

Let us look at what is explicit:

Twelve years before the moment of the storm at sea with which the play opens, Prospero and the infant Miranda were brought by night from Milan to some convenient and accessible point on the coast of Italy. From there they were conveyed by their captors in a “bark” – that is, a little boat – to an old ship lying at anchor some distance away. They were put on board, with provisions (as well as clothes and books) the anchor raised and the ship cast adrift. It is described as the rotten “carcass of a butt” with neither mast, sail, nor steering tackle, so it could only have drifted with winds and currents until it ran aground on the shore of the island which Prospero was to make his home.

Two things may be deduced by common sense from this basic story: First: the point on the shore of Italy to which Prospero and Miranda were first brought was most probably Genoa, since Milan lay in the natural hinterland of this thriving port, with traffic and merchandise travelling between the two cities through a convenient gap in the Appenines. Second: an old rotting ship would hardly be found at anchor in the open sea, it would be far more likely to be lying somewhere off shore further along the coast. But did this second point, probably a harbor too, lie Southwards in the direction of Elba or Westwards, between Corsica and the Cote d’Azur?.

The likely answer to this question is given by Alonzo’s voyage which took place twelve years after Prospero’s. We know that Alonzo sailed from Naples to Tunis to marry off his daughter Claribel and that it was on his return voyage that his ship passed not far from Prospero’s island – near enough at least for the magician’s artificial storm to catch it

and cast it ashore there. In an abstract proposition the simplest way to sail from Tunis to Naples is in a straight line which neatly misses the western tip of Sicily a logical landfall, we should look for Prospero's island either between Tunis and Sicily or between Sicily and Naples. Both stretches of sea are to the South of Genoa not West. So we may conclude that it was Southward that Prospero's rudderless ship had drifted twelve years earlier and that the island should be before arriving at the Bay of Naples. This is indeed a common conclusion since various islands near Naples have been proposed as the Island of "The Tempest", and that the island should be found somewhere just off Alonzo's natural sea route (though a considerable distance off it is not impossible).

There are often scraps of geographical information in the play that might be relevant. Twelve years before Prospero and Miranda arrived on the island Caliban's mother (The Sorceress Sycorax ) had arrived in the same place, left there by sailors as a punishment for some unnamed deed. We learn from Ariel that she came from "Angier"- that is- Algiers on the north coast of Morocco. From Algiers we can sail in any direction except south, but the easiest way to sail must be east, along the old Phoenician trading route because the prevailing wind blowing from the cooler Atlantic is a westward wind. This third route – the route of Sycorax- must also arrive at the two other routes: Alonzo's and Prospero's.

Another hint of place comes in the masque, Venus and her son Cupid do not attend the "Contract of True Love" which the masque celebrates. They have tried and failed to make Ferdinand break his promise of pre-marital chastity, and now they are off, flying through the clouds in a chariot drawn by doves, to the city of Pathos that is to Cyprus. Pathos is a center of the cult of Aphrodite. So Venus is explicitly identified here

with her Greek relation. Shakespeare also reveals his accurate knowledge of mythological geography.

There is also an important temple to Aphrodite which was built on Sicily. A natural Business route for Aphrodite, Venus, would therefore be straight as the dove flies from Sicily to Cyprus.