

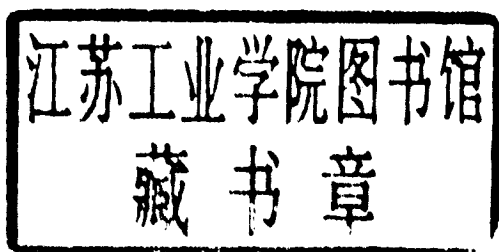
JONSON, SHAKESPEARE & EARLY MODERN VIRGIL

S
cena 4. Alabonius, regens archans manu, re-
cipiunt pueri, pueri, atque colone.

MARGARET TUDEAU-CLAYTON

JONSON,
SHAKESPEARE
AND EARLY MODERN
VIRGIL

MARGARET TUDEAU-CLAYTON



 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521580793

© Margaret Tudeau-Clayton 1998

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1998
This digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Tudeau-Clayton, Margaret, 1952–
Jonson, Shakespeare, and early modern Virgil / Margaret Tudeau-Clayton.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 58079 X (hardback)

1. Jonson, Ben, 1573?–1637 – Political and social views. 2. Literature and society – England – History – 17th century. 3. Jonson, Ben, 1573?–1637 – Knowledge – Literature.
 4. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616. Tempest. 5. Latin poetry – Appreciation – England.
 6. English drama – Roman influences. 7. Social classes in literature. 8. Rome – In literature. 9. Virgil – Influence.
- I. Title.

PR2642.S58T84 1998
822.3'09351 – dc21 97–4226 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-58079-3 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-58079-X hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-03274-2 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-03274-1 paperback

Preface

This book has its origins in a childhood privileged by the benevolent presence of two outstanding classicists, my father Fred Clayton, and my godfather, Jackson Knight. To the former I owe the gift of love for language, literature and the life of the mind.

To Tony Tanner of King's College, Cambridge, a brilliant critic and inspiring teacher, I owe thanks for first showing me how to pay attention to a literary text, and to John Barrell and David Simpson for introducing me to the question of the relation of the literary text to history and politics. I have benefited too from the exceptional erudition of the late Robert Bolgar and the critical acumen of Frank Kermode. Constructive dialogue with my thesis examiners, Anne Barton and the late James Smith, pointed me in the direction of a book, which has since grown out of various, more and less direct conversations with scholars and critics the world over. Colleagues and students at the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne have provided a stimulating and supportive environment over the past several years; special thanks to Gregory Polletta and Rick Waswo (Geneva), and Neil Forsyth and Peter Halter (Lausanne). The readers for Cambridge University Press were constructive in their critical comments, especially Ian Donaldson, whose insights have been particularly valuable. Pippa Berry of King's College, Cambridge has been a precious friend, supplying me with an on-going exciting intellectual exchange as well as with important help with the final draft. Josie Dixon of Cambridge University Press has been a steady support throughout. The staff in various libraries, notably the staff of the rare books room at Cambridge University Library, are to be thanked for their efficient, friendly service. My thanks too to the authorities of the University of Lausanne for the term's leave they gave me to work on the book, and for their contribution towards the cost of its publication.

Special mention must be made of Lisa Jardine, without whose

informed advice and consistent, energetic encouragement this book would probably not have seen the light of day.

Finally, my deepest thanks to Jean-François, sometimes almost, but, mercifully, not often ‘the wife’, for his stoic patience, and *haute cuisine*; and to ‘the girls’ for the sweet irony of their absolute indifference to my labours.

Bibliographical note

Citations and quotations from Virgil will be taken from the Loeb edition by H. Rushton Fairclough, unless otherwise indicated. Translations will be mine, again unless otherwise indicated. In quoting from early modern texts I have normalised *i/j* and *u/v* spellings, and silently expanded abbreviated forms. The native form of the proper name is given where it is recognisably related to the Latinised form (for example, Eritreo). The Latinised form is otherwise retained (for example, Pontanus rather than Spanmüller), as it is also retained when it is the more commonly used form (for example, Ramus).

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Bibliographical note</i>	xi

Introduction	I
--------------	---

PART ONE

FIGURES OF VIRGIL AND THEIR PLACE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

1 English readers' Virgils	21
2 Informing youth, and confirming man: an English schoolboy's Virgils	44
3 Secrets of nature and culture: the learned man's Virgils	78

PART TWO

JONSON, SHAKESPEARE AND FIGURES OF VIRGIL

4 'the most learned of poets': Jonson's use of Virgilian authority	115
5 Of 'chaste ear' and 'soveraigne worth': Jonson's use of Virgil as author	150
6 Shaking Neptune's 'dread trident': <i>The Tempest</i> and figures of Virgil	194

<i>Bibliography</i>	245
<i>Index</i>	262

Illustrations

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <p>1 Sebastian Brant's woodcut illustration to the tempest in <i>Aeneid</i> 1
in <i>Publii Virgilii Maronis opera</i>, Strasbourg, 1502.
(By permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)</p> | 24 |
| <p>2 Frontispiece to Petrarch's 'Ambrosian Virgil'.
(By permission of the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan)</p> | 29 |
| <p>3 John Brinsley, <i>Virgils Eclogues, with his booke De Apibus</i>, London,
1633, p. 3.
(By permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)</p> | 52 |
| <p>4 Sebastian Brant's woodcut illustration to Virgil's description
of the universe in <i>Georgics</i> 1, lines 231–51, in <i>Publii Virgilii Maronis
opera</i>, Strasbourg, 1502.
(By permission of the syndics of Cambridge University Library)</p> | 88 |
| <p>5 <i>Neptune calming the Tempest</i>. Oil sketch on wood panel by
P. P. Rubens, 1635.
(By permission of The Harvard University Art Museums)</p> | 236 |

Introduction

This book is not about authors and texts but ‘authors’ and ‘texts’, not definitive meanings but finite mediations, the *figures* produced and circulated in the discourses of a historically and culturally specific universe. What is at stake in the production and circulation of these figures? How do they come to be contested, erased? And what is at stake in their contestation and erasure?

My case study will be the multivalent figure of Virgil in early modern England, which I shall compare, briefly here, and occasionally throughout, with the case of Shakespeare(s). Though necessarily different in many important ways, there are likenesses between the two, which go beyond the multiformity Chris Baswell suggests is characteristic of the reception of ‘central’ figures in the various layers and media, popular as well as learned, of a given culture.¹ This is indicated, if unwittingly, by historical critics from the eighteenth century on, who, seeking ‘to discover a modern face under the classical mask’ of the *dramatis persona* of Virgil in Ben Jonson’s play *Poetaster* (first performed 1601), have come to the very unhistorical conclusion that this face is none other than the face of Shakespeare.² Indeed, ‘Mr William Poel dressed “Virgil” as Shakespeare’ for a performance of the play produced in London on 26 April 1916 (*H&S*, vol. 1, p. 432, note 1), at the height, that is, of the massive tercentenary celebrations mobilising the figure of Shakespeare – at once universal and specifically English – in affirmation of ‘an Anglo-centric

¹ Christopher C. Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the ‘Aeneid’ from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 16 and p. 31. Baswell suggests twentieth-century Shakespeare and Freud as examples comparable to medieval Virgil.

² *Ben Jonson*, edited by C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925–52), vol. 1, p. 432. I refer to this edition throughout using the abbreviation *H&S* with the volume and page numbers, modernising titles. On the identification of Jonson’s Virgil with Shakespeare see also Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, edited by Tom Cain (Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 217.

universe'³ at a moment of international as well as national political and ideological crisis.

This identification of Jonson's *dramatis persona* with Shakespeare, which might, I imagine, have offended the author of *Poetaster*, if not the author of the prefatory poem to the first folio (discussed below), is a function of an ideological equivalence in the 'system of representations' informing the discourses constituting a certain form, or level, of cultural consciousness.⁴ Within this system, that is, Virgil stands for what Shakespeare stands for: an ideal, absolute paradigm of the national poet; a repository of universal human wisdom;⁵ a stable, monolithic and sacred object of reverential attention at the centre of a homogeneous community of educated readers/spectators.

Idealist and essentialist, suppressing the differences and discontinuities of history, this equivalence has come to be confined to the discourses of the academy, as Virgil has become virtually unrecognisable as a currency of signification outside them (and the equivalence consequently meaningless). Within the academy, the equivalence has been produced by, and has served to reproduce the system of representations informing the discourse of traditional literary history, consisting in the master authors – or great books – of the canon. What is ultimately at stake in the reproduction of this equivalence is thus the common ground, or shared 'body', which has traditionally given a sense of collective identity to the academic community in English studies. The current crisis, largely articulated around the question of the canon, is, amongst other things, a crisis of collective identity; it has become increasingly problematic to use 'we' and to assume shared objects – purposes as well as texts.⁶

³ Malcolm Evans, 'Deconstructing Shakespeare's Comedies', in John Drakakis, ed., *Alternative Shakespeares* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 84.

⁴ The term 'ideological' is used in the sense, derived from Althusser, which Kavanagh expounds, the phrase 'system of representations' being Althusserian. See James H. Kavanagh, 'Ideology', in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 310. Kavanagh's example of a contemporary 'cultural icon', though dealing with a very different form of cultural consciousness, nevertheless shows, as I try to do, how authors are turned into figures (or icons) and *used*. For this use of the term 'ideology', see also Jonathan Dollimore, 'Introduction', in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, eds., *Political Shakespeare* (Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 6–7; Howard Felperin, 'Political Criticism at the Crossroads: The Utopian Historicism of *The Tempest*', in Nigel Wood, ed., *The Tempest. Theory in Practice* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1995), pp. 35–7.

⁵ Compare Gollancz, in 1916, on Shakespeare's 'power to instil in men's hearts his manifold observations on the myriad problems of life and eternity' (quoted in Evans, 'Deconstructing Shakespeare's Comedies', p. 84) with 'Tibullus' on Virgil (in *Poetaster*): '... could a man remember but his lines, / He should not touch at any serious point, / But he might breathe his spirit out of him.' (v.i.121–3) See Jonson, *Poetaster*, edited by Cain, p. 217 and below chapter 5, pp. 171–2.

⁶ See further Jonathan Culler, 'English in the Age of Cultural Studies', *Bulletin de la société des anglicistes de l'enseignement supérieur* 40 (1996), p. 8, and the forum on 'relations between cultural studies and the literary', *PMLA* 112:2 (March 1997), pp. 257–86.

Though still occasionally wheeled out, as, for example, in Louis Zukofsky's self-declared 'eccentric study', the specific identification of Jonson's *dramatis persona* with Shakespeare, which Herford and Simpson quite rightly dismissed as anachronistic, is itself no longer an object of collective attention within the academy.⁷ Nevertheless, as we shall see in chapter 6, when we look at critical discussion of the intertextual relation of *The Tempest* to the *Aeneid*, the ideological equivalence of Shakespeare and Virgil has largely been maintained. For this intertextual relation has usually been construed in terms of source, echo, allusion or analogue, terms, that is, which foreground likeness, although more recently it has been construed in terms of 'transvaluation' (Bono) 'transformative imitation' (Miola) 'responding' (Wiltenburg), and 'rewriting' (Hamilton and Felperin).⁸ These are terms which allow for difference(s) within a construction of the relationship which nevertheless remains non-contestatory. Virgil and Shakespeare continue, that is, to be 'idolized' as figures of equal, absolute value, and the structure of literary history they serve to reproduce is confirmed.⁹

Confined today to the discourses of the academy, the equivalence of these two figures appears to have been first inscribed, significantly enough, on the base of the monument to Shakespeare at Stratford, 'erected between 1616 and 1623'.¹⁰

Judicio Pylum, genio Socratem, arte Maronem:

Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet.

(In judgement a Nestor, in genius a Socrates, in art a Virgil:

The earth covers him, the people mourn him, Olympus has him.)

(Halliday's translation)

⁷ Louis Zukofsky, *Bottom: On Shakespeare* (University of California Press, 1987), p. 13. For the case against this identification see *H&S*, vol. 1, pp. 432–3.

⁸ Barbara J. Bono, *Literary Transvaluation: From Vergilian Epic to Shakespearean Tragicomedy* (University of California Press, 1984); Robert S. Miola, 'Vergil in Shakespeare: From Allusion to Imitation', in John D. Bernard, ed., *Vergil at 2000* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), p. 225; Robert Wiltenburg, 'The *Aeneid* and *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Survey* 39 (1987), p. 159; Donna B. Hamilton, *Virgil and The Tempest: The Politics of Imitation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), p. xii; Felperin, 'Political Criticism', p. 54. See further chapter 6, pp. 194–6.

⁹ The word 'idolized' is used by Gary Taylor in his review of Bono's book, 'Licit and Illicit Quests', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 August 1985. Hamilton, apparently quite unselfconsciously, closes: 'The closing language . . . invokes the authority of Virgil, which Shakespeare has made his own.' (Hamilton, *Virgil and The Tempest*, p. 137) A welcome exception to this tendency, though one about which I have other reservations (see note 38 below), is provided by the recent work of Heather James, who has followed up an article on *Titus Andronicus* as a subversive Ovidian critique of the Virgilian model with a book on Shakespeare's Troy including a chapter on *The Tempest*. See Heather James 'Cultural Disintegration in *Titus Andronicus*: Mutilating Titus, Vergil and Rome', *Themes in Drama* 13 (1991), pp. 123–40, and *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1997). I am grateful to Heather James for allowing me to see chapters of her book prior to their publication.

¹⁰ F. E. Halliday, *A Shakespeare Companion 1550–1950*, reprint (London: Duckworth, 1955), p. 420.

Not 'arte Nasonem' (in art an Ovid) as earlier representations might have led us to expect,¹¹ but 'arte Maronem' (in art a Virgil). This may be a trace of the presence of Virgil in the last, or late, play *The Tempest*, although, as I shall argue, there is a questioning of, as well as a quest for, this presence, and the relationship is not simply one of likeness. The phrase 'arte Maronem' might recall, in particular, the natural philosopher and magician Prospero, who bears traces of received figures of Virgil, as we shall see, and through whose art the eponymous tempest is raised, which evokes, if it also interrogates, the opening event of the *Aeneid*. Be that as it may, the inscription marks the boundary between the material, temporally confined life of Shakespeare and the after-life of 'Shakespeare', the culturally constructed figure of the ideal, absolute poet, the English/British equivalent to the received paradigm of Virgil. At the same time it marks the monument (and by extension Stratford) as a privileged site of presence, a metonymy of the cultural figure, and thus prepares the ground for the turning of the site (monument and town) into a place of pilgrimage.

Thus begun, the cultural processing – the turning of the body of Shakespeare into the body of 'Shakespeare' – is subsequently elaborated by the publication in 1623 of the 'works', as they are described by Heminge and Condell in their preface to readers, and, more insistently, by Digges in his prefatory poem, in imitation, like Jonson's publication of his 'works' seven years earlier, of the *Opera* of the classical authors.¹² Specifically, Shakespeare's 'works' are divided into three 'kinds', which, in their progression from a light, or 'lesser' kind through a middle, or more serious kind to the highest, and most serious, echo the received threefold hierarchical division – *humilis*, *medius*, *grandiloquus* – of the Virgilian *Opera*, a cultural career model which was consciously followed, by Spenser amongst others, and which here serves to stabilise the playing over and subversion of generic boundaries within the corpus.¹³

¹¹ See Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 2–3, 21, 83–4, and further below chapter 5, p. 158.

¹² See *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), pp. 63, 71; David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 220–6, 239.

¹³ On Spenser see Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson and the Literary System* (University of California Press, 1983), pp. 63, 82. Compare Riggs on the 'shape' Jonson imposes on his works, which 'marks his passage from the lesser genre of comedy to the greater one of tragedy' (Riggs, *Ben Jonson*, p. 225). The marking of the specifically Virgilian shape of Shakespeare's 'works' is underscored by an article which argues for deep parallels between the two middle kinds – Virgil's *Georgics* and Shakespeare's *Histories*. James C. Bulman, 'Shakespeare's Georgic Histories', *Shakespeare Survey* 38 (1985), pp. 37–47. Bulman of course simply assumes the equivalence which the first folio aspires to establish, working as Magreta de Grazia puts it

A contribution to this formation of 'Shakespeare' is furnished by Jonson's prefatory poem (*H&S*, vol. 8, pp. 390–2): unlike the famously flawed Shakespeare of *Timber*, and the conversations with Drummond, who 'lacks art',¹⁴ this Shakespeare is the ideal paradigm of the (art-ful) poet. As such he does indeed resemble the Virgil of *Poetaster*. For, like this Virgil, he is 'not of an age, but for all time!' (line 43), an absolute and universal figure who stands above history, a position which in each case is represented by an image of celestial prominence and permanence: while Virgil in *Poetaster* is compared to 'a right heavenly bodie' (v.i.105), Shakespeare is addressed as 'thou Starre of *Poets*' (line 77).¹⁵

But if this Shakespeare is, like the figure of Virgil, universal and 'for all time', he is also emphatically British (and this is the crucial differentiating feature). The lines immediately preceding the claim to universality are these:

Triumph, my *Britaine*, thou hast one to showe,
To whom all Scenes of *Europe* homage owe.

(lines 41–2)

While Virgil in *Poetaster* stands as the revered, unifying centre of a homogeneous community of 'learned heads' (v.i.53), as we shall see, 'Shakespeare' here stands as the revered, unifying centre of 'Britain', dynastically inscribed, but in need of an imaginary as well as a legal identity.¹⁶ Indeed, we shall see in chapter 4 that Jonson mobilises 'Virgil' to promote this new/ancient national identity, as he mobilises Shakespeare here, specifically in order to represent Britain as the revered unified centre and apex of an (undifferentiated) rest of Europe.¹⁷

'performatively rather than referentially'. Magreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 41. This comment comes in her brilliant comparative analysis of the two collections of 'works' (Shakespeare's and Jonson's) (pp. 29–42), which points up their differences as well as their shared aim of announcing 'the content . . . of enduring significance, meriting preservation' (p. 32).

¹⁴ See *H&S*, vol. 8, pp. 583–4, and *H&S*, vol. 1, pp. 133, 138.

¹⁵ On the classical derivation, and contemporary political implications of the 'stellification' of Shakespeare see James, *Shakespeare's Troy* (forthcoming), chapter 1.

¹⁶ See William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh: John Donald 1977), pp. 97–106; Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England 1603–1642* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), pp. 158–68.

¹⁷ See chapter 4, pp. 128–9. Jonson's 'my' slipped in here – 'my *Britaine*' – (as in 'My *Shakespeare*' (line 19)) makes a claim for a share in the authorship of 'Britaine' (and of 'Shakespeare') – one of many appropriating moves in this poem. See de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim*, p. 22. James treats English and British as interchangeable terms (e.g. 'the England that Jonson lovingly celebrates as "my Britain"') and so misses the specificity of the political agenda Shakespeare is made to serve in this poem. James, *Shakespeare's Troy*, chapter 1.

This twofold function – as guarantor, on the one hand, of a national identity and unity and, on the other, of the *differentiating superiority* of that identity, a function which authorises both British nationalism and British imperialism – sets the agenda for the career of the figure of Shakespeare, especially from the eighteenth century through to the twentieth when, still absolute and universal, Shakespeare has become a ‘monumental signifier of “Englishness”’.¹⁸ ‘The ideological mode of the Shakespeare industry is’, as Terence Hawkes has remarked (about Stratford in particular but the comment has a more general relevance), ‘centripetal, integrating’, although it is, of course, at the same time, alienating and oppressive.¹⁹ Articulated through a range of discourses at different levels of cultural consciousness, outside as well as inside the educational institutions, this ideology is nowhere writ so large as at Stratford (as Holderness as well as Hawkes has pointed out²⁰). Already marked by the monument mentioned above as a privileged metonymy, this site has been turned into a centre of pilgrimage, the fetishised object of millions of tourists in quest of ‘roots’, if they are American,²¹ or of the essence of what it is to be English, which continues to be bound up, if contradictorily, with what it is to be human through the continued insistence on the universality of Shakespeare.

Though in another ideological universe ‘learned Maro’s golden tomb’ is similarly fetishised as a privileged site of presence by a character admittedly prone to fetishism, Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr Faustus*.²² The scene opens with Wagner (the Chorus in the B-text) telling how ‘(l)earnèd Faustus’ (III, Chorus, line 1) has turned from reading ‘the secrets of astronomy’ ‘(g)raven in the book of Jove’s high firmament’ (lines 2 and 3) to ‘cosmography’ (line 7) – a reading/writing of/on the

¹⁸ Evans, ‘Deconstructing Shakespeare’s Comedies’, p. 86. Note the not insignificant *glissement* from Britishness to Englishness; even Shakespeare could not hold Britain together. On the career of ‘Shakespeare’ see most substantially de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim*; and Christopher Norris, ‘Post-Structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology’, in John Drakakis, ed., *Alternative Shakespeares*, pp. 47–66.

¹⁹ Terence Hawkes, *That Shakespeherian Rag: Essays on a Critical Process* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 14; David Margolies, ‘Teaching the Handsaw to fly: Shakespeare as Hegemonic Instrument’, in Graham Holderness, ed., *The Shakespeare Myth* (Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 42–53; Malcolm Evans, *Signifying Nothing: Truth’s True Contents in Shakespeare’s Text* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), p. 64.

²⁰ Graham Holderness, ‘Bardolotry: Or the Cultural Materialist’s Guide to Stratford-upon-Avon’, in Holderness, ed., *The Shakespeare Myth*, pp. 2–15.

²¹ Evans, *Signifying Nothing*, p. 4, citing L. Marder, *His Exits and Entrances: The Story of Shakespeare’s Reputation* (London: J. Murray, 1964), p. 233.

²² References are to the A-text (1604) in Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus*, edited by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester University Press, 1993).

earth which he then performs on his entrance by tracing a map of Europe.

Having now, my good Mephistopheles,
 Passed with delight the stately town of Trier,
 ...
 From Paris next, coasting the realm of France,
 We saw the river Maine fall into Rhine,
 ...
 Then up to Naples, rich Campania,
 ...
 There saw we learnèd Maro's golden tomb,
 The way he cut, an English mile in length
 Thorough a rock of stone in one night's space.
 From thence to Venice, Padua and the rest,
 (III.i.1-2, 6-7, 9, 13-16)

It is, of course, specifically appropriate that the tomb of the magician Virgil should feature as a landmark in a cultural tour of Europe conducted by the magician Faustus. The relation between them is, however, underscored by the epithet 'learnèd', which is used of both Faustus and Virgil, and which is not used of Virgil in the source text.

There is, however, a more general point to be made about the use of this epithet, namely, that practices of Virgil as mage/magician were regularly associated with the erudition of Virgil the poet until the early seventeenth century when the figure of Virgil as mage/magician was first made an object of historical enquiry, as we shall see in chapter 3. This is important, because the separation of the figure of Virgil as mage/magician from the figure of Virgil as learned poet and the classification of the former as popular in origin and provenance acquired the status of virtual fact with the publication, in 1872, of Comparetti's *Virgilio nel medio evo*, which is articulated around this division.²³ Although Comparetti has not been without his critics, as we shall see, this monument to nineteenth-century nationalism and historical positivism, and the divisions it inscribes have not lost their hold; Baswell, for example, accepts as given the 'popular' character of Virgil as magician and excludes this figure from his otherwise wide-ranging study of Virgil

²³ D. Comparetti, *Virgilio nel medio evo*, 2 vols. (Livorno: Francesco Vigo, 1872), published in English as *Virgil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M. Benecke (London: Swan Sonnenschein; New York: MacMillan, 1895). There is a more recent edition of the Italian text by Giorgio Pasquali, 2 vols. (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1937-41), and a new edition of the English translation by Jan Ziolkowski (Princeton University Press, 1997).

in medieval England.²⁴ Further, critics to date have failed to address the particular blindspot of such a study, perhaps because it is characteristic of traditional historicism even as it continues to be practised today. It is a blindspot that may be summarised here as the blindness of traditional historicism to the historical character of its own discourse and method, a discourse and method which began to emerge precisely during the early modern period. By ignoring its own historicity, that is, traditional historicism becomes its own worst enemy.

What I shall try to show is how the figure of Virgil the mage/magician was bound up with a figure of Virgil as natural philosopher and how both were bound up with mediations of specific Virgilian texts as natural philosophical discourse, and, more generally, with a mediation of the formal structure of Virgilian verse as a form of knowledge. In part one I shall consider the canonical status of these mediations and their place in early modern English culture. Belonging, at least initially, to what I have called the more esoteric learned man's Virgils, we shall see how these objects came to be more widely circulated, and, more importantly, how they came to be interrogated, as the map of the universe/nature they imply came under pressure with what I have called the Protestant turn. As I shall show in chapter 1, this turn entailed the dismantling of an institutionalised structure of authority analogous to the structure of the Catholic Church, which tended, as it was used, to reproduce in early modern English culture, a hierarchy of privilege between insiders and outsiders. It is a turn which, more specifically, tended to dismantle a universe in which Virgil the poet inhabited with both Virgil the natural philosopher and Virgil the mage/magician – figures which ceased subsequently to exist other than as objects of a sceptical, historical mode of enquiry which itself belonged to this turn. In this connection it is no coincidence that the 'book of Jove's high firmament' described by the Chorus in the speech from *Dr Faustus* quoted above is the 'book' we will meet again in mediations of Virgil as mage/magician and in mediations of his texts and verse as knowledge of nature, the 'secrets' of nature and of the text constituting, as this image implies, a single system of knowledge.²⁵

To return again, briefly, to the comparison with Shakespeare. In both

²⁴ See Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, p. 16. This is unfortunate because it is in texts from this period that the first written traces of this figure of Virgil are to be found, as we shall see. See Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, 'Competing for Virgil: From the Courtroom to the Marketplace', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4:4 (Spring 1998).

²⁵ See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 48–9.

cases the place of burial, and the figure for which it is a privileged metonymy, serve as landmarks, marks, that is, invested with signifying value within a system of marks written on to the land. In the case of 'Shakespeare' the land is, as I have already indicated, England, a map, both material and imaginary in which the figure of Shakespeare serves to stand for a national collective identity, as 'our' 'common' heritage, and even as 'our' capital (the image of Shakespeare has adorned National Westminster Bank cheque cards and the £20 note²⁶). And it is this unified, grounded England which is at stake in the continued production and circulation of this figure of Shakespeare. There have, of course, been attempts to deconstruct this figure and what it serves to underwrite. Indeed, such deconstructions have been designated 'a modish topic' and, more importantly, have provoked a reaction reductive and trivialising to the point of parody.²⁷ Nevertheless, in England at least, certainly outside the academy and to an extent within it, there has been no effective displacement of 'Shakespeare'. Indeed, the attempts at deconstruction of received interpretations seem often, rather, attempts at *appropriation*, precisely *Alternative Shakespeares*, and not, as any effective change would require, alternatives to 'Shakespeares'. The analogy that comes to mind is that of a disputed holy site; it is not the holiness of the ground that is contested, merely who, and whose construction of the world will occupy it. Actually to effect a displacement of 'Shakespeare' in English culture, certainly outside the academy and probably inside too, would require little short of a cultural and ideological revolution.

It is as a site of cultural and ideological contestation at a pre-revolutionary moment that I shall situate *The Tempest*. This contestation is articulated, specifically, through the intertextual relation to received figures of Virgil and specific mediations of his texts, which are evoked only to be interrogated and displaced. There is, first, the figure, mentioned above, of Virgil as natural philosopher/mage and magician, which is evoked through the figure of the mage/magician Prospero, who, through his art, produces not only the eponymous tempest, but also a masque setting forth the total, closed and enchanted universe implied in these received mediations of Virgil, as we shall see. With the

²⁶ Graham Holderness, 'Preface: "All This"', in Holderness, ed., *The Shakespeare Myth*, pp. xi–xii.

²⁷ Alison Shell, 'Picking the Critical First Eleven', *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 23 November 1990; Richard Levin, 'The Poetics and Politics of Bardicide', *PMLA* 105:3 (1990), pp. 491–504. For a lucid, comparative analysis of what is at stake in England and the States respectively, see Don E. Wayne, 'Power, Politics and the Shakespearean Text: Recent Criticism in England and the United States', in Jean H. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor, eds., *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987).