

## **Consuming the Body of Christ: Body Politics, Law Enforcement and the Occult in a South African City**

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This paper deals with the social power of a damaged body and its impact on the political history and imagination in a South African city. The paper explores an act of extreme, transgressive violence during the 1952 Defiance Campaign unrest in East London where a white Dominican nun was murdered, mutilated and consumed by an angry crowd in an East Bank township of East London. This act of cannibalism has been suppressed or underplayed in many academic and political accounts of the 1952 violence in the city. But it is well remembered in East London where stories of the nun and the manner of her death have circulated for decades in the townships and feature regularly in the local media. In fact, in 2002, a local township civic leader raised funds for the erection of a statue to celebrate the life of the slain nun, arguing that urban renewal would elude the city and township until such time as forgiveness was sought for the actions of 1952. This paper explores how one damaged body has shaped the history of a city and provoked various forms of violence, counter-violence and occult politics.