

*The Whereabouts of the Island of the Tempest.*

*Undated notes*

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What do we have to go on that we learn directly from the play?

Twelve years before the storm with which the play opens, Prospero and Miranda were brought by night from Milan to some point on the coast of Italy that could be easily reached from Milan. From this point, which would most probably have been a harbour, they were conveyed in a small boat (a bark, probably a small sailing boat or a Rowing boat, OED) to an old boat or ship, lying at anchor, a certain distance away, with a store of food, clothes, and books. Father and baby daughter were put on board the ship and the anchor was cast loose.

Since the ship had neither sail nor rudder, it simply drifted with winds and currents until it ran aground on the shore of an island. Here the voyagers landed, while the ship remained (we must suppose) to be broken up by the waves.

The island proved to be wooded and fertile and to contain one solid inhabitant of human shape; Caliban. It was also full of strange sounds (for those who could hear) and elemental spirits, one of whom, Ariel, was found by Prospero imprisoned in a tree. From this tree Prospero released her and by using his magic powers made Ariel and Caliban his servants.

All this is more or less implicit in the text. It is hardly enough to pinpoint any one island among the many hundreds of possible candidates. Can we, using common knowledge and common sense deduce any more?