Conclusion

In autumn 1674, verses circulated *On the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen presenting the late King and Duke of York each with a copy of their Freedom*.[1] The libel was attributed to Andrew Marvell. Whether he wrote them or not is less important than the fact that, in terms of their content and intent, he (and his friends) clearly could have done so. Marvell was hardly averse to satirising the Stuarts. He was also fully acquainted with the political and idiomatic contexts that, in this instance, informed the satirist's pen: indeed, his friend Richard Thompson sat on the committee charged with costing the presentation of the freedom to the Duke of York.[2] The poet's initial objection to the presentation was that 'you Addle-Brain'd Citts' had wasted money on 'Diamonds and Gold' when 'your Orphans want Bread to feed on'. As importantly, neither Charles nor James was worthy of enfranchisement. The king 'ne'er knew not he / How to serve or be free'. Since being 'bound' as monarch in 1661, he had 'every Day broke his Indentures': instead of learning his trade he wasted all his time 'Revelling, Drinking and Whoring'. A bad apprentice, he was also profligate. Although his 'Masters' – the public – had 'Intrusted him with Cash', he had spent and borrowed so 'his Creditors' were 'all left in Sorrow'. He 'molested the neighbours', kept 'Company lewd', and left only 'Debts / And the Bastards he gets' in his wake. His appetites – and those of his soldiers – threatened to turn 'All your Wives' into 'Strumpets'. Moreover,

> His word nor his Oath
> Cannot bind him to Troth,
> He values not Credit nor Hist'ry,
> And tho' he has serv'd now
> Two Prentiships through,
> He know's not his Trade, nor his Mist'ry.[3]

[1] 'Upon his Majesties being made free of the city', in Margoliouth, *Poems and letters*, vol. 1, pp. 181–4.
[2] CLRO, Rep 80, f. 129.
[3] Ibid., p. 183.

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For all Charles' dishonesty and incivility, the enfranchisement was not all bad. In an abrupt (and typically Marvellian) shift in tone, line eighty saw the citizens commended on their 'fortunate choice' of a monarch whose 'virtues exceed all his vices' – indeed, enfranchisement might well contribute to his further civilisation. The same could not be said for James. Sketched in the *Advice to a painter* (likewise attributed to Marvell) as a man wondering that subjects 'dare to contradict my Will / And think a Prince o'th Blood can e'er do ill', here was a prince implacably advancing 'The Government of France / With a Wife of Religion Italian'.[4] Faced with a future monarch bent on destroying 'their Liberties and Laws / Their Parchment Presidents, their dull Records' it was suggested that the box in which his freedom was to be presented had better uses. It could be appropriated as a 'Box of pills' for his syphilis; a ballot box for 'A new Duke to choose'; a box to hold 'the Cross with the Dagger' in case citizens had to resist James with force. Whichever was preferred, its current use merely confirmed that the citizens 'for Slaves are decreed' – that 'You in Chains offer your freedom'.

In admonishing the Stuarts, Marvell's verses invoked many of the constitutive features of commonwealth, freedom, and citizenship as they have been described in previous chapters. Most notable, perhaps, was the idea that the values that ideally defined citizens were a vantage point from which to judge not simply gentry and nobility but also monarch and heir to the throne. The Stuarts were not civil enough, honest enough, hardworking enough, skilled enough, creditable enough, socialised enough, or virtuous enough to warrant enfranchisement. Like Luke in *The city madam*, their wills were 'still the same'. The *honestas* required of this most civil of civil societies, and which was so lacking at court, was at once personal and social: dispositions that married self-reflection and discretion with an astute appreciation of place, company, conversation, and performance. Moreover, they were qualities that did not stop with the council chamber, but rather characterised all domestic, neighbourly, and commercial company and conversations of male and female citizens alike. In this way, city commonwealths formed an economic, patriarchal, and religious community in which incivility in one realm had profound consequences for distinctions, reputation, and credit in another – the positions and conversations of civic governance included. This fusion of personal and social morality – and the creation of a regulated and sharply defined self – was married to an equally powerful sense of place: a tangible culture of possession, ownership, and inclusion that made even the inclusion of the monarch a contingent and political process.

In both respects, the previous 130 years witnessed a process of structural and behavioural urbanisation: the expansion of a corporate system of city

[4] *Advice to a painter* (1679), p. 1; 'Upon his Majesties being made free', p. 184.

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commonwealths. This fecundity of place allowed the promulgation of civic and civil values that served as a template for the political, social, and economic practice of citizens; informed more general conceptions of civil society; and addressed, in particular, the role of 'the commons' – or middling sort – within it. In these ways urbanisation was constitutive of developments that traditionally delineate the 'early modern' as a distinctive period in English history: not least commercialisation, state-formation, the transformation of 'the public sphere', and the intensified politics of patriarchy, religion, and class. However, it also complicates those narratives in terms of their antecedents, agents, contexts, resistance, and meanings. In particular, it offers a counterpoint to the narrative of sovereign state and private subject found in writers like Jonson, Bacon, Hobbes, Baines, Brady, and Barbon. This genealogy was, perhaps, the most radical dynamic of seventeenth-century political culture: certainly regimes that came closest to behaving like 'a state' – in the 1630s, 1650s, 1680s – provoked violent and successful opposition within the commonwealth at large. However, the very potency of this opposition points to the survival and, indeed, consolidation of an institutional and symbolic space that can slip as easily through the fingers of historians as be dismissed by proponents of *Leviathan* or 'universal monarchy'. This was a space located somewhere between household and sovereignty, and colonised by both; that was redolent with the common and public good, and contested and appropriated accordingly; that transmuted into eighteenth-century civil society.

The very centrality of this space to local and national politics explains, perhaps, its occasional invisibility in the historiography. With so many intersections, overlaps, and legacies, the very fact of English urbanity outwith the parameters of court and country house can be lost. This peculiar ambiguity was never better demonstrated than by a seventeenth-century coin now held at the Marischal Museum in Aberdeen.[5] In terms of its metal content and design the coin is consistent with unites minted for the Commonwealth between 1649 and 1660. Likewise the inscription of the George Cross on a shield surrounded by the words 'THE COMMONWEALTH OF ENGLAND' is formulaic. What is unusual about this particular coin is that the words 'GOD WITH US 1646' are inscribed on the reverse side: that is, it was minted three years before the execution of the king. In the absence of any retooling, the most likely explanation is that is that a 'die-sinker' erroneously punched in the figure 9 upside-down (although research has failed to locate any other recorded specimens). If the error was noticed at once, and the offending die re-cut or destroyed, it may be that very few coins struck from it were released into circulation.[6] However,

[5] The coin's registration number is ABDUA 47318.
[6] N. M. McQ. Holmes, 'A Commonwealth unite dated 1646', *Numismatic Circular*, 111, 6, 2003, p. 311.

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this book suggests that, long before 1646, notions of city and national commonwealth were the predominant frame of reference for English citizens and freemen. Householders like the York baker James Wright, Cambridge fish merchant Thomas French, and Ludlow weaver John Bradford would have recognised the coin and its signification. The coin's inscription may have been hasty, but it was by no means unthinkable.

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