The Tempest is a play about the relationship between fathers and daughters, the usurpation of power and ultimately, one’s retreat from the public world. With this in mind, I began my research with a desire to understand how people in the early modern period thought of these three ideas. This essay combines a reading of Shakespeare’s The Tempest with primary source documents such as diaries, letters, sermons, conduct manuals, and pamphlet literature in an attempt to define the early modern discourse of patriarchal thought and the belief in the interrelationship between the household and the state. As well, I argue that though Shakespeare provides an endorsement of the dominant discourses of his time, the playwright tempers this endorsement with an exploration of an emerging sense of the value of privacy and individuality. This essay challenges some of the criticism around the distinction between the public and private sphere during the early modern period. Many critics including Susan Amussen, Conal Condren and Lena Orlin have argued that in England at this time there was little distinction between the public and private because most activities such as marriage and work were believed to be performed in duty of the commonwealth. In this essay, I argue that a new valuation of the private was emerging and is apparent in the play. Nevertheless, though Shakespeare reveals a complex interplay between the public and private, he is ambivalent about the importance that should be placed on the private sphere.