THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY 'LIVES' OF EDMUND GENNINGS (1566–91)[1]

by ALISON SHELL

The Elizabethan Catholic priest Edmund Gennings was born with a tooth, and after his martyrdom, parted with his thumb to a seeker of relics. For these and other reasons, his life and death attracted considerable literary attention in the seventeenth century. The evolutions and redactions of the biography apparently written by Gennings' brother John demonstrate how manuscript and print circulation complemented each other at this date, as well as pointing to the difficulties faced by would-be commemorators of England's martyrs in the early 1600s, and the phenomenon of Catholic material published in the mainstream to appeal to those on both sides of the religious divide. Set side by side, Gennings' biographies show how martyr-narratives were told and retold in different eras and for ideologically divergent audiences. The most ambitious of them, *The Life and Death of Mr. Edmund Geninges Priest* (St. Omer, 1614) also includes a fascinating reference to Shakespeare's life and work, recently discussed in another article in *Recusant History*, that sets the real-life exemplary challenges of martyrdom in opposition to the Shakespearean imaginative world.[2]

Edmund Gennings was born in Staffordshire in 1566, and as with many saints, instances of precocity and early spiritual gifts figure prominently in the narratives of his early life; one day during his childhood, for instance, he saw a vision of armed men fighting each other in the air. After he became page to a Catholic gentleman, Richard Sherwood, he converted to Catholicism himself, and when Sherwood announced his intention of leaving England to take religious vows, Gennings was so distressed at the prospect of leaving him that he went abroad with his master. He was sent to the English College at Douai, was made priest at the age of 23, and not long afterwards was sent on the English mission. In London he lodged in Gray's Inn Fields, Holborn, at the house of a lay Catholic, Swithin Wells. While he was celebrating a clandestine Mass, the notorious priest-catcher Richard Topcliffe arrested him and his congregation. He was led through the streets in his priestly vestments, and was subsequently imprisoned in Newgate. At his trial he was found guilty of high treason—so the story runs—and forcibly dressed in a fool's coat that had been found at Wells' house.[3] Together with Wells, he was executed in 1591 in front of Wells's house: a strikingly unusual venue, since Catholic priests were normally executed at Tyburn.[4] His last words were reportedly

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'Holy Gregory, pray for me', to which the hangman responded in amazement, 'His heart is in my hand, and yet Gregory is in his mouth'. As with all Catholic martyrs, co-religionists were keen to acquire relics from his martyred body; a story is told of his thumb coming off in the hand of a young girl who grasped his forequarter, and who was so amazed by the miracle that she subsequently became a nun.[5] Edmund Gennings's brother John was a Protestant at the time of the death, but not long afterwards had a powerful conversion experience, became a Catholic and ended up heading England's small Franciscan community when, in 1630, he was elected as the first Provincial of the restored Province of Friars Minor.[6]

Within ten years of Edmund's death, John appears also to have been responsible for authoring, or primarily authoring, a biography of him. Though the first printed biography of Gennings known to survive was that published by Charles Boscard at St. Omer in 1614, to be discussed below, an earlier biography of 1602, also described as printed at St. Omer, is cited by the 17th-century Catholic bibliographer Luke Wadding in 1650.[7] There also exists an abbreviated manuscript life dated 1603, summarised by the Catholic antiquarian Christopher Grene in the latter half of the 17th century in his 'Collectanea', which also records a title-page suggesting that it was printed or intended for print: 'A brief relation of the life and death of Mr. Edmund Jennings Pr[ies]t martyred 10 Dec. 1591 in London: written by Mr. J.J. (stretto parente del martyre, nay brother), 1600, and published of late by J.W. &[c] Printed with licence 1603'.[8] Wadding attributes the 1602 *Life* to John Gennings, which would be consistent with the notes to the title-page of Grene's transcription of the 1603 edition, as well as by the authorship statement concluding the *Life* itself: 'His brother John a perverse Puritan, . . . suddainly resolued to be Cath[olic]k goe to ye Seminaries & follow his brothers footstepps & so he did & wrott this rel[ati]on Anno 1600'.[9] This attribution, accepted most recently in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, is queried by Allison and Rogers on the grounds that the 1603 *Life* is described as being written by 'J.J, priest', while John Gennings was not ordained till 1607.[10] However, the entry for John Gennings in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, post-dating Allison and Rogers' research, follows the *Liber Ruber* of the Venerable English College, Rome in giving a date of 1600 for his date of ordination, and one of 1601 for his despatch on the English mission. Even without the evidence given above, this would make him the most likely candidate to have written a life of his brother around that time, and to search for another is probably a red herring.[11]

To summarise: taken together, the independent evidence of Wadding and Grene points towards there being at least one early, lost printed edition of Gennings' *Life*—two, if we are to take the dates of 1602 and 1603 as both accurate—but the only textual evidence we have for it is

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the summary of the 1603 *Life* in Greene's 'Collectanea'.[12] To judge by this, there is likely to have been, at least, a very close relationship between the *Life* of 1602/3 and that of 1614, since they share most episodes in Gennings' life story. However, they do not map onto each other exactly. The 1602/3 *Life* includes a few details that the 1614 *Life* does not: the fact that Polydore Plasden accompanied Gennings when travelling to England after his ordination; Topcliffe's vow to put to death a servant who attacked him when Wells' house was raided; and the name of the young woman who took Gennings' thumb, Lucy Ridley. The author of the 1614 *Life* admits to suppressing one other name on purpose, and may therefore have wished to be discreet about her identity.[13] Conversely, one of the most memorable episodes of the 1614 *Life*, Gennings being dressed in a fool's coat at his trial, is not mentioned in Grene's summary. This could indicate that it is a later incorporation, perhaps even a fictional embellishment; certainly, it does not figure in the other early account of Gennings' martyrdom, though to judge by the comments in the 1614 preface, it was included in good faith: 'I will make mention of no one thing, which I have not eyther knowne to be true my selfe, ... or have not receyved as true, by relation from very honest, vertuous, and sufficient persons, whose tender and Catholicke consciences ... could not bear the burthen of uttering such untruthes' (pp. 10–11).[14] Finally, Grene comments on the fact that there is no mention of those martyred with Gennings; since the 1614 edition includes an appendix on the life and death of Swithin Wells, this suggests either that it was a later addition, or that Grene's source did not record it.

The 1614 edition also has an engraved title-page, several illustrations, including a portrait of the martyr, and a large quantity of paratextual material: an epigraph from St. Cyprian's *Epistles*, two verses, 'The Author to his Booke' and 'The Booke to his Reader', a dedicatory epistle to John Gennings from John Wilson, the manager of the press at St. Omer, and the author's own preface.[15] For the most part we have no way of knowing how much, or how little, of this figured in the earlier edition. If the book was really printed at St. Omer, the professional printer François Bellet could have coped with the technological sophistication of illustrations, but if 'St. Omer' were a false imprint for a book printed in England, then this would be much more unlikely.[16] The summary recorded by Grene has little in the way of paratextual material, which could mean either that his manuscript source did not have it, or that Grene himself did not record it. In the letter prefixed to the 1614 *Life*, the author of the dedicatory epistle, John Wilson, points to its having previously been circulated in manuscript: a stage in the text's evolution that should probably be distinguished from the manuscript source utilised by Grene, since this appears to record a printed text.[17] This letter is perhaps a carry-over from 1602/3, since Wilson is highly likely to be the 'J.W'. identified as publisher on Grene's transcription of the 1603

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title-page, and it reads as if introducing the text to its readership for the first time. According to the reports of the spy William Udall, Wilson was involved in clandestine printing in England in 1605/6, so it is no surprise to find his hand in a printed production a few years earlier; the fact that Wilson was on the continent during 1602/3 may indicate that one should take the St. Omer imprint at face value.[18]

The dedicatory epistle suggests that Wilson prepared the written *Life* for print on being sent it by John Gennings, perhaps even without Gennings being aware that this was to happen.

> This ensuing Relatio[n], which of late I receaved fro[m] you in writte[n] hand, I now returne againe in Print by way of dedication. My reasons (for so unusual a thing) are two. First, for that I judge your selfe (before all others[)] only Worthy to patronise the same; it being the subject of him, in whome (before all others) you ever had, and have still most right & interest. Secondly, that as in his vertuous life tyme, you were neerly conjoyned unto him both in Affection & Bloud: so now after his glorious death, his memory might be lively represe[n]ted unto you both in Hart & Mynd. The which I have heere endeavoured to expresse to my best power. Turne then over the leafe, & behould that mirrour, wherein you most delight...[19]

It is certainly an unusual thing to dedicate a book to its author. The gambit suggests a close relationship between John Gennings and Wilson, and may point to both entrepreneurship and creative involvement on the latter's part: most likely through having conceived, commissioned, and possibly even drawn the portrait and other illustrations. Wilson was certainly someone who would have found the subject-matter particularly congenial, since in 1608, the year he took over as director of the press at St. Omer, he published *The English Martyrologe*, a calendar of English martyrs with an appendix listing those who had suffered during and after the reign of Henry VIII; in subsequent years he was responsible for publishing a range of polemical and devotional books for the English Catholics.[20] From the seventeenth century onwards, Wilson's literary intervention in the *Life* has been also suspected. In a Protestant critique of the book, *A Survey of the Miracles of the Church of Rome* (1616), Richard Sheldon identifies John Gennings as the author on the strength of the prefatory material, but comments: 'Having cursorily runne over the pamphlet, I should have reputed the same, the worke of some childish *Punie*, or ignorant *Wilson*' (p. 323).[21] It is entirely possible that the friends collaborated on the project at various stages, and the fact that the 1614 volume does not have an author on its title-page, unlike the 1602/3 *Life*, may point towards a collaborative revision and augmentation.[22]

As remarked above, it is often hard to say what elements of the prefatory material might be unique to the 1614 edition. It comprises four items, 'The Author to his Booke', 'The Booke to his Reader', Wilson's letter to Geninges and the preface; Sheldon must be referring

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to Wilson's letter when he speaks of the 'two letters prefixed in the Front of the booke' (p. 323) though it is not clear which item he designates as the second letter. No names or initials are appended to either prefatory verse, but the first is entitled 'The Author to his Booke' and the second 'The Booke to his Reader', suggesting that while John Gennings was happy to be identified as having written the first, the author of the second wished to leave his contribution anonymous.[23] Perhaps he was John Gennings, perhaps Wilson, perhaps a third party. The point has particular interest because of the reference it contains to Shakespeare's work: an allusion to *King Lear*, glossed 'a Book so called', and likely to refer to the 1608 quarto edition of the play: the 1602/3 *Life* would have preceded both its performance and its printing.[24] But as far as the Shakespeare reference is concerned, the author's identity is less important than his convictions. Warning, 'Affected wordes, or Courtly complement,/Do not expect, who ever reades this story', the poem's speaker advises anyone who wishes these things to 'post to King Liere,/He hath applause, seeke not contentment heere'. This is not the only negative reference to Shakespeare's work from a Tudor or Stuart Catholic pen, and may be a piece of *ad hominem* criticism.[25] More generally, it asserts the general decadence of mainstream English literary culture in comparison with martyr-narratives.[26]

Yet why should a publication of 1608 be singled out for criticism six years later? The reference to the quarto *Lear* in 1608, the year it was printed, would have been highly topical as a means of taking up arms against profane literary culture; in 1614 it would have been less striking, particularly as Shakespeare himself had stopped writing for the stage by then. Though this may simply indicate the author's personal dislike of the play, it may also suggest that the volume was intended for an earlier republication than it received. If Wilson had originally wanted to reprint the *Life* in 1608 or shortly thereafter, at the time of his inception as director of the St. Omer press, it would have especially complemented the *English Martyrologe*, published the same year.[27] An element of caution in the latter volume may, therefore, have bearings on the *Life*. In his preface, Wilson presents England's recent martyrs as supplementary to those of the early church, and goes to some lengths to limit the claims made for them: 'I do not meane by this ensuing Martyrologe to introduce any other possible observation or festivity of any of the Saintes heerin by me set downe, then that which the Catholicke Church of England hath in former tymes, and doth also at this present celebrate' (f.*8b).[28] As this suggests, while martyr-narratives were an inspiration to the English Catholic community throughout the late 16th and early 17th centuries, they were also used to accentuate its internal divisions, particularly between secular priests and Jesuits.[29] These quarrels were exploited by Protestant controversialists, as acknowledged within the title of a late Elizabethan Catholic foray into printed martyrology, Thomas

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Worthington's *A Relation of Sixtene Martyrs Glorified in England In Twelve Moneths. With a Declaration, that English Catholiques Suffer for the Catholique Religion, and that the Seminarie Priests Agree with the Jesuites. In Answer to Our Adversaries Calumniations, Touching These Two Points* (1601).[30]

Worthington's eirenical strategy is clear from the title, and may have been shared by Wilson.[31] As a secular priest operating from a Jesuit stronghold, he would have been especially sensitive to the advantages of reconciling the two factions. Even if Edmund Gennings had been a secular priest, his exemplary life and death had the potential to unite rather than divide—though the fact that the book was published by Charles Boscard at the St. Omer town press, rather than the college press, may indicate that Wilson was nervous of pushing his luck.[32] By the same token, the *Life* could have attracted criticism from other quarters: Rome was reluctant to endorse unofficial martyr-cults, while the veneration of recent martyrs would have posed difficulties for English Catholics anxious to win toleration from the monarchy.[33] Thus, the allusion to *King Lear* would have acted as a means of distracting Catholics from their internal squabbles, and reminded them that they had foes to dispel on the literary front.[34]

The *Life*'s blueprint was not followed up in any obvious way, and as an intervention in the martyrological debate, the experiment can only be judged a qualified success. But it must have been a document of considerable biographical and autobiographical significance to author and publisher alike—not least because they were both natives of Staffordshire—and the date when it was republished may have personal resonances. 1614 seems to have been an important year in John Gennings' life, though there is some uncertainty about dates: according to some sources he joined the Franciscans then, while according to others, he had the seal of the English province delivered into his hands by William Staney, the commissary of the English friars and one of the last surviving members of the Order.[35] There is no reference to these events in the 1614 *Life*, an omission that may have been deliberate in the light of tensions discussed earlier; to endorse the emergent Franciscan cause in a book masterminded by a secular priest and having associations with the Jesuit stronghold of St. Omer might well have been a step too far. Still, it is hard not to see the dates as synchronous. As far as John Gennings' involvement goes, one can see the book as a tribute to Edmund Gennings' saintly intercession on his behalf; imputations of merit to the dead brother would have empowered the living one, marking him out as a suitable person to head a mission. If Wilson was pro-Franciscan as well as being pro-Gennings, he would have had an interest in shoring up the cause.

The book's remarkable series of engravings, depicting episodes from the lives of the Gennings brothers, deserve a more extended consideration than is possible here.[36] It is visually one of the most interesting—and

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surely among the most expensive—of the books produced by English Catholic exiles: perhaps this should be seen as Wilson's tribute to his friend. He may, given his long-standing paternal interest in the young scholars at St. Omer, also have intended it to appeal to children: even if the commendation of a secular priest might have raised some eyebrows in this Jesuit-dominated institution, a visually appealing volume describing the martyr's birth, childhood and youth, with stories of miracles and wonders, would surely have appealed to English Catholic children everywhere.[37] But the book's presentation could backfire when surveyed by anti-Catholic polemicists. In *A Survey of the Miracles of the Church of Rome*, Sheldon describes it as 'gloriously bedeckt with imagery representing unto the gazing Reader in pictures, the birth, life, attachment, arraignement and execution' (p. 323), and fulminates: 'there is nothing worthy a Schollers view; there are onely some pretty gazing bookes for their *blinde-Obedients*; to them we will leave them' (pp. 328–89). 'Gazing', as often in anti-Catholic discourse, is a very loaded word, evoking notions of idolatry; the adjective 'pretty' points to the unformed tastes of the intended audience whom the pictures will blind still further.[38] Thus, criticism of the book's visual matter feeds into Sheldon's contemptuous summary of the miracles associated with Gennings; both serve to keep Catholics in a state of childishness, and both conceal poison beneath superficial attractiveness.[39] Sheldon was a convert from Catholicism who knew Edmund Gennings' Catholic milieu well—his account, full of knowing references, includes many reminiscences about Edmund's lack of sanctity in seminary days—and this may give us a vignette of the book's intended audience.[40]

Less easy to pin down is an anonymous abridgement of the 1614 *Life* from the late 1670s or early 1680s, published at the height of the so-called 'Popish Plot': *Strange and Miraculous News from St. Omer*. At first sight this appears to be an appropriation of Catholic history to serve the ends of anti-Catholic propagandists: not uncommon at the time, or at any time since the Reformation. The Popish Plot scare increased the popular appetite for Catholic material of all kinds, and the publication feeds off post-Reformation England's continuum of suspicion against Catholics. 'News' might at first seem an odd designation for the account of a Catholic martyr published some six-and-a-half decades ago, but as has long been recognised, the Popish Plot was easy to believe because it fitted a pattern: the pre-existent narrative of Catholic chicanery and treason, which had existed from the start of the English Reformation, and which Elizabeth's reign had consolidated.[41] Even if the Popish Plot had not convulsed late 1670s London, the 1666 Great Fire, commonly attributed to papists, would still have been in the minds of many; in this as in other respects, contemporary anti-Catholic fears looped back to Elizabethan and Jacobean history. The association of Catholics and incendiarism was a natural one to link to the Gunpowder

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Plot, while that of Catholics and treason would have recalled the activities of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Catholic priest-martyrs, among whom Gennings was numbered.

The title 'News from St. Omer' would be bound to catch the eye if one were a Catholic. But by describing a priest's London ministry and London martyrdom this way, the title is also tapping anti-Catholic reflexes by reminding them of Catholic internationalism and, by implication, of Catholic disloyalty and treason. Gennings' life certainly seems likely to have been chosen for its London interest, since just under half the space is given to an account of Gennings's London ministry and the circumstances arising from it—an enormous proportion, compared to the 1614 account. Given how intimately the Popish Plot panic was bound up with the geography of London, and how much of the ephemeral literature it generated seems to be exploiting a metropolitan frame of reference, stories of earlier Catholic activity in the capital were bound to be of interest, particularly such colourful and topographically specific stories as Gennings's story gives: his enforced parade through the streets in his vestments—which will have resonated with the pope-burning processions that so colourfully marked the Popish Plot years—and his execution in Gray's Inn Fields.[42]

Even so, this text could have served two very different audiences. Its anti-Catholic credentials might seem obvious, but by making large portions of a Catholic text available, it would also have been attractive to Catholic purchasers: a gambit which would have been effective for both evangelical and pragmatic reasons, targeting those most in need of salvation as well as maximising the potential market.[43] A seemingly anti-Catholic title was not in itself a guarantee of anti-Catholic content; throughout the second half of the 17th century, in publications far more obviously pro-Catholic than this, the device of using 'papist' in the title to provide a rudimentary smokescreen is not unknown.[44] But *Strange and Miraculous News* raises a different issue: when the decision was taken to edit and publish a Catholic work in a manner that seems to contain elements of dissociation from Catholicism, what level of anti-Catholic polemic could have been swallowed by an audience desperate for Catholic matter, and what level would have alienated them entirely?

The question is easier to pose than to answer: depending on the predisposition of individual readers, any work presenting counter-arguments to an ideological position has the potential to score an own goal. But one rule of thumb may be to attend to the nature and degree of animadversion involved. The idea of condemning papists out of their own mouth is ubiquitous in anti-Catholic polemic—quoting one's enemies is almost as basic to the genre as condemning them—but, typically, there is an awareness that papists cannot be allowed to hold the floor for too long. The various stratagems that print uses to heckle—sardonic interspersions in the main text, marginal notes, paratextual material, caricaturing

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illustration—can all be deployed to break the flow. Typical of this tendency is 'The Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome', a periodical from the Popish Plot years which presents itself as being a multi-part 'History of Popery'; it makes considerable use of excerpted and digested Catholic material, but tight control is kept over this by the periodical's true Protestant compilers.[45] Satirical summaries are preferred; direct quotations, on the other hand, are usually brief and capped with a rebuttal.

In *Strange and Miraculous News*, a very different strategy is adopted. Sardonic anti-Catholic commentary frames the excerpts: the narrator comments of the infant Gennings's birth that 'it is propaple (*sic*) [he] had a Father as well as a Mother', and of the story of the miraculous thumb, exclaims: 'What shall we say? The Authour is astonished at it, and so may all that read it, to think of the Impudence of the Man, who durst thus publickly affront the Understanding of Mankind'. Yet it is only the first and last episodes in Gennings's biography that are singled out for this contempt; editorial comment only impinges on the main body of the text once, very briefly, and with a suggestive double-entendre. The sentence in question runs: 'And here endeth the most wonderful, and remarkable History of the Miracle of the Fair Tooth, which doth certainly tend very much to the Comfort and Education of the Ideots of the infallible Church'. At this date the word 'ideot' had two meanings: the pejorative one with which we are still familiar, and a more neutral designation referring to the laity or to the unlearned, used especially by Catholic authors.[46] Thus, the sentence could be read as heavily sarcastic, or as a straightforward way of endorsing the miraculous nature of the tale. In some ways this is a gratuitous intervention, almost a kind of editorial showing off. Yet it adds to the cumulative impact of the story, as a way of simultaneously reinforcing Protestant prejudice and not unduly annoying a Catholic reader. Thus, an ironic, protestantised perspective frames the work but hardly impinges upon it, while Catholics buying the text would get a lot of unadulterated Catholic matter for their money.

The question of how far irony should be taken also affects one's consideration of the paratextual material. The publication's title, 'Strange and Miraculous News from St. Omers', and the assurance that the text is 'published by their own Copy, which was printed by Authority at St. Omers' hardly cancels out the sneer of the subtitle, 'Wherein may be observed what lying wonders the credulous papists are made to believe, both against sense and reason'. Seeing this, a Protestant reader would have interpreted all the elements of the title as ironising Catholic belief in miracle and the papistical notion of authority. Yet the same text would have caught the eye of a Catholic reader, predisposed to find the story of Gennings genuinely strange and miraculous, and to accept the authority of a licenser from St. Omer. It may be worth noting in this context that the tract is anonymously published, while the original

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imprimatur of the Catholic licenser, John Redmayne, is published in full. Many ephemeral publications with no ideological reason to conceal their origin were issued anonymously during the Popish Plot years, the lapse of the 1662 Licensing Act between 1679 and 1685 being one reason for the mayhem; still, if one wanted to give the appearance of a possibly surreptitious Catholic work, suppressing the imprint would have been a very good start.[47] Even the epigraph, 'For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie' (Revelation 22:15) would have taken on different connotations in confessionally different contexts.[48] The lack of printing and publishing details, and any typographical distinctiveness, is another reason why this is a hard publication to assign to any one ideological box. All in all, *Strange and Miraculous News* seems more concerned to maximise its appeal to a wide variety of readers than to make an anti-Catholic point—which is, in a way, the beauty of it. Any bookseller with an eye to profit would have known two things in the Popish Plot years: firstly, that there was a heightened appetite for anti-Catholic propaganda, and that excerpting Catholic books with a brief ironic commentary would have been a quick, easy and cost-effective means of meeting the demand; secondly, that Catholic books were difficult to come by and, like any clandestine publication, were likely to command high prices.[49] If one was prepared to trim one's ideological sails to the wind of profit, appealing to two distinct audiences would have been no bad thing. Conversely, for a true Protestant bookseller, nothing could have been more unexceptionable than publishing something that would appeal to Catholic readers in the first instance and make them uneasy once they had started reading.[50]

Several decades later, Richard Challoner wrote about Gennings with a very different agenda in mind. His account of Gennings' life and death in *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (1741–42) was, like *Strange and Miraculous News*, principally arrived at by excerpting the 1614 *Life*.[51] Strikingly, he selects most of the same picturesque anecdotes as *Strange and Miraculous News*: Gennings' childhood vision of armed men in the sky, the parade through the streets, the miracle of the thumb which detached itself from the rest of his corpse. His priorities testify to the continuing Catholic appetite for miraculous stories, and like *Strange and Miraculous News*, give oblique support to the notion that anecdotes of this kind could simultaneously be read as egregious by a Protestant and edifying by a Catholic. But there is one exception to this rule: the account of Edmund Gennings' tooth. Via both narrative and image, the tooth is played up in the 1614 *Life*; the martyr's portrait even includes an engraving of it, and a reference to it in the Latin verse caption: 'Huic dens ex proprio vix nato nascitur ore,/Roboris hoc signum proq[ue] fideq[ue] Deo'. But it is scoffed at both by the anti-Catholic commentator Sheldon and within *Strange and Miraculous News*, and whether he knew of these

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specific attacks or not, it is surely no coincidence that Challoner makes no use of the story.

Even where they retained an appetite for miracle, Enlightenment Catholics were likely to be more sensitive than their forbears to the imputation of quaintness, and the polemical fire it could attract. But the anecdote could have been felt dispensable in any case; it was a remarkable rather than a miraculous incident, and related to his babyhood rather than his adult ministry. Given the venerable prejudice against female witnesses, and the era's increasing distrust of oral tradition, Challoner might well have felt that reporting nursery lore was not a serious historian's business; it could easily have fallen foul of his stated aim to report 'nothing upon hearsayes or popular traditions', despite its attestation in print.[52] Anne Dillon has written of Challoner's *Memoirs* that they provided the mid-eighteenth-century Catholic community with its 'own identity and history: its genealogy'.[53] So if Catholic martyrology came of age with Challoner's volume, milk-teeth had to go—but, here and elsewhere, early modern re-tellings of Gennings' life-story invite us to read the gaps.

NOTES

[1] My thanks to Bro. Ninian Arbuckle, OFM, Alice Dailey, Peter Davidson, Anne Dillon, Katherine Duncan-Jones, Anne Barbeau Gardiner, Arnold Hunt and Andrew Starkie for help with this paper. My spelling of Gennings' name follows the *ODNB*; alternative spellings are 'Genings', 'Geninges' and 'Jennings'.

[2] Frank W. Brownlow, 'A Jesuit Allusion to *King Lear*', *Recusant History*, 28:3 (2007), pp. 416–23. Other articles that discuss the Gennings brothers and John Wilson include A. C. Allison, 'John Heigham of S. Omer (c. 1568–c. 1632)', *Recusant History*, 4:6 (1957–58), pp. 220–4, and David Rogers, 'A Note on the *Life* of St. Edmund Gennings', *Recusant History*, 17:1 (1984), pp. 92–95.

[3] On this detail, see below, p. 215.

[4] The third line of the Latin verse engraved under Edmund Gennings' portrait in the 1614 *Life* is a chronostichon giving the date of 1591 in anagram form = MDLXXVVVVI.

[5] See Alice Dailey, 'Miracles, Martyrs and Margaret Clitherow', ch. 4 in Lowell Gallagher (ed.), *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism* (Toronto: Toronto UP, forthcoming). I am grateful to Professor Dailey for letting me see this article in advance of publication.

[6] See Father Thaddeus OFM [F. Hermans], *The Franciscans in England, 1600–1850* (London/Leamington: Art and Book Company, 1898), pp. 21–37, 238–9.

[7] For the 1614 edition, A. F. Allison & D. M. Rogers, *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation Between 1558 and 1640*, 2 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1989–1994) (hereafter *ARCR*), vol. II (Works in English), no. 338. For the 1602 edition, see Luke Wadding, *Scriptores Ordinis Minorum* (1650: Rome, Attilio Nardecchia, 1906), p. 142. The entry in the 1650 edition (f.Fff2a–b) is identical apart from the spelling. See also A. F. Allison, 'Franciscan Books in English, 1559–1640', *Biographical Studies, 1534–1829*, 3:1 (1955), pp. 16–65.

[8] Transcribed from Stonyhurst/Farm Street, Collectanea M, ff.186–187 (216–17 in later sequence), copied by Christopher Grene. On the question of whether Grene was transcribing from a MS text of a previously printed book, a MS fair copy prepared for press or a printed text with MS annotations, see Rogers, 'Note', p. 93. Grene's archival work took place between 1666–74 and 1686–97: see John Hungerford Pollen, S.J. (ed.), *Unpublished Documents Referring to the English Martyrs. Vol. I. 1584–1603*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 5 (London: J. Whitehead & Son for CRS, 1908), p. 6. The document

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is reprinted on pp. 205–7 of the same volume. The comments in round brackets are Grene's; the first can be translated as 'close relative of the martyr'.

[9] Transcribed from *Collectanea*, f. 187: see also Pollen (ed.), *Unpublished Documents*, p. 207. On the pamphlet's genesis within Sussex/Hampshire Catholic circles, see Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), pp. 267–8.

[10] *ARCR*, vol. II, appendix, p. 250.

[11] Wilfrid Kelly (ed.), *Liber Ruber Venerabilis Collegii Anglorum De Urbe. I. Annales Collegii. Pars Prima. Nomina Alumnorum 1. A.D. 1579–1630*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 37 (London: CRS, 1940), pp. 111–12. See also the sources given in Anstruther, vol. 1, pp. 128–9. The confusion seems to have arisen because another John Gennings, ordained priest in 1607, was cautiously identified as the martyr's brother by Peter Keenan Guilday: *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent*, vol. I (no vol. II) (London: Longman, 1914), citing *The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay* (London: David Nutt, 1878), p. 26. The Douay Diaries make no mention of a subsequent career as a Franciscan. My thanks to Brother Ninian Arbuckle, OFM, for guidance on Gennings' career.

[12] As A. F. Allison comments, the date of 1603 could also indicate a reissue: 'Franciscan Books in English, 1559–1640', *Biographical Studies, 1534–1829*, 3:1 (1955/6), pp. 16–65, at p. 41.

[13] *Life* (1614), p. 50.

[14] The episode is not mentioned in the report of 9 February 1595 by James Young/Younger to Robert Persons: Stonyhurst, Anglia vi.117, transcribed in John Hungerford Pollen, intro. John Morris, *Acts of English Martyrs Hitherto Unpublished* (London: Burns & Oates, 1891). On the question of martyr-narratives and their possible fictional embellishment, see *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: Select Narratives*, ed. John N. King (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), pp. xxvi–vii, 292.

[15] On Wilson, see Geoffrey Anstruther, OP, *The Seminary Priests*, 4 vols. (Ware: St. Edmund's College/Ushaw: Ushaw College, [1968]–1977), vol. 2, under name; Hubert Chadwick, S.J., *St. Omers to Stonyhurst: A History of Two Centuries* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), pp. 95, 100–1, 116, 141–5; C. A. Newdigate, S.J., 'Notes on the Seventeenth Century Printing Press of the English College at Saint Omers', *The Library*, 3rd ser., 10 (1919), pp. 179–90 and 223–42; and, on his namesakes and possible aliases, P. R. Harris, 'The Reports of William Udall, Informer, 1605–1612. Part I', *Recusant History*, 8:4 (1966), pp. 192–249, and '. . . Part 2', *Recusant History*, 8:5 (1966), pp. 252–84 (esp. pp. 219–20, 237, 244, 256).

[16] Further research on when the engraver, Martin Basse (see endnote 36), was working in Douai might help to date the illustrations.

[17] On the attribution of the dedicatory epistle, see *ARCR*, vol. II, no. 338. Alternatively, the circulated MS might have been prepared as if intended for print, but never actually printed.

[18] For Udall's reports, see British Library, MS Lansdowne 153, pp. 6–42. They are edited and discussed by Harris, 'Reports' (see p. 220 of this article, and Anstruther, *op. cit.*, for the dates of Wilson's movements).

[19] This sentence can be read both as referring to the portrait of Edmund Gennings overleaf, and to the total biographical representation of the martyr.

[20] See J. T. Rhodes, 'English Books of Martyrs and Saints of the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Recusant History*, 22:1 (1994), pp. 7–25; and Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), pp. 80–2.

[21] Puny = 'a junior or recently admitted pupil or student in a school or university', 'novice', 'beginner' (*OED*). Sheldon reports that the book was drawn to his attention by the then Bishop of Bath and Wells (p. 323). Some library catalogues cross-refer to Wilson to this day.

[22] The prefatory material is studiedly ambiguous about authorship: see Rogers, 'Note'. In this context, Rogers considers the phrase 'by reason I have bene so much linked unto him in friendshippe and favour' (p. 9) an 'oddly cool phrase for a blood brother to use' (p. 94). However, if it refers to friendly aid from the subject to the author (*OED*)—perhaps the sanctified Edmund Gennings' conversion of his brother—its use by one blood relation of another becomes less improbable.

[23] Brownlow, 'A Jesuit Allusion'. For further discussion of this allusion, see ch. 2 of my *Shakespeare and Religion*, Arden Critical Companions (forthcoming: London: A. & C. Black, 2010). Though Shakespeare's Edmund and Edmund Gennings have little in common, Brownlow, *op. cit.*, makes a case for other aspects of the martyr-narrative resonating with images from Shakespeare's play.

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[24] The reference is much likelier to refer to Shakespeare's play than the other possible candidate, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his Three Daughters*, given the differences of subject-matter and genre between the two dramas: see Brownlow, 'Jesuit Reference', and Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion, op. cit.* The *True Chronicle History* was entered in the Stationers' Company Register as early as 1594, but was only published in 1605, so, like Shakespeare's *Lear*, would not have been a 'book' in 1602/3: see *A Critical Edition of the True Chronicle History of King Leir and his Three Daughters*, ed. Donald M. Michie (New York: Garland, 1991), introduction, and *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Thomson, 1997), p. 90; and Brownlow, *op. cit.* The mention of 'goodman Jennings' in Michie's edition of the play is a mistranscription of 'Genitings' on f.I2a of the *True Chronicle History* (i.e. 'Jennetings', a variety of apple (*OED*), after which a character is named).

[25] Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, ch. 2.

[26] In the context of the *Lear* reference, two lines in 'The Author to his Booke' stand out: 'A Tygers hart such sorrowes will deplore, /His teares I wish that never wept before' (f.A2a). It is possible that these recall Robert Greene's *Green's Groats-Worth of Wit* (1592) and its famous allusion to Shakespeare's *Henry VI:3*, 1:4, 138, 'O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!': 'there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey...' (f.F1b). However, though Greene's book shares the theme of repentance with the 1614 *Life*, the phrase 'tiger's heart'—to judge by a search on *Early English Books Online*—is not uncommon in texts of the period. Hence, it is likelier to be used here as a general condemnation of emotional obduracy.

[27] For books printed by the St. Omer press in 1608, see Newdigate, 'Notes', part 2, pp. 230–1, and *ARCR*, vol. II, nos. 19 ('John Brereley', *The Protestants Apologie for the Roman Church*: see also nos. 18, 20), 628 (Robert Persons, *The Judgement of a Catholick English-Man*), 663 (Orazio Torsellino, *The History of Our B. Lady of Loreto*, trans. Thomas Price), 780 (Michael Walpole, *A Treatise of the Subjection of Princes*) and 806 (John Wilson, *The English Martyrologe*). See also Chadwick, *St. Omers to Stonyhurst*, p. 142.

[28] Thomas S. Freeman has remarked that 'English Catholics did not develop a sustained martyrological tradition in print until the closing decades of the sixteenth century': *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England c. 1400–1700*, ed. Thomas S. Freeman & Thomas F. Mayer (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), introduction, p. 23.

[29] For a recent account of the Jesuit/Appellant controversy, see Victor Houliston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons' Jesuit Polemic, 1580–1610* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[30] See Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535–1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 325–6.

[31] Even so, Richard Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon, was to complain to Rome in 1626 that martyrology and calendar had been published without Roman authorisation: Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, A19, no.103 (see *ARCR*, vol. II, no. 806). The 1640 edition of the *English Martyrologe* may be responding to this or similar criticism: the recent saints are left out, and an approbation from George Keynes, priest, dated from St. Omer on 23 June 1608, appears for the first time.

[32] Alternatively, this might have been because Boscard's firm was better able to cope with the engravings. On Charles Boscard, see H. R. Duthilloeul, *Bibliographie douaisienne* (Douai: Adam D'Aubers, 1842), p. 407. Some typographical material from the college press does, however, appear to have been used for the *Life*: see Allison, 'Franciscan Books'. Harris, 'Reports', p. 237, comments on the strangeness of Wilson, a non-Jesuit, having charge of the St. Omer college press, and concludes that his previous role as secretary for Robert Persons must have helped defray suspicion.

[33] On Rome and unofficial cults, see Peter Burke, 'How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint', repr. in Andrew Pettegree (ed.), *The Reformation: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies* (London: Routledge, 2004), vol. 4, item 64.

[34] If there was a belief at St. Omer that Shakespeare was the dedicatee of Southwell's verse, it may be significant that Southwell's preface is dedicated to 'W.S'. in the edition of Southwell printed at St. Omer in 1616, just two years after the augmented Life of Gennings—but if so, one would need to explain why nothing is made of the initials. I have discussed this question in more detail in *Shakespeare and Religion, op. cit.*, and 'Why Didn't Shakespeare Write Religious Verse'? in Takashi Kozuka & J. R. Mulryne (eds), *Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 85–112.

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[35] Contemporary sources vary, some giving a date of 1610 instead. See the *ODNB* entries for the brothers, and the online *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, under 'Edmund and John Gennings'.

[36] On Martin Bas/Baes/Basse, the engraver, see Wolfgang Lottes, 'Henry Hawkins and *Partheneia Sacra*', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 26, no. 102 (1975), pp. 144–53, and Karl Josef Höltgen, 'Henry Hawkins: A Jesuit Writer and Emblematist', in John W. O'Malley, S.J., *et al.* (eds), *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1999), ch. 28, at p. 620.

[37] It is possible that Wilson—clearly a man of means—funded the illustrations hımself. On his benefactions to the college, see Chadwick, *St. Omers to Stonyhurst*, pp. 100–1, 116, 141–5; Henry Foley, *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, vol. 5 (London: Burns & Oates, 1879), p. 426; and the inscription at the front of the St. Omer roll of honour (BL Add. MS 9354).

[38] For an analogous use of 'gazing', see (e.g.) Thomas Taylor, *The Progresse of Saints* (1630), pp. 282–3.

[39] See Peter Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Jacobean Age: A Survey of Printed Sources* (London: Scolar, 1978), pp. 163–5. Milward also examines the relationship between the 1614 *Life* and Wilson's *English Martyrologe*. Richard Sheldon, *A Survey of the Miracles of the Church of Rome* (1616), appendix. Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), discusses the author's sensitivity to current controversies over miracles.

[40] On Sheldon, see Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), esp. pp. 34–5, 48, 82–4, 96, 161. Like the Gennings brothers and Wilson, Sheldon was a native of Staffordshire: see his entry in *ODNB*.

[41] On the myth of a popish plot, see John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (1972: rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), ch. 1; John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660–1688* (1973: this ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), ch. 4; Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1983), esp. ch. 1; and Allan Marshall, *The Strange Death of Edmund Godfrey: Plots and Politics in Restoration London* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).

[42] On pope-burnings, see David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: California UP, 1989).

[43] On the more general issue of how Catholic publications were protestantised, see F. Blom, J. Blom, F. Korsten & G. Scott, *English Catholic Books, 1701–1800: A Bibliography* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), p. xxiv, and Victor Houliston, 'Why Robert Persons Would Not Be Pacified', in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), ch. 9.

[44] One example from the Popish Plot years is John Huddleston (attr.), *A New Plot of the Papists to Transform Traitors into Martyrs* (1679): see Thomas H. Clancy, S.J., *English Catholic Books, 1641–1700: A Bibliography* (1974: revised edition Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), item 511. See also John Baptist Vincent Canes's *The Reclaimed Papist* (1655) and John Gother, *A Papist Misrepresented and Represented* (1st ed. 1685).

[45] *The Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome* was written by Henry Care and published by Langley Curtis. For the complex bibliographical history of this item, see the *English Short-Title Catalogue* under title.

[46] E.g. Gertrude More, *The Holy Practices of a Divine Lover, or the Saintly Ideots Devotions* (1657).

[47] See Michael Treadwell, 'The Stationers and the Printing Acts at the End of the Seventeenth Century', ch. 38 in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Vol. IV (1557–1695) ed. John Barnard & D. F. McKenzie with Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

[48] I am grateful to Andrew Starkie for this point.

[49] See my 'Catholic Texts and Anti-Catholic Prejudice in the Seventeenth-Century Book Trade', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds), *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France, 1600–1900* (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1992), pp. 33–57.

[50] This strategy could backfire; one early 18th-century guide to St. Winifred's Well at Holywell, specifically targeted at Catholic visitors in the hopes of converting them, became popular on account of the Catholic matter it contained, and much to the chagrin of its author, William Fleetwood, acted as a means of publicising the well. See my 'St. Winifred's Well and its Meaning in Post-Reformation British Catholic Literary Culture', in Peter Davidson & Jill Bepler (eds), *The Triumphs of the Defeated: Early Modern Festivals and Messages of Legitimacy* (Wolfenbüttel: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), pp. 271–80.

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[51] Richard Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (1741/2), part 1, pp. 262–77. Challoner's account of Gennings also received augmentation from Alban Butler's transcripts from the Douai papers: see Richard Luckett, 'Bishop Challoner: The Devotional Writer', chs 1 & 4 in Eamon Duffy (ed.), *Challoner and his Church: A Catholic Bishop in Georgian England* (London: DLT, 1981), esp. p. 81. On *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*, see Eamon Duffy, 'Richard Challoner, 1691–1781: A Memoir', ch. 1 in the same volume, and Dillon, *Construction*, pp. 373–74.
[52] *Memoirs*, I, f.A2b. On these questions, see Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), esp. ch. 3.
[53] Dillon, *Construction*, p. 373.

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