident in much of Boshoff's work, namely forced "co-operative interpretation" (Vladislavic 2005: 64). This process requires groups separated by language to share their understandings of certain words or phrases in order to arrive at what Croatto would call a common "horizon of understanding" (Croatto 1987: 14). The work therefore functions in such a way as to prompt English speakers to discuss and learn otherwise concealed meanings by confronting that which they cannot understand. As such the metaphor extends to social and political dialogues of co-operation, obliterating as it does the notion of superiority.

Sand operates here as a signifier towards temporality, essentially drawing into focus questions surrounding the value and vitality of the threatened languages that *The Writing in the Sand* incorporates. The manner in which the work is designed to be disrupted, as evident in figure 1d, appears to substantiate this suggestion. This physical obliteration of texts, which are already incomprehensible without co-operative interpretation, can be linked to the lingual conundrum in which we are

“haunted by the possibility of...[a] stable identity, but...[are] unable to produce it”
(Ward 2000. 15).

One can understand Boshoff’s desire to “perplex and confuse the English intelligentsia” as made manifest through the manner in which he further complicates the hermeneutical displacement of meaning inherent in language to effect uncertainty and instability. Ward’s summation of Derridian concerns highlights the haunting possibility of a “stable identity” (Ward 2000:15). It is of some interest to consider not only the instability of identity in language, but also identity as threatened *by* language in terms of Boshoff’s work.

Language plays a large role in the provision of a social identity. Karen Basel has quoted Marina Ward as stating that language “carries codes of identity, creates bonds and...communicates...local principals” (Basel 2005: 13). The potential for redundancy that threatens the marginalized languages that *Writing in the Sand* employs also threatens the societal identity of those groups to which languages such as Tshivenda, for example, belong. By constructing a scenario whereby words and their meanings are accessible only through an interaction between language groups, *The Writing in the Sand* offers an opportunity to partially access otherwise distant aspects of various social identities through individual interaction.

The reliance on co-operative interpretation lends itself to the problematic question of the possibility of real unity in collaboration. To what extent an appreciation or even an acceptance of shared meaning can be made possible through willing interaction between individuals distanced from one another by language and experience is

difficult to ascertain. It is arguably the very recognition of such distance that brings to the fore the extent and nature of that divide. As has been established, even a common or shared language creates potential divides between those who employ it, as a result of the polysemic eradication of singular or fixed meaning. It is Boshoff's decision to render those conventional processes of communication redundant which allows for an assessment of the way in which privileged English interpretations can become presumptuous and categorical, and thus exclude and separate.

Discussing *The Writing in the Sand's* use of co-operative interpretation, Vladislavic promotes the idea as resonating "powerfully in contemporary South Africa" (Vladislavic 2005: 64). He quotes Mark Swilling as having described "organizational conversation" between "unions, community organisations [and] student bodies" as having resulted in the demise of a governmentally upheld separatist ideology. In effect, quotes Vladislavic, "apartheid was talked out of existence" (Vladislavic 2005: 64). Similarly, when viewed as a continuation of these discussions, he suggests that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission can be viewed as the means through which a democratic society was talked "into" existence.

In an essay discussing the narratives of apartheid, as revealed in part by the TRC, Njabulo Ndebele writes that although elements central to the intrigue of apartheid are slowly being revealed, the meaning behind those elements has yet to be fully understood. An attempt to discover those meanings, Ndebele argues, may result in still further narratives. Should this occur, and should such a process be invested with the necessary degree of imagination, previously concealed meanings within narratives

may well be revealed. It will be at this stage that facts become the “building blocks of metaphor” (Ndebele 1998: 21).

A narrative, in the context of communication, describes the articulation of a past event, an individual account of an experience in and over time. Metaphor, in this instance, allows for a further distancing² from the restriction of categorical fact, and privileges an individualised validity or importance over a collective and therefore an arguably less human one. Boshoff has written that “books can be prisons; once something is written, it’s written, and it can become dogma” (www. artthrob.co.za.). If one considers *The Writing in the Sand*, with its numerous –ologies and –isms, as a complication of factual classification and dogmatic assertion, then Ndebele’s suggestions could arguably be read in conjunction with such complications. Not understanding the dictionaryal definition of *pognology*, for instance, is perhaps less important than understanding “how (people) have grasped and related their experiences comprise[s] the actual core of ‘their story’” as James Young has written (Young 1988: 39). Elaborating, Young writes that the authority of any historical source cannot be reliant on factual components alone. Such a reliance would inevitably result in conflicting accounts of a single event. Young stresses that perceived facts are always tied to individualised interpretation in narrative. Understanding this, those facts become perhaps less important than their consequences and implications (Young 1988 38-39).

² In a compilation of essays entitled *Vision and difference-Femininity, feminism and histories of art*, Griselda Pollock points out that the word “distanciation” describes a strategy employed by the dramatist Brecht. The term is equated with “defamiliarization”. Pollock writes that the strategy was intended to “liberate the viewer from the state of being captured by illusions of art which encourages passive identification with fictional worlds...[T]he viewer was to become an active participant in the production of meanings across an event which was recognised as a representation... referring to and shaping understanding of contemporary social reality” (Pollock 1988: 163).

The Writing in the Sand is “both a homage to... ‘survivor languages’... and a large-scale conversation piece” (Vladislavic 2005: 64). Within the work, Boshoff has used and manipulated lingual and communicative processes both textually and materially in order to generate such conversation through mutual co-operation. The possible implications of those conversations can be read in relation to Ndebele’s suggestion that “resulting narratives may have less and less to do with facts themselves... than with the revelation of meaning through the imaginative combination of those facts” (Ndebele 1998: 21).

Chapter 2

The Blind Alphabet

Blind Alphabet ABC (figure 2) is perhaps Willem Boshoff's most acclaimed work. Winner of the 23rd Sao Paulo Biennale in Brazil, the entire installation is comprised of 338 wooden sculptures, "each representing a word related to form, structure or texture" (Vladislavic 2005: 58). A variety of indigenous wood was used to create the sculptures, and was inherited by Boshoff from his father. The Sao Paulo Biennale shows only the 77 units entitled *Blind Alphabet C (Coculli-Ferous to Cymbiform)*. Encased within steel-mesh boxes, each sculpture attempts to "articulate the meaning of a word" (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 149). The word of which any one object "speaks" is written only in Braille, as is a detailed account of the word's meaning and derivation. In accordance with Boshoff's instructions, only those who are unable to see are permitted to draw the objects from their boxes and examine them with their fingers.

Through this work Boshoff realises his desire to subvert "the usual relationship that obtains between the sighted and the blind, the strong and the weak" (Vladislavic 2005: 60). As a result of this subversion, sighted participants in the installation find themselves "disqualified" from the process of ascertaining meaning (Vladislavic 2005: 58). Describing the sensation of this disqualification, Vladislavic goes on to write that for him, the Braille script is meaningless. The inability to comprehend what would ordinarily be a necessary and informative element of a challenging conceptual piece results, for Vladislavic, in a disquieting lack of assurance (Vladislavic 2005: 58).

Vladislavic states that, for a sighted participant, any pleasure gained from the appearance of the objects themselves is a “chance by-product of its authorized appropriation by a blind guide.” (Vladislavic 2005: 58) This is due, in part, to the fact that the sculptures are entombed within steel mesh “crypts” which, as he points out, is a word derived from the Greek “kruptos”, meaning “hidden”, and are thus tantalizingly and yet incompletely available to the scrutinizing eye. Both the craftsmanship and the beauty of the finish on each of the sculptures beg tactile appreciation and yet reject all advances to this end. Sculpted lower bodies¹ and even a delicately rendered duck’s foot² remain safely unavailable amidst a mass of morphological objects.

As a result of the deprivation of which Vladislavic speaks, and a distancing from both the tactile and textual information which comprises the work, sighted participants are forced to re-evaluate their presumed position of superiority. Sighted viewers “are confounded in the moment of failed apprehension...Bereft, we come to understand the little we know, our illusory grasp of certainty and...the instruction that comes with ignorance (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 150). Through this failed apprehension, we- as sighted participants- are also challenged to question the superiority of one sense over another. Vladislavic writes that “the privileging of sight has led to the neglect of other senses, especially that of touch” (Vladislavic 2005: 60). Boshoff has written that “touching provides for a more intimate sensory experience than sight. Touch eliminates distance whereas sight enforces it, touch is committed to

¹ This object describes the word *callipygian*, meaning “having beautiful buttocks”.

² This object describes the word *bicolligate*, meaning “webbed between toes”.

an immediate encounter whereas sight is illusory and superficial” (Vladislavic 2005: 61).

In addition to the subversion of those power relationships that exist between the sighted and the blind, Boshoff has stated that *Blind Alphabet ABC* “re-establishes the integrity of touch as a socially viable catalyst for interactive discourse” (Vladislavic 2005: 61). Through the work, he promotes the notion that “skin is capable of drawing finer distinctions than the eye and act[s] as a ‘bridging tool to help mend the social chasms of the past’”, as Vladislavic has quoted (Vladislavic 2005: 61). Boshoff’s essay for the catalogue of the 23rd biennale in São Paulo, Brazil, referring to his *Blind Alphabet ABC*, states:

Our prejudicial obsession with each other’s skin-colour enforced the coldest, furthest possible distance. Under apartheid we were like sacred art objects in a well-guarded museum, far apart, only to be seen, never to be touched” (Boshoff nd).

Given the restrictions and informational distancing placed on the sighted participants in Boshoff’s installation, one might be tempted to initially regard the sighted viewer’s encounter to be more of a non-experience than an experience. Unable to attribute a common meaning to an object through language, we, the sighted, are alienated in our own world, as Croatto might describe it. Each object generates a visual association for a sighted participant. As opposed to being illustrative of a specific word and its derivation, each sculpture begins to speak in countless ways to those who view them.³ Essentially, this process can be identified by Croatto’s

³ This is particularly so in cases where the object is harder to recognise. *Bicolligate*, for example, describing “webbed between toes”, is represented by a duck’s foot. *Abbozzo*, however, means “in rough form”, and is represented simply as an irregularly shaped block, covered in striated cuts. As a result of the fact that this object does not appear to be tied to an easily recognisable form, it presents a more

assertion that “each reading is a production of meaning...In other words [text] becomes polysemic...(Croatto 1987: 22). In relying upon our own previous associations or experiences to give meaning to any one of Boshoff’s objects, we transform these objects into catalysts for our own histories. These histories, then, can be understood as being rooted in memory.

Discussing her memory-related work entitled *My Lovely Day*, Penny Siopis quotes Annette Khun as writing:

Memory...presents new possibilities for...understanding...how we use images and representations to make ourselves, how we construct our own histories through memory, even how we position ourselves within wider, more public histories (Siopis circa 2004: 4).

Perhaps the most significant point to draw from this quotation is that we constantly “make ourselves”. That is to say, our histories are constructs based on memory, which, as Siopis has pointed out, “is a fickle thing” (Siopis circa 2004: 2). Khun writes in *Family Secrets- Acts of Memory and Imagination* (1995) that memories are formulated in a complicated and intertextual network of discourses that shift between the past and the present (Khun 1995: 12). Discussing the generation of meaning through an interaction with images, Khun goes on to write that “in this network, the image itself figures largely as a trace, a clue: necessary, but not sufficient, to the activity of meaning making; always pointing somewhere else” (Kuhn 1995: 12).

It would seem as though *Blind Alphabet ABC* affords a significant opportunity to sighted participants. Through isolation and confusion, we are able to allocate

challenging polysemy. In other words, it becomes harder to cognitively identify an association when the object itself is so difficult to determine and categorize.

associative memories and histories to generate meaning in the work, and consider how our own histories are always in the process of being constructed through memory.

Considering *Blind Alphabet ABC*'s potential to "mend the social chasms of the past" (Vladislavic 2005: 61), and understanding Boshoff's statement that "under apartheid we were like...objects in a ...museum" (www.willemboshoff.com), it seems of some importance to consider the work in relation to notions of a collective history and a collective memory.

In an essay entitled "Museums and the reshaping of memory", Patricia Davidson discusses the flaws and functions of a collective perception of history, as perpetuated by institutions of "preservation" such as museums. Davidson writes here on the subject of museums and memorials, whose objective it is to preserve "authorized versions of the past, which in time become institutionalised as public memory" (Davidson 1998: 145).⁴ It appears reasonably obvious that the processes of selective representation through which museums function disallows for the inclusion of innumerable histories. Without being preserved, by extension, these unarticulated histories become dead.⁵

⁴ Davidson's essay centres on a discussion of how older and larger state funded museums "are responding to political imperatives" (Davidson 1998: 149). Essentially the paper investigates aspects of both the historical and contemporary display policies of these institutions and their efforts to "confront the burden of their own history in shaping a new future" (Davidson 1998: 149).

⁵ A reader is reminded here of the manner in which *The Writing in the Sand* shows how languages, and by extension the cultures which employ them, are threatened with extinction through disuse. In order for any language to adapt and survive, it must of course be spoken.

Of more importance to this discussion is the manner in which selective and often-fraudulent histories can be presented in such a way, and to such an extent, as to become inscribed as a false yet collective memory. As Davidson has discussed, museums in this country can and have operated in such a way as to propagate elitist and separatist ideologies. Tools of bad education, these obtuse ideologies became instilled as history, and, by extension, as memory.

It is within this dynamic that *Blind Alphabet ABC* seems to operate with some poignancy. For Davidson, tangibility is of great significance within the dynamics of memory (Davidson 1998:160). *Blind Alphabet ABC* promotes touch as a means of obliterating social and historical distance. Through the immediacy of interaction which the work provides, participants are permitted to reflect upon the ways in which distance has been generated through our histories and how our histories are often constructs of allocated memory.

Blind Alphabet ABC is concerned with the subversion of those relationships of power that exist between the sighted and the blind. Through this subversion, sighted participants are encouraged to re-evaluate their conceptions of superiority, strength and weakness. In addition, they are called to consider the elevation of one sense above another. It is by way of informational deprivation that sighted participants are required to rely upon memory in order to bring a semblance of meaning and thus reassurance to the work. Through the introduction of the subject of memory, a reader is encouraged to consider the ways in which we construct our histories through memory, and how authorised histories can in themselves become memory.

Chapter 3

The Bread of the Presence

The Bread of the Presence (Figure 3) is comprised of twelve sheets of hardened dough. Mixed with epoxy resin, flour has been cast into individual sheets, each forming a rectangular format upon which a subsection of an amnesty application is embossed. The application was one presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Andries Putter, former Chief of Staff of Military Intelligence in the South African Defence Force. The sheets are exhibited in two rows of six, to make reference to Levitical instruction (Leviticus 24: 5-6). In part, I believe that this work's reliance on problematic textual testimony allows for comparisons and discussions with and surrounding notions of language, hermeneutics and memory as made evident in my reading of Boshoff's *Writing in the Sand* and *Blind Alphabet ABC* respectively. In addition, I believe that it is the materiality of the installation which lends itself to such comparisons.

The book of Leviticus describes how each week, the Israelite priests were to bake twelve loaves of unleavened bread, called The Bread of the Presence, to be arranged in two rows of six behind the curtain that demarcated the holiest place in the tabernacle. This practice was to signify the preservation of life. Additionally, this practice stemmed from the use of unleavened bread accompanying every burnt offering made in an attempt to achieve atonement. No yeast was permitted, as it was a symbol of degradation, corruption and the contaminating effect of sin within an individual and within the community. Only the finest white flour was to be used. This flour was expensive, but accessible to all at a high price, and was considered a



luxury product. It was ground from the inner core of a kernel of wheat, and displayed the purity and sincerity of the "grain offering" (*Life Application Study Bible*: 160).

Each loaf was to contain what is estimated at approximately 4.6 kgs of ingredients.¹ Each sheet that I produced incorporates approximately the same weight in measures (2 kgs of flour, 2kgs of epoxy resin, and .6 kgs of hardening agent). This adherence to the original instruction appeared necessary, conceptually, for a variety of reasons. For me, the most important of these was the impossible notion of measuring atonement.

As a work, *The Bread of the Presence* is concerned with the idea of atonement. The work follows those practices of atonement enacted by the ancient Hebrews in the Tabernacle of the Old Testament. In the early stages of my research towards this work, I discovered that the Hebrew for "atone", *Kippur*, means "to cover". Whilst this is meant, in context, as a complete blanketing out of sin, its direct translation does not mean specifically "to remove". In much the same way as a suspended sentence operates today, in the Old Testament an individual's pardon would be conditional, and thus "covered over". Repetition of that sin, however, indicated a lack of sincerity in the process of atonement, and as such resulted in punishment for the initial transgression. In this way, sin was conditionally forgotten, but not expunged.

This point is of importance here in that I believe the distinction between covering over and complete removal can be understood as corresponding to those Derridian aspects of concealment and erasure as discussed in Chapter 1. Considering the manner in

¹ The conversion of biblical measures into metric units has been standardised, with the understanding that those measures varied significantly within the time in which they were in use. For example an ephah, a dry measure, is now understood to contain 22 litres. Leviticus 24: 5 reads as instructing the loaves to include two tenths of an ephah of flour and an unspecified quantity of salt and olive oil (Leviticus 2: 4-13).

which all language “conceals and erases itself in its own production” (Derrida 1976: 7), it is obvious that the written testimony employed within this work is subject to the same dynamics of concealment and partial erasure. Aside from the hermeneutics of that process, the dynamic can also be exploited to function metaphorically. This testimony, a self-preserving account of truth, distances itself from the facts of a past military operation by pleading ignorance with regards to the details of the event. A complicated process of possible erasure is at work within Putter’s amnesty application with regards to his memory of the operation. A potential concealment is at work concerning his knowledge of the details of the event as it transpired.

As I have already stated, *The Bread of the Presence* attempts to discuss atonement. The document used within the work cannot be considered a reliable narrative through which to better understand past events as they transpired in reality. That is not necessarily the objective of an amnesty submission. The application, however, does exist as a form of testimony. It is through a discussion of the differences between written and oral texts that one might begin to consider the difference between written and oral testimony. Testimony, although intrinsically connected to the government of hermeneutics, must also be understood to rely on memory, which, in the case of amnesty application, can be selective.

For Saussure, Ward summarizes, writing is not part of language itself, and exists as an external event. In this way, meaning is presented in its most direct and unsullied form when spoken (Ward 2000: 12). Derrida, however, asserts that the elevation of the spoken over the written is “phonocentric”. This criticism concerns the “temporal and logical priority which structural linguistics gives to the spoken word over its written

representation (Ward 2000: 12). Ward, quoting Derrida throughout, explains as follows:

This privileging of the spoken (and the concurrent secondariness of the written) Derrida relates to 'logocentrism', a desire for, or a belief in, the possibility of the unmediated presence of the object signified. 'The system of language associated with phonetic-alphabetic writing is that within which logocentric metaphysics, determining the sense of being as presence, has been produced' (Ward 2000: 12).

He goes on to suggest that

The object of [Derrida's] early work was 'to give to the theory of writing the scope needed to counter logocentric repression'. That is...to show how the written works to undo the suggestions of meaning directly presented through the sign and requires also an examination of the historical movement forward of language. Writing involves us in re-presentation, in mediated meaning and process (Ward 2000: 12,13).

Having surmised that writing undoes the suggestion of meaning and involves us in re-presentation (Ward 2000: 13), it would seem of some importance to discuss the distinction between written and oral *testimony* when viewing *The Bread of the Presence*. The ancient procedure from which the work has drawn its title was certainly a representative one. The notion of re-presentation begins, I think, to refer to the idea of truth and sincerity in reconstruction.

Discussing written testimony, Robert Langer observes:

A written narrative is finished when we begin to read it, its opening, middle and end already established between the covers of the book. This appearance of form is reassuring (even though the experience of reading may prove an unsettling challenge). Oral testimony steers a less certain course, like a fragile craft veering through turbulent waters unsure where a safe harbour lies..." (Langer 1991:17).

The immediacy of oral testimony, Langer states, is a more effective means of delivering a recalled event. His statement that oral testimonies "repeatedly touch exposed nerves that the witnesses themselves did not realise existed, resulting in the immediacy of introspection that could probably be captured nowhere else" testifies to that belief (Langer 1991: 31).

It would appear that for Langer a false assurance comes, when reading written testimony, from the manner in which written narratives propagate form and cohesion. Narratives, he argues, thus placate a reader with the lie that uncertainty cannot exist outside of that narrative's textual confines.

Similarly, but perhaps more concerned with the hermeneutics of written testimony,

James Young writes:

The words in a translated and reproduced [testimony] are no longer traces of the crime, as they were for the writer who inscribed them; what was evidence for the writer at the moment he wrote is now, after it leaves his hand, only a detached and free-floating sign, at the mercy of all who would read and misread it. Evidence of the witness's experiences seems to have been supplanted— not delivered by— his text. Once he withdraws from his words, the writer has in effect also withdrawn the word's evidentiary authority, the only link it ever had to its subject in the world. The writer's absence thus becomes the absence of authority for the word itself, making it nothing more than... a fugitive report (Young 1998: 24).

Here a reader is called to regard testimony as being embroiled within established hermeneutical discourses surrounding the displacement of meaning within all text. This displacement can be understood to have its origins in the death of the author scenario, as encapsulated by Croatto in Chapter 1.

Within both discussions of written testimony, an issue of distance is generated. For Langer, that distance presents itself in the manner in which a reader is separated from the fullness of history through narrative confines. For Young, this separation is tied, too, to hermeneutical distancing. By juxtaposing these notions of distance and immediacy in testimony, one finds oneself returning to similar notions as they pertain to memory and preservation.

The Bread of the Presence incorporates an amnesty application to problematise the notion of sincerity in atonement. Recalling any past event obviously requires memory. Memory, however, in addition to being “a fickle thing” (Siopis c. 2004: 2), can also be deliberately altered to evade responsibility. Anthony Holiday, in an essay entitled *Forgiving and Forgetting: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, writes: “...there are various sorts of memory and ways of remembering, just as there are various kinds of forgetfulness and amnesia. Each of these has its own special connection to other concepts in the semantic field” (Holiday 1998: 44). The alteration of memory in order to achieve an objective recalls Patricia Davidson’s discussion of “authorised versions of the past” (Davidson 1998: 145). and how they can, in time, become “public memory” through institutions of selective representation such as museums.

Young quotes T. W. Adorno as having warned that “the German word *museal* (museumlike) has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying” (Young 1988:184). It is of some interest to consider *The Bread of the Presence* in light of these relationships. Concerned as it is, in part, with the preservation of defunct

physical ritual, the work, I think, calls into question the relationship a viewer has with the underlying philosophies of the Old Testament practice.

For the Israelites of the Old Testament, sacrificial processes surrounding the function of the Tabernacle were exclusively outward measures taken to ensure spiritual or inward atonement between humanity and God. Holiday makes clear, however, in relation to our contemporary social circumstance, “that forgiveness, by reason of its conceptual dependence on remorse, must be an intensely personal, even a private matter” (Holiday 1998: 44), and later, “The formulae of forgiveness...are...outward signs of alterations to situations which are essentially inward, so that the mere public utterance of them does not of itself guarantee that the alteration has occurred...”

(Holiday 1998: 45) Later still, Holiday writes:

Since public utterances provide no cast-iron warrant of that the sincerity-conditions have been met, forgiveness is not something we can expect to happen as if it were an entitlement flowing from a contract, but only something for which we may hope (Holiday 1998: 45).

By establishing the necessarily inward dynamic of sincerity conditions in our own social context, and by contrasting these with the outward displays of sincerity required in the Old Testament, one can consider *The Bread of the Presence* as posing questions as to the distinction between inner and outward modes of sincerity. In so doing, I believe, the work calls into question the relationship a viewer holds with the very concept of atonement within our current socio-historical dynamic.

Considering the manner in which *The Bread of the Presence* reconstructs, in part through its materiality, an ancient procedure in order to articulate its concerns, it becomes feasible to understand the work as being somewhat archaeological. Young points out that in excavating concentration camp sites, “archaeologists are bringing the past into the present one rusty artefact at a time...necessarily atomiz[ing] events in order to reconstruct them.” (Young 1988:184). For Paul Ricoeur, as Ward has written,

The trace of the past event is brought to language...The trace of the past is retraced and so ‘historians can, absolutely speaking, be said to refer to something “real”’. The reality to which historians refer is not the naïve empiricism of positivists, but it bears nevertheless the trace of having actually occurred. We cannot discover the past without also inventing it to some extent (Ward 2000: 57).

Here a reader is called to recognise that representing and reconstructing the past is always in some way connected to the notion of invention. Ward writes that “no accurate picture of the past can be given; no reconstruction of all the possible relations constituting an object of knowledge is possible. There is no true history” (Ward 2000: 65). Elaborating on the role of the categorised object as an archaeological and thus historical referent, Ward summates Foucault’s concerns discussed in his work entitled *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

An archaeology attempts to...present the interplay of rules governing the social and intellectual space in which the object can emerge, locate itself in relation to other objects in the field, be transformed, even forgotten or replaced. The object...only exists ‘under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations’ (Ward 2000: 60).

As Ward makes clear, then, an historical object is in itself dispersed, and relies upon archaeology to map out that dispersal. Archaeology essentially acts to trace those elements responsible for an object’s formation and construction (Ward 2000: 60).

It is of some interest to regard *The Bread of the Presence* in light of these quotations. Foucault has established that historical objects refer, through archaeology, to the specific social, intellectual and political climates from which they emerged. In considering and reconstructing those climates, a degree of invention is constantly at work. I think that *The Bread of the Presence* discusses not so much the distinction between the social climates of the Old Testament and our own, but the manner in which effective atonement must take place internally as opposed to exclusively outwardly.

Ward discusses Foucault's assertion that:

Archaeology is concerned with ...how [documents]...constitute distinctive series 'which are juxtaposed to one another, follow one another, overlap and intersect, without one being able to reduce them to a linear scheme' (Ward 2000: 60).

This irreducible juxtaposition and overlapping of historical documentation is what enables us to return briefly to the subject of hermeneutics. The specific "social and intellectual space" (Ward 2000: 60) to which historical documents and objects refer, and the impossibility of reducing them to linear cohesion, can be linked to the polysemic dispersal of fixed meaning within language. These objects can be understood as signifiers towards historical social and intellectual climates, which are in themselves invented to some extent through their reconstruction. When considering the manner in which *The Bread of the Presence* uses fine flour in specific quantities to refer to Old Testament practices, it becomes apparent that materiality operates within the work as a signifier.

The Bread of the Presence has its conceptual roots in the atonement processes of the Old Testament. The bridge created between this outward display of sincerity in the biblical atonement dynamic and the contemporary event of apartheid testimony offers, I feel, an opportunity to discuss the nature of atonement. This discussion inevitably includes an investigation into the problematic distinction between inner attitudes and outward actions. The conceptual priorities and concerns of this work and the work of Willem Boshoff discussed in this paper are separate. All of these works, however, utilise language to pose questions pertaining to these separate concerns. A considered use of materials through which to address these concerns is also evident in both Boshoff's work and my own. It is by and through an investigation into such subjects as language and material association that I believe a correlation between *Blind Alphabet ABC*, *Writing in the Sand* and *The Bread of the Presence* can be validated.

Conclusion

As has been made clear in this study, *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet* are works concerned with disrupting illusions of power in and through language. For Ward, “power...creates forms of rationalization and invests them with a credibility (Ward 2000: 64). The primary purpose of this study has been to explore the ways in which Boshoff utilises and complicates established processes of communication in order to discredit notions of power. Put simply, Boshoff’s work “undermine[s] the notion that one language or culture is superior to another” (Basel 2005: 15).

Within this study I have discussed those particular dynamics through which effective communication is best afforded. It is through this discussion that one might understand Boshoff’s work to be a deliberate problematisation of conventional means of dialogue. The purpose and significance of such a disruption lies in his desire to “perplex and confuse the English intelligentsia” (Boshoff nd), thereby replacing delusions of English superiority with an unavoidable confrontation of ignorance.

Throughout this paper I have revealed that *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet* offer a reader the opportunity to parallel both works’ aims with the distanciative and polysemic potentials of language. It is through addressing such notions of polysemy and distanciation that my discussion has turned to the subjects of memory and narrative as they pertain to Boshoff’s works.

Underlying all communicative structures and processes, regardless of the language through which such communication is effected, lies the dialectically disruptive and

redemptive constant of hermeneutics. Through the obliteration of concretised and fixed meaning and the consequent opportunity for personalised interpretation, hermeneutics functions as something of an equaliser over any presumption of superiority in or through language. This irreducible constant seems to recall Boshoff's assertion that nobody can escape being lost, regardless of a particular lingual prevalence (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 149).

A reader is able to recognise that the manner in which language and communication are individually and oftentimes selectively interpreted can be understood as closely linked to dialogues of individuality and selection in memory. The polysemic nature of language refutes the notion that there might be a consistent and immutable truth against which to measure all accounts of history. Similarly, it becomes possible to accept that it is precisely the exclusivity, and not the consistency, of a recalled experience that reveals meaning.

As has been argued by both Ndebele and Young, facts are not necessarily the means through which an individual history is reconciled to a collective one. Once the *meaning* of another person's fact or personalised truth is established as prevalent in some shared and thus coherent fashion, some potential for social and individual re-examination is initiated.

Boshoff's suggestion that nobody can be "anything but lost" (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 149) echoes powerfully again here. It is the realisation of our individually constructed histories that demands an attempt to receive and internalise others. In effect, this would allow for the expansion of the metaphorical and psychological

spaces in which individuals wander “lost”, and yet at the same time permit us all, at the very least, more light by which to negotiate our sociological claustrophobia.

The Bread of the Presence, like *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet*, is conceptually reliant on both language and materials. Despite its distinctive objectives, those lingual processes evident in Boshoff’s work can be seen to function within my own. Similarly, like the work of Boshoff, *The Bread of the Presence* incorporates selected materials to allude to, or signify, those concerns with which the work is preoccupied. The work, referential to ancient religious and historical practices, has permitted some measure of comparative exploration into the theoretics of archaeology. Although this avenue of investigation has been touched upon with regards to my own work in this study, it has not been explored in relation to Boshoff’s objectives and methodologies.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Foucault regards archaeology as a study through which those complex and interrelational circumstances and occurrences, which permitted historical objects to emerge, are presented contemporarily (Ward 2000: 60). It may be feasible, then, to consider language as artefact, as resultant of complex social relationships and circumstances of the past, presented and functioning in the present.

Whilst not concerned with those factors which gave rise to the development of now-threatened languages such as Xitsonga, Boshoff’s work is concerned with the preservation of those languages, recognising that in order for a language to be preserved it must be spoken. It might prove very interesting to consider how language, as archaeological artefact, both reflects and imagines the physical and

social histories from which it has developed. Perhaps more pertinent here is the fact that archaeology is concerned with “bringing the past into the present” (Young 1988:184). Considering this, a reader may begin to view Boshoff’s employment of threatened languages as being something of a complicated lingual archaeology. Should one subscribe to this view, Boshoff’s work could be understood as prompting participants to question the vitality of their relationship with those lingual artefacts, themselves echoing Adorno’s *museal* objects.

Remarkable in their conceptual scope and reach, *The Writing in the Sand* and *The Blind Alphabet* are works axiomatic to Boshoff’s artistic oeuvre. Both utilise materiality and communicative problematisation in order to subvert power relationships within language. This subversion extends to suggest that the delusion of superiority on any front, be it linguistic, sociological or racial, is not only tyrannically obtuse but also short-sighted.

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Figure 1c. Willem Boshoff, *The Writing in the Sand* (2000), sand and stencils, dimensions variable, travelling installation. Photographed at the Castelo de Moko, Havana.



Figure 1d. Willem Boshoff, *The Writing in the Sand* (2000), sand and stencils, dimensions variable, travelling installation. Photographed at The Castle Champlitte, France.



Figure 1e. Willem Boshoff, *The Writing in the Sand* (2000), sand and stencils, dimensions variable, travelling installation. Photographed at the Castelo de Moko, Havana

Figure 2- *The Blind Alphabet*



Figure 2a. Willem Boshoff, *The Blind Alphabet* (begun 1991), wood, steel and aluminium, dimensions variable (each box stands at 73.5 cm high), travelling installation. Photographed at the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

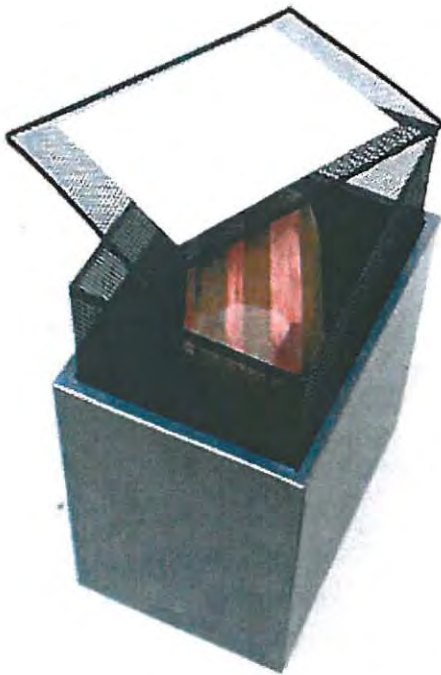


Figure 2b. Willem Boshoff, *The Blind Alphabet* (begun 1991), wood, steel and aluminium, dimensions variable (each box stands at 73.5 cm high), travelling installation.

Figure 3- *The Bread of the Presence*



Figure 3a. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery by Monique Pelsler.



Figure 3b. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery by Monique Pelsler.



Figure 3c. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery by Monique Pelsler.

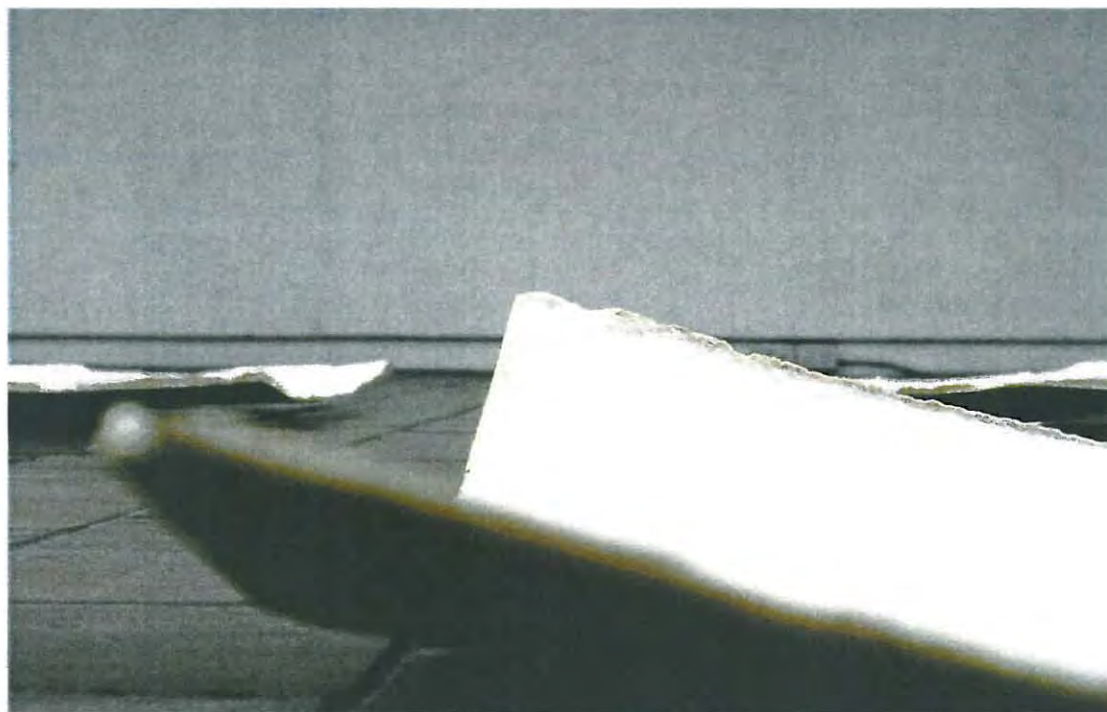


Figure 3d. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery by Monique Pelsler.

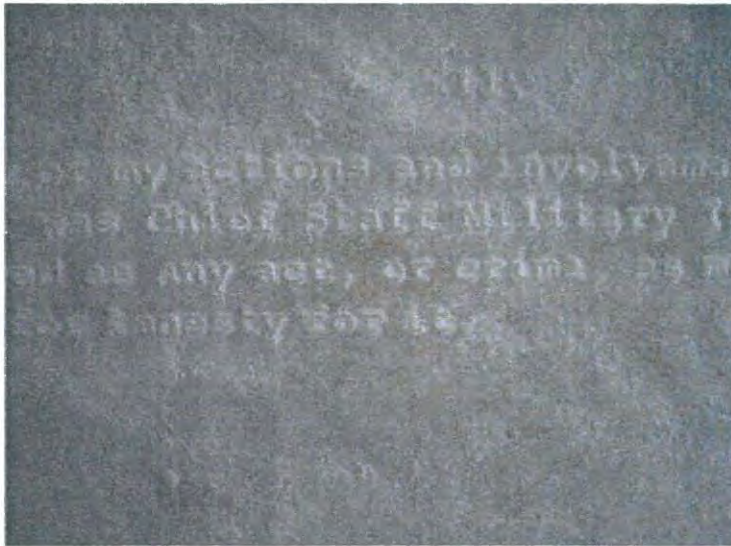


Figure 3e. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery.

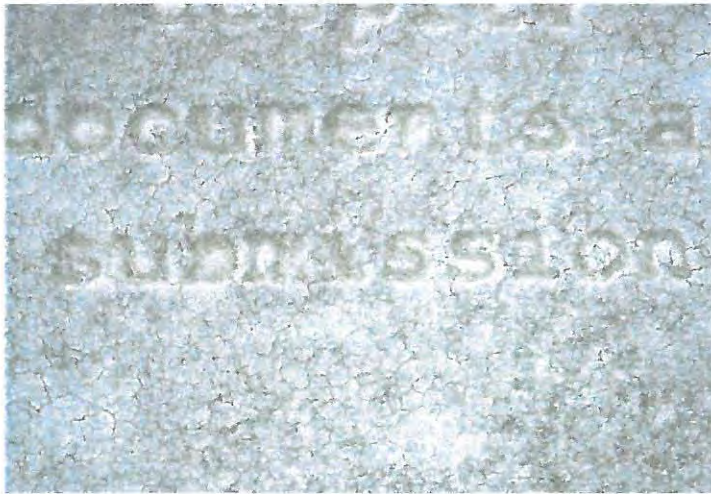


Figure 3f. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery by Monique Pelser.



Figure 3g. Jordan Tryon, *The Bread of the Presence* (2005), flour, epoxy resin and stencils, dimensions variable. Photographed at the Rhodes University Gallery by Monique Pelser.

