



## THE HAND OF THE ARCHAEOLOGIST HISTORICAL CATASTROPHE, REGIMES OF CARE, EXCISION, RELATIONALITY AND UNDISCIPLINARITY

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1. This paper was written as part of a collaborative project involving the authors, which focused on questions of archaeology, coloniality and decolonial knowledges. Our thanks to Sven Ouzman, curator of archaeology at the Iziko South African Museum, and to Janine Dunlop and Stacey Hendricks for research assistance.

*Image: In the hand of Goodwin, a trowel slices the earth. The dead of Oakhurst Cave are laid bare, inscribed within a new logic and a new space/time...*

*All images from the Goodwin Collection in the Manuscripts and Archives division of UCT Library.*

### A flock of images

We first encounter the images when they are pasted to the walls of the John Berndt Thought Space, the seminar room used by the Archive and Public Culture research group. Each contributor to the book has been invited to stick up a selection of their images. At a later stage a choice will be made and some of these images will find their way into the finished product. There is something deeply appealing about the sheer number and variety of images. In loosely themed clusters, they cover much of the available wall space.

As a set, the images materialise the intellectual project of the Archive and Public Culture group in particular ways. They present its variety, suggest its points of articulation, raise questions and point to overlaps and coincidences. There is something generative about the sheer profusion of images. For the three days of our workshop they surround us. We sit and frame words, but around us clamours a different register, a flock of images whose import is only loosely translatable into language. We have summoned them up; they have come to settle among us; they challenge us in particular ways. The habit of language – the old trick of language – is to pin down and anatomise the image, to contain the profusion, each word placed just so. How will it be this time?

At the same time, as so often happens in photographs of an ethnographic or documentary nature, we encounter the image as spectre: in the portrait of the murdered Biko, in the returned gaze of the ethnographic subject, in the photographs of artefacts held in ghostly immobility in the museum or archival collection.

