The household, the citizen, and the city: towards a social history of urban politics in the late Middle Ages

Abstract

Histories of politics in the late medieval European town present a struggle between town oligarchs and town citizens. While the conclusions that historians draw differ, the stakes of politics are the same: exclusion, participation, and representation in town government. Politics is the 'public' domain of officeholding, elections, and voting, its actors exclusively male, its locations the council chamber, the craft guild, the workshop. Starting and ending with the evidence of a 1532 'insurrection of women' in the English city of Norwich, this article seeks to reconceptualise town politics in the late Middle Ages. Its premise is that urban citizenship was a social and performative practice, as much as a formal legal and political status. It argues that the relationship between home, household, and family was fundamental to the lived experience of citizenship. The urban household was a complex source of political agency, where the official separation between citizen and non-citizen was difficult to sustain. The 1532 insurrection of women allows us to connect the politics of the household to the politics of the town hall and to write a social history of town politics, in which women were political actors.

Keywords

Household, gender, women, citizenship, protest, political agency

Total Word Count

15,650

In 1532, there was an 'insurreccion within the Citie of Norwich of women'. The clerk of the mayor's court (otherwise known as the court of mayor and aldermen) summarised the details of the insurrection in one sentence, devoid of punctuation. The 12 'principall offenders', who had 'caused' the insurrection, were charged by the city's mayor and aldermen of the 'sellyng of dyuers mennes cornes ayenst ther willes and settyng of prises therof at ther aun mendes [i.e. own minds] contrary to such prises as the mair of the said Citie hadde sett bifore that tyme'.[1] In the public space of the city's market, the same place where they were now to receive their punishment of a public whipping, the 12 women had seized the corn of various men and then sold it, after first deciding on the public price of corn among themselves; in so doing, they had contradicted and supplanted the authority of the city's mayor.

The participation of women is perhaps less surprising than the reference to an 'insurreccion'. Late medievalists have been slower than early modernists to explore the intersection of gender and popular politics, but the literature on women's involvement in medieval protest is growing.[2] Alerting historians to the need to consider both the extent and the pattern of women's participation in revolt, Sam Cohn has identified temporal and spatial differences in women's roles, notably between England and continental Europe.[3] In a stimulating methodological intervention on the question of women's visibility, Alice Raw has shown that we must be more attentive to the archival sources if we wish to 'correct for two levels of erasure – that of contemporary comment, and that of our own definitions of what it meant to protest'.[4] The task of the historian is to interrogate, not amplify, the apparent silences in the records.

Much less problematically, when viewed through an early modern lens, the 1532 insurrection in Norwich would appear to be an early example of a pattern of popular politics that would continue into the first half of the nineteenth century.[5] This was the

phenomenon of the 'food riot'. Motivated by the customary values of a 'moral economy', distinguished by the discipline of its protagonists and by the ritualised, symbolic, and repetitive character of its practices, the food riot would become more frequent in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, 'more common' from the late seventeenth century, and, 'more pronounced' during the eighteenth century.[6] In the classic food riot, rioters intercepted the passage of grain to sell it at a 'just' or 'fair' price.

Historians of early modern popular politics long ago noted the presence of women in protests that concerned food: from so–called food riots to enclosure riots. A few critical voices notwithstanding, there is consensus about the gender–specific motivation of women's roles in popular protest.[7] Women's actions in food riots and enclosure riots were explicable by the gendered dimension of the domestic sphere, which prescribed and circumscribed women's familial roles as mothers and wives. On the one hand, there was a gendered division of labour that entrusted mothers with the domestic chores of providing for their family's basic household needs. Secondly, wives' dependence on, and subservience to, their husbands contributed to the ambiguity of women's legal status, which persuaded husbands that, without full legal capacity owing to their sex, they had immunity from the rigour of the law.[8] These two factors gave women a source of moral authority, but only on certain terms and within specific domains.[9] They operated within an economic field dominated by what John Walter has called the 'politics of subsistence'.[10] This was a politics that revolved around the household economy, the functioning of which, in a period of rising population and increasing prices, rested upon the memory of custom. According to Nicola Whyte, women's responsibilities within the household made them guardians of household knowledge. The convergence of familial history, attachment to place, and understanding

of custom motivated and legitimated women's participation in rural food and enclosure riots.[11]

By contrast, the use of the word insurrection intrigues. It points to an alternative framework within which we might situate the Norwich episode. In British sources written in medieval Latin and Middle English, usages date from the last quarter of the fourteenth century.[12] We encounter it applied to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 contemporaneously and retrospectively.[13] Thereafter, insurrection had connotations of violence, of assault, of physical attack, of armed resistance, all of which were unlawful. The insurrection in Norwich was not accompanied by the exercise of armed force or the use of weapons; it was not war–like; there was not the threat of the destruction of property or of people. In what ways was 1532 an insurrection?

The clerk's terse description of 1532 as an insurrection of women made gender the primary issue of concern. We might suspect behind the clerk's succinct expression the invisible hand of patriarchal ideology, which here rendered a woman's disobedience to, and coercion of, a man an attack on the mayor's governance of the city. We might infer a connection between patriarchy and the law, that is, the invention and enactment of a legal fiction that dramatised the smallest infraction or act of insubordination as the highest possible danger to public order. My argument is not that we should ignore the gendered nature of the insurrection, which was certainly not incidental, but that gender was imbricated in a fluid, pragmatic, and participatory politics, whose contours remain only partially delineated.

In Norwich, in 1532, I think that we should translate 'insurreccion' literally. Derived from the Latin intransitive verb *insurgere*, the vernacular noun indicated the bodily action of rising up; it was a movement. One of the features of 1532 was women's physical mobility: women took grain as it was transported into the city, they entered and

occupied the marketplace, which was in the middle of the walled city, and they travelled between households across diverse parishes within the city. Both as individuals and groups, a total of more than 40 women moved *against* and *in opposition to* those in power. The 1532 insurrection of women in Norwich was an uprising that traversed the spatial boundaries between the public and private spheres of urban living and that made claims on and against civic authority.

This article is not a microhistory of 1532. I approach the events of 1532 from a dual perspective. I argue that we must first rethink the existing categories and parameters of politics to make sense of the actions of the Norwich women. Yet the evidence of the social and political agency of the Norwich women in 1532 has a value of its own. It illustrates a denser, richer town politics than current models allow: one that was neither completely male dominated in its actors nor narrowly political in its stakes. Together, these two ways of thinking about 1532 enable us to widen the frame of town politics in the late Middle Ages.

The research of social historians of early modern England over the past twenty years has expanded the conception of the 'political' by rooting politics in social relationships structured and experienced by inequalities of power. In this article, I seek to *connect* the politics of everyday life in late medieval towns to the town politics in the public spaces of the town hall and council chamber, the town square or public street. Town politics was inherently social, insofar as it was grounded in the material realities of home and residence, competing definitions of the household, and the reproductive capacity of the family. This town politics was, in turn, inseparable from urban citizenship, not because a person first had to be a citizen to participate in politics, but because citizenship was embedded in the everyday relations of power. In conjoining the

household, the citizen, and the city, I make the case for a social history of medieval town politics that, I hope, also has implications for the study of early modern towns.

Models of urban politics

The political history of late medieval towns is a field of research polarised between two outwardly antagonistic schools of thought – the growth of urban oligarchy and the corrective power of urban citizenship – neither of which, in their common engagement with narratives of democratisation, can accommodate and explain the events in Norwich. We know a great deal now about what Charles Tilly called the politics of collective action; about the presence and persistence of conflict within urban political life; about the vigorous condition of urban political culture; about the existence, even, of a critical, but not Habermasian, public sphere. Paradoxically, this revisionism has not shifted the terms of discussion. In presenting town politics as a continual debate about the nature of the town constitution and about the closed or open nature of the councils and assemblies of town government, we feel compelled to qualify, confirm, or deny its democratic aspects and practices.

Models of urban politics adhere to a tradition of writing about medieval towns that goes back to at least the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scholars such as Henri Pirenne and Max Weber located the historical roots of the transition to modernity in the Middle Ages and in the novel political arrangements and economic potential of the medieval European town. Pirenne and Weber emphasised the singularity and precocity of the medieval city. To Pirenne, the story that began with the Italian urban communes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the birth of democracy and the rise of democratic institutions; to Weber, it was the economic supremacy of the West. Both found their explanation for these phenomena in the tradition of urban

citizenship, and in the formation of new social and political organisations (from the *coniuratio* to the craft guilds) with which citizenship was so often intertwined.[14]

The rejection of this thesis came from historians of contrasting ideological positions. Not everyone was convinced by the initial democratic and participatory promise of urban communes, but many more agreed in change over time, as political power came to be monopolised by small groups of townspeople between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. This was the paradigm of oligarchisation. In France, the Holy Roman Empire, the kingdoms of Castile and England, as well as in the cities of Flanders, monarchies (kings, emperors, and dukes) supported and, in Castile (the *regimiento*), institutionalised oligarchy.[15] Everywhere, two distinct groups of urban citizens coalesced: the commons (*comuneros*, *Gemeinde*, *commun*) and the good men (*hombres buenos*, *probi homines*, *bonnes gens*).[16] Everywhere, the town council supplanted the citizen assembly as the crucible of decision making.

Today, the ideas of Pirenne and Weber have returned to the historical agenda.[17] Maarten Prak's 2018 monograph *Citizens without Nations* is arguably the culmination of a recent body of scholarship that has reinvigorated study of the relationship between urban citizenship and democratic politics. In comparison with the national model of citizenship that took hold in Europe after the French Revolution of 1789, Prak remarked that pre-modern urban citizenship 'actually has quite an impressive track record when it comes to political freedom, social equality and inclusiveness'.[18] When we dig down into 'local politics' in 'premodern towns', Prak argued, what we find is 'more "democracy" before the French Revolution than historians have usually acknowledged, fixated as they have been on national politics'.[19] Beyond rioting and protesting, which in any case had their own logic and order, ordinary citizens talked politics on the street, in their craft guilds, in their parish churches, with their neighbours and friends, and while

drinking. They were politically active, as well as politically informed. Holding office in their guilds, turning up for elections even when not authorised, and occupying seats in 'popular' councils, they drafted and submitted petitions. They did so because of the prevalence, absorption, and utility of ideas and practices of urban citizenship. An individual who swore an oath of citizenship promised to uphold a mixture of duties and rights. While their relative weight was disputable, together they were a mandate of civic participation. Urban citizens were the 'body' of the city: in addition to supplying the pool of candidates from which officeholders and councillors of various types were chosen, they paid taxes, kept the peace, and made requests of the municipal authorities.

In reconstructing the repertoire of collective actions that urban citizens had at their disposal, historians have sought to overcome the distorting effects of national historiographic traditions and misleading assumptions about the historic status of nations, states, and nation-states as the natural unit of politics. Transnational comparisons across an interconnected urban Europe have revealed that townspeople shared a common language of urban politics.[20] *This* citizen politics hinged on several, interlocking claims. These included the routine accountability of urban governors, to ensure the representative character of town government; the inviolability of municipal autonomy, to preserve the condition of self-government; and the inalienability of collective and individual urban liberties, which belonged of right to all citizens equally and fully. Citizens petitioned, they compiled manifestos, they advanced political programmes.

We might draw three conclusions about town politics. The first relates to the size of the political arena. Political power in late medieval towns was never held by the few. It was created, but also contested, through collective action. The second conclusion, which concerns the substance of town politics, tempers our impression of

the enlargement of the political realm. Whether we consider the town hall the main forum of town politics or whether we focus on politics within the crafts and the guild halls, or politics out of doors, in the marketplace or in the street, the political sphere conforms to what we instinctively and intuitively understand, and have always understood, politics to be about: the institutional apparatus of government and the exercise of public authority; principles of representation and consent; the extension of, and limits to, formal participation. Urban politics was a struggle about the town constitution. The third conclusion, which builds on the second but weakens further the significance of the first, is that town politics was a distinctly man's world. Town halls or guild halls were venues of male power. They were political spaces from which many urban inhabitants were ordinarily excluded. Women did not vote; they did not stand for office.[21] What we need to recover, if we are to understand the Norwich insurrection of women in 1532, is a social history of town politics. Part of this history lies in looking, once again, at what made town politics different from village politics.

Citizen or non-citizen

One of the greatest barriers is the conceptualisation of citizenship, which acknowledges the particularity of the urban place while artificially separating the social from the political. One reason for this unhelpful partition is the tendency to inscribe histories of urban citizenship within histories of law and of rights. Like the medieval jurists whose writings they studied, Italian scholars approached citizenship in the towns of northern and central Italy through the prism of law.[22] Citizenship was not a vague abstraction; it was a condition of legal equality, which offered all citizens juridical protection within and without the city. The urban commune was a sworn association (*coniuratio*) and a legal body. The swearing of the oath of citizenship was a legal act. This oath, as

historians of German towns stressed, gave a person the status of citizen, but it impressed upon the individual the form and substance of the town constitution. Access to civic rights (*Bürgerrecht*) was contingent upon the fulfilment of obligations towards the urban community of which citizens became members. Breach of the oath (the *Bürgereid*) could end with the temporary forfeiture or withdrawal of citizenship.[23] Rights that might be held, but lost, could also be seen as privileges.

They were privileges in another respect, because the individuals who benefited from them, historians have argued, were a minority of the urban population. At the end of the Middle Ages, the Hanseatic town of Lübeck, which was one of the largest German cities after Cologne, had an estimated population of 20-24,000, of whom 3-3,500 held citizenship.[24] In the light of their relative numerical strength, citizens were an elite group within urban society. Wim Blockmans's depiction of 'exclusive citizenship in preindustrial Europe' appears irrefutable.[25]

Yet the evidence that town governments pursued a 'citizenship policy' (*Bürgerrechtspolitik*) can be variously interpreted. Were civic rulers ever fully in control of who was, and was not, a citizen? The need for a 'citizenship policy' is proof that they were not.

The possession of urban citizenship, and the social divide between citizen and non-citizen, was less clear cut than is generally envisaged. In fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Bristol, for example, there were 'portmen' and 'portwomen', an economic group of men and women who wished to trade or exercise a craft freely in the town, but who had neither the means nor the desire to pay the money required to become a burgess (that is, a citizen).[26] Although they did not have the rights of the *poorterij* of the towns and cities of Flanders and Brabant, with whom they had a common etymology, by the middle of the fifteenth century the portmen and portwomen of Bristol had pushed

and transcended the boundaries of what was felt permissible. In 1455 the mayor, sheriff, and common council took measures on behalf of the town's burgesses to contain their opportunism. The town's chamberlain was in future to admit 'no man nor woman to be Portman ne Portwoman butt oonly to selle breed and ale and nott to be Free of eny othour thinge'; their fee, which had first been negotiable, was to be a fixed annual sum. These new rules imply that the inverse situation had previously prevailed.[27] In the Italian communes of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, too, citizenship was 'an elastic assemblage of rights', rather than a fixed legal status, while the identity and status of the citizen were inconstant because citizenship itself was 'an unstable and provisional condition'.[28] There was no one type of urban citizen.

The binary nature of urban citizenship was destabilised, fundamentally, because it was as much an action as a state. A social practice, individuals might perform citizenship and act like citizens without ever enjoying, legally and formally, the title of a citizen. Even a cursory reading of the borough court rolls of the East Anglian port town of Great Yarmouth, which are extraordinary only by virtue of their uninterrupted sequence from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, shows how frequently townspeople outside the civic franchise bought and sold, conducted trade, kept shops and apprentices, and carried out a craft when technically they had no right to do so.[29] The rolls suggest that urban citizenship was a pretence, in the two meanings of the word – both the putting forward of a claim and the action of pretending – whose achievement was dependent upon credibility and persuasion. In the roll for 1446-47, for example, we learn that almost 20 men were reported to the borough court 'for having shops, buying and selling *as if they are* burgesses but they are not'; in 1448-49, one Henry Parchmynmaker was fined 'for having shops and buying and selling *as if he is* a burgess'; in the same year, more than 10 individuals, among them one woman, had to

pay 'because they buy and sell and hold shops *as if they are* burgesses but they are not'.[30] To appear as one thing, but in fact to be something else: was the demarcation between a citizen and a non-citizen immediately and visibly obvious? At a court in Great Yarmouth in 1467, a local jury stated that a Philip Leem 'buys and sells and keeps his craft of the fullers' craft, *saying* that he is a burgess and he is not (*dicendum se ipsum esse burgensis et non est*)'.[31] Leem was caught, but how many others were not? How many others were bold enough to declare successfully, but erroneously, that they were a citizen?

In theory, there was no such thing as a dishonest citizen, but truth, like citizenship, was often a matter of interpretation. Truth could refer to a person's integrity, or faithfulness, but it could also express the factual accuracy of something. This 'semantic slipperiness', to use Richard Firth Green's phrase, was the quickening pulse of urban citizenship.[32] We glimpse the tensions and contradictions between these two interpretations in a Bolognese statute of 1288. The statute announced that the 'true citizens' (*veros cives*) of Bologna were those who had been born in the city or who had lived in the city for more than 30 years. They were 'true', then, because they were authentic, real, genuine. The very same statute admitted that 'true citizens' were those who petitioned to have their names incorporated in the city's tax lists; their inclusion as taxpayers was a public statement of their fiscal probity and of their civic fidelity and reliability.[33] We might add that, if there were true citizens, there were false citizens. Certainly, there were 'good' citizens, and there were 'bad' citizens.[34] Goodness and worthiness were in the eye of the beholder, so that citizenship was necessarily enhanced or debased by the perceptions of others.

Urban citizenship was a legal condition, replete with rights and duties. It was also a formal political status; a person elected or appointed to civic office first had to be

a citizen to qualify for the position. Yet citizenship was principally a lived experience, enacted daily through myriad social encounters and relations.[35] Determined by what people did, how they behaved, and how they were seen by others, it was mutable and subjective. In these various ways, urban citizenship was socially constituted.

Home, household, and family

If we accept that urban citizenship was, above all, a social construct, we can expand the definition of who was a citizen beyond the public realm of law, rights, policy-making, and office. Among the social relationships that constructed citizenship, I argue now that the interaction of home, household, and family was central. Quite simply, men did not inhabit the public sphere of politics, while women were restricted to the home. Forming and disrupting relations of power, practices of home, household, and family effaced the line between active and passive citizenship, between the social and the political, and between private and public authority.

Home is an appropriate starting point because the word encompasses the idea of both a *built* space and a *dwelling* place. To be at home was to be a citizen. Property was the oldest, and remained the pre-eminent, qualification of urban citizenship across medieval Europe. Burgage tenure was a form of free tenure, which was both a special right and a precondition of citizenship. Burgage plots in the towns of western Hungary, close to the border of the Holy Roman Empire, were 'denoted by the word *Haus*', a sign that it was not only the holding of land, but the erection of a building on the plot of land which gave material substance to a claim of citizenship.[36] If fiscal status and occupational affiliation became increasingly synonymous with citizenship, the possession of property was a lasting attribute and, in some towns, a residual source, of official citizenship. The citizens of fifteenth-century Coventry justified their use of the

common lands outside the city walls with reference to property. It was as 'free holders of Couentre' that the citizens repeatedly and 'seuerally claymed' commoning rights. An adjunct of 'their free hold & tenementes' in the city, these rights were heritable resources; and they pertained also to their tenants, blurring the line between ownership and tenancy.[37] Houses may have been of different sizes, built from different materials, and held on different terms, but in northern France, as elsewhere, membership of the urban community was 'determined, in the first place, by the home' (*domicile*).[38] The citizen was a householder.

The physical reality of the home was a guarantee of more or less permanent habitation. Residence was a desideratum of urban citizenship: a citizen was a citizen of a distinct place.[39] It was possible to be a citizen of one town or city and to live somewhere else. In some regions of Europe, such a citizen had a formal name: in German and Austrian towns of the Holy Roman Empire, they were *Pfahlbürger* or *Ausbürger*, the prefixes indicative of their residence past the edges of the urban settlement.[40] Residence, however, was expected. In 1377 those living outside the English town of Walsall had to pay more than three times the standard cost of admission to the freedom. Although he was from a village barely two miles north of Walsall, one Henry Mylleward of Rushall paid 6s. 8d. 'because he was neither an inhabitant nor a property holder within the manor' (*eo quod non erat manens neque tenens infra manerium*).[41] Residence was thought of temporally, spatially, and materially.

The stability of residence, in every way, was the genesis of trust: trust that the individual would be a reliable citizen, who would honour the promises made in the oath. Broken trust, arising from failure to meet mutual responsibilities, could lead to the razing of the person's house. This form of civic punishment, documented across late medieval and early modern western and central Europe, symbolised the intimate

relationship between citizenship, home, and place.[42] Despite their wealth, it was because of the transient nature of their occupation, without a permanent domicile in the towns they visited for trade, that merchants could find themselves alongside the poor, widows, and orphans in an otherwise amorphous legal category of *miserabili persone* in Italian cities such as Turin.[43] Municipal hosting laws were predicated on the rootedness, security, and accountability of home. In German towns, as in English towns, a trader was assigned to a citizen host, who received the visitor into his house, who stood as surety for him, and who was answerable for the behaviour of the visitor during his period of residence.[44] The home, as the physical manifestation of the household, was integral to the politics of town government.

What was the urban household?[45] Among social historians of medieval English towns, there has been a tendency to reduce the household – from its irregular shape and variable numbers to the complexity of household relations – to a story of the rise and triumph of the nuclear household and the idealisation of the conjugal family.[46] In this account, the citizen household was a site of governance that became an instrument of civic government. In the attempted regulation of marriage and sexual relations, or in the pursuit of peace, town rulers idealised the household as a microcosm of urban government and a conduit of mayoral authority.[47] The male head of household was to wield authority over his wife, children, servants, and apprentices, publicly to represent everyone under his roof, and to provide for them, in return for deference and compliance. The rule of the household was a foundation of civic order, a mechanism for the strengthening of patriarchy, and a tool of urban oligarchy. In her recent study of London households, Katherine French argued that patterns of household consumption after the Black Death greatly influenced gendered ideas of household order. Yet new

forms of domestic material culture seem mostly to explain, corroborate, and reinforce a narrative of women's marginalisation to, and within, the household.[48]

Altogether, we still have too one-dimensional a picture of household structures and dynamics, for several reasons, each of which leaves the implications of the relationship between household status and citizenship under-explored. While the household was structured vertically, it was a corporate body. The corporate body of the household was fragile, and impermanent; it might divide and re-form, sometimes very quickly. The longevity and stability of the urban household were much less assured than the model of the nuclear, conjugal family supposes. High mortality rates meant that re-marriage was common and that there was always a significant proportion of households presided over by a widow.[49] The civic authorities may thus have preferred the stability of one model of household – headed by a male, who was a citizen, a husband, and an employer –[50] but the division between householder and non-householder, between citizen and non-citizen, was harder to maintain in the face of the increasing diversity of household types that resulted from demographic conditions and economic pressures. Journeymen and apprentices tried to set up their own fraternities against the wishes of their masters, but they also occupied their own dwelling-houses; they formed brotherhoods *and* households, as did the journeymen of the London tailors in 1415, much to the alarm of the mayor and aldermen.[51] Such behaviour raised a troubling question: if citizens were by definition householders, were householders by the same token also citizens?

Practices of shared labour within the household, borne of the daily necessity of making a living, prompted a related question: who was the householder? Household management was the task of more than a single head. Relations of power between husbands and wives were asymmetrical, but economic imperative, as Martha Howell

has explained, blunted patriarchal ideology. Exposed to the vicissitude and unpredictability of the market, wealthy citizens and their wives had to work together diligently and industriously to keep the urban household afloat.[52] The argument can be extended to artisanal households, in which the home was concurrently a place of work and the separation of labour precept, not practice.[53] In March 1442 a London common sergeant reported to the court of mayor and aldermen that Joanna Bernewell and her unnamed husband, an upholsterer, had resisted the wardens of the skinners' craft and civic officers, prevented them from searching 'in their house' (*in domo sua*) for furs, and said 'abusive words' (*verba obprobriosa*) about the mayor and his officers. For these offences, it was Joanna, and Joanna alone, not her husband, who was sent to prison.[54] Both residence and workshop, the urban household was a location in which women could have authority over others and could be publicly accountable for its activities.

The household was also a reproductive body, which made it a kind of family group. Of course, if we think of the family essentially as a domestic unit whose main social ties were those of blood and marriage, then the household stood apart from the family. In an urban setting, the household might contain others, from household servants to apprentices and journeymen. However, like the family, it was a co-resident group, and, like any family, it was biologically and socially constituted. It was not the individual, but the 'household-family', consisting of dependents and descendants, which formed the urban community.[55] Urban citizenship was an inheritance that, like other family assets, was transmissible through horizontal and vertical familial structures.

This quality of citizenship – familial, intra- and inter-generational – is all too easily overlooked when reading the lists of citizens that survive from many late medieval European towns. In a study of over 40 cities in the German, Swiss, and

Austrian lands of the Holy Roman Empire between the late thirteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, Barbara Studer considered to be citizens all those who were 'registered in a late medieval citizen book'.[56] This appealingly pragmatic definition ignores the problem of omission. The documentary genre of 'citizen books' (*livres de bourgeois*, *Bürgerbücher*), often parchment rolls listing the new citizens formally admitted into the civic franchise, recorded more regularly the names of citizens who secured citizenship through purchase and apprenticeship. From time to time, in short bursts of administrative activity, town clerks inscribed the names of citizens by inheritance, but they were often forced into action only because the civic authorities feared that they had lost track, and control, of the citizen body.

Who might succeed to citizenship: was it biological heirs, was it legitimate offspring, was it sons (singular or plural?) at the expense of daughters? Our current knowledge is partial, but suggestive. In 1399 two brothers, Thomas and John, each 'the son of William Hory' (*filius Willelmi Hory*), became burgesses of the Staffordshire town of Walsall at the same time. Likewise, two sons of the mercer Robert Louthe joined York's citizenry together in 1426.[57] In 1402 one 'Richard Wever junior', styled the 'heir' of Henry Marchall of Walsall, became a burgess of Walsall 'through the death of the aforesaid Henry Marchall' (*per descensum predicti Henrici Marchall*). As the son of a man of the same name, Richard Wever was not Henry Marchall's son, but he was his heir.[58] This is a single example, but it is enough to encourage further reflection on the heritability of citizenship. It is very likely that townspeople did not inherit citizenship only from their biological fathers.

Urban citizenship nested within other family relationships. Women, for example, could inherit citizenship *and* confer citizenship on the men that they married. Sarah Rees Jones calculated that, in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the

names of those inheriting citizenship in York were recorded more systematically, 'half the women who became citizens did so by inheritance from their fathers'.[59] The clerk noting the entry of a new burgess in Walsall in 1514-15 wrote that if the burgess were to marry a woman 'who is a daughter and heir of a burgess', then he would be exempt from the admission fee.[60] As late as 1571-2 a certain Edward Shaw paid only half the fee 'be cawse he maryed a burges' of Walsall.[61] Ordinances from Bristol in 1344 presumed that women were burgesses of the town. Whether she were a daughter of a burgess or a woman who had previously been married to a burgess, if 'a woman of the liberty' ('*si que mulier de libertate existens*') should re-marry 'of her own will' ('*voluntate sua propria*') a 'stranger' of servile condition, she would obtain her new husband's unfree condition and lose her burgess status.[62] While the ruling theoretically impinged on women's freedom to marry, it was from another angle public recognition of the capacity of women to transmit their own citizenship to their children. As daughters, wives, and widows, women were conduits of citizenship and themselves citizens.[63]

Women were structurally excluded from the overtly 'political' venues of town politics, such as councils, assemblies, or the town hall, which we associate with urban citizenship. Townswomen played no part in 'the formal, direct exercise of public authority'.[64] Lacking political rights to vote or to hold office, they could not be 'full citizens' (*Vollbürger*). The mistake is to dismiss women as 'unpolitical citizens' (*unpolitische Bürger*),[65] or to assume that what 'remained closed to women fundamentally, and in all cities, was participation in urban politics'.[66] The point is not that we should distinguish between being a citizen and being a political actor, but that the household was a political domain and an arena of political action within which ideas and practices of citizenship were articulated, worked out, and contested.

That the household was a site of politics will come as no surprise to historians of early modern England, but their conceptualisations of the household as a political space differ from each other. The divergence is the consequence of two separate historical agendas. Social historians have broadened the notion of politics to encompass the structures of power within and without the household. The enterprise of social history, hostile to the deadening effects of a 'men and events' notion of history as 'high politics', loosened politics from the institutions of government and reframed social structures and social ideologies as a political system.[67] Patriarchy was political, the household was patriarchal, and in early modern society 'the concepts of house, household and family carried considerable ideological weight'.[68] We might say, then, that politics was everywhere and that everything was political. Meanwhile, historians of popular politics, intent upon restoring agency to the lower orders, have recovered the political consciousness of ordinary people to assert the social depth of politics. Studies of seditious speech, drawing on legal records and criminal prosecutions, have shown how frequently townspeople talked politics *at* home: *about* the internal business of municipal government and civic rulers, and even *about* the external affairs of kings, dukes, and princely regimes.[69]

We can build bridges between historiographies, while attending to the particularity of the urban environment, where the relationship between the household and the political sphere had meanings and dynamics that were characteristically, if not distinctively, urban. The urban household was political not because it was a locus of power and patriarchy per se or because it was a building block of the urban polity. It was political because it was within the household, as much as within the craft guild, that townspeople learned to be citizens and practised citizenship.

Sensitive to the fluidity and variability of households and to the precarious state of household economies, members of urban households held town governments to the same standards. The idea of accountability, a principle that was at the heart of many collective disputes between townspeople and town rulers, in the public confrontations in town halls and urban marketplaces analysed by historians, began at home, and with the household. In their clashes with the mayor and aldermen between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, for example, the commons of York advanced a set of demands that was more balance sheet than manifesto: the city should be solvent and, as custodians of the public purse, civic officials should account for the public resources that they had at their disposal.[70] The private business, anxieties, needs, and values of households infused the public life of late medieval towns. These convergences, between the private and the public, between the social and the political, occurred at many levels, which could sustain and embed, but also complicate and contest, the authority of town rulers. They structured, and propelled, the events of 1532 in Norwich.

The Norwich insurrection

In 1532 the flashpoint was food, but the 'insurreccion within the Citie of Norwich of women' was not a food riot but an *urban* insurrection, marked and explicable by a series of distinctively urban entanglements: between the domestic and the civic, and between the household and the citizen. If the fundamental issue for any household, anywhere, was access to food, the difference is that the provision of food in urban markets was foundational to medieval ideas of the city. The prominence of the imposing structure of the city's market cross in the 1541 map of Norwich is illustrative of the central place of the market in contemporary imaginings of the city and in conceptions of

civic identity and civic authority.[71] The supply of food was a quintessentially urban field of politics.

The urban ideology of the body, which allegorised the town as a human body and its individual parts as co-ordinated members of the larger whole, made food a metaphor of good governance and of the legitimate exercise of political power.[72] The concept of the body politic was suited to the complexity of urban societies that were, unlike the human body, a marvel of mechanical ingenuity, but that, like the human body, could function only if the multiple organs worked harmoniously. When town government did not operate as it should, in the interests of the whole, and when the body was impoverished and malnourished, it was because town rulers had enriched themselves and grown fat at the expense of the people they were meant to protect. In the cities of Flanders, where a term of abuse commonly directed at city aldermen and other officers was the expression 'liver eater', we witness the broad ideological resonance and acute political charge not only of the concept of the body but of metaphors of food and nourishment that readily attached to it.[73]

Food had this symbolic power precisely because towns could not easily feed themselves, because they were subject to external forces often beyond their control, and because, crucially, it was commonly believed that only government intervention could mitigate their vulnerability. Town chronicles, which mirrored the customary preoccupations of town governments and of the people they ruled, noticed the unpredictability of the weather, the outbreak of plague, and the incidence of dearth. These environmental crises had an impact upon the price of grain, whose fluctuations determined the quality and quantity of bread that townspeople could consume.[74]

The Coventry annals, a sequence of town chronicles written between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, fastidiously monitored the rise and fall of grain

prices. In the first annal, we learn of the mayoralty of John Michell, in the 1430s: 'That ȝer was þ^{e} strykes made lesse'.[75] The strike was a dry measure for grain, similar to a bushel. Subsequent chronicles tracked the prices of grain and other foodstuffs, not quite methodically, but certainly regularly. The mayoralty of John Scarbrough in the 1380s was remembered *because* it was a year that wheat was very expensive: 'Then was y^{e} first dear year. Wheat sold at 3$^{s.}$ 4$^{d.}$ per strike'. Another annalist recorded that Scarborough's year in office was 'A Dear year for Corn'; 'it was Sold for 4$^{s.}$ 0$^{d.}$ & 4$^{s.}$ 6$^{d.}$ A streicke'.[76] There was awareness, too, of prices elsewhere. During Nicholas Dudley's mayoralty in the early years of the fifteenth century, there was 'A great Dearth of Corn', and 'corn sold at London for 16s. a 4ter [quarter]'.[77] A quarter was a grain measure, consisting of eight strikes (or bushels). In William Carver's time as mayor of Coventry, in the late 1430s, there was 'a great dearth of Corne', and 'wheat' was 'sold for 3$^{s.}$ per Bushel', 'malt' for '13$^{s.}$ per 4ter', and 'oats' at '8$^{d.}$ per bushel'. These prices 'caused men to make bread of Beanes, pease & Barley'.[78] Several of the annals recollected the 'great debate' between the mayor and the bakers of Coventry in the 1480s, when the mayor tried to stabilise the price of grain and the bakers retaliated by taking refuge at Baginton Castle, four miles south of the city, in Warwickshire.[79] Although they had not committed any violence, the bakers had perpetrated nothing less than a 'riotte', according to the memorandum in the city's civic register. In going on strike, the bakers had left 'þ^{e} seid Cite destitute of bred'.[80] In these circumstances, what could civic officials do?

Governing elites of towns could set prices and impose price controls on grain.[81] The mayoralty of Richard Stoke in the 1350s was memorable in Coventry not only because 'He laid the first stone at the Newgate and there began the Town Wall', but because 'He also obtained the good strikes'.[82] The construction of walls and the fixing

of grain prices: both were symbols of order and the foundation of a town's security. Food supply, however, was much harder to manipulate, since all towns were reliant on imports of food, even the Italian cities with their rural districts (*contadi*).[83] Some towns, such as Ghent, established a grain staple for the buying and selling of grain imports, while others built granaries, storehouses for the collection and preservation of grain, which would be called upon in times of need.[84] Public granaries appeared in the Tuscan cities of San Gimignano and Florence in the second half of the thirteenth century, and London had a communally-owned granary from the second decade of the fifteenth century, when the city bought the Leadenhall estate and developed a new building at Cornhill, one of the city's main marketplaces, to serve as a 'common garner'.[85] More often, in periods of scarcity, a mixture of civic charity, public duty, and fear of social disorder impelled urban elites to act. All three factors were at play in Norwich in the 1520s and early 1530s.

Exposed to the recurrent weight of national taxation, Norwich's inhabitants, like those in Coventry, were also susceptible to food scarcity.[86] The mayor and aldermen of Norwich were far from united on what they should do *and* on what they were capable of doing. The account of a meeting in March 1522 of the mayor and aldermen, whose members 'agreed' on a course of action, is full of erasures and interlineations.[87] The initial decision, that 'euery alderman' should 'prouyde and bye' 20 combs of wheat, which were 'to be brought in to the Citie … to serue the people duellyng in the same Citie', was substituted by the commitment to 'paye' an unnamed individual 'to bye … for euery of the said alderman' 20 combs of wheat, the equivalent of 80 bushels. Despite the penalty of 20s. for each alderman who defaulted, a number of aldermen did not respond at all. Against the name of one alderman was the word 'nothing' ('*nichil*'), while there were blank spaces beside the names of another five aldermen. Seditious

words spoken about the mayor in the city's marketplace in May 1523 by a Norwich butcher reflected social tensions about the supply of food.[88]

1527, however, was the first crisis year. In late September 1527 the mayor and aldermen met to discuss food shortages. This time, they turned to five private contractors, among them a Norwich mercer and three of the city's grocers, with one of whom they negotiated the regular delivery of wheat to the city's marketplace on a weekly basis, for a fixed price.[89] At the same time, the mayor and nine of the aldermen made an assessment on themselves for 100 quarters of wheat 'to be boute [i.e. bought] for the comon weale'.[90] In the first and third weeks of December, the mayor and aldermen made new terms with two of the contractors. One undertook to supply wheat, so 'that it may be sold in the said market' for 20d. per bushel.[91] On 31 December 1527 the 'whole council' decreed that two of the aldermen (two of the original private contractors) should bring before Easter 1528 60 combs of wheat and 60 combs of malt into the Norwich marketplace, on the usual market days. They were also to supply the same quantities of wheat and malt before the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, on 24 June.[92] This benevolence did not stop people talking about the sincerity, expedience, and limits of their rulers' public-spiritedness. *Where* they chose to do so is as instructive as *what* they said.

The location in 1529 was the home. An alderman came before a meeting of the mayor and aldermen at the beginning of October 1529 to say that he was 'in the hous of [blank] Thakker wedowe', when 'he herd ther that one Thurkeld shomaker saye that he herde Cotes and Spirlyng Carpenter saye' that one of the city's aldermen, acting through 'dyuers deputies', had 'bought' in the marketplace on that day 10 or 11 combs by the bushel and half bushel, and that he had paid 14d. for every bushel.[93] This alderman, the grocer Robert Jannys, was accused of monopolising the market and of

artificially raising the price of grain. The amount purchased was far in excess of the requirements of the alderman's own household; he can have bought the grain only to make a profit. Frustrated by such exiguous evidence, which was no more than hearsay, the mayor and aldermen struggled to verify who had said what, to whom, and where. 'Cotes' was James Cootes, a resident of Ber Street and a common councillor for Conesford since his election in 1526.[94] Perhaps he had heard a rumour about the alderman at a meeting of the city's common assembly. Confusingly – for us, and for Norwich's rulers – four men *instead* told the mayor and aldermen that they were at a sawyer's house when one John Wright of Norwich, a carpenter, 'seieth the wordes aforeseid'.[95] Yet it cannot be a coincidence that the home of the unnamed widow would be a site of political agitation once more, in 1532.

1532 was the second crisis year. The mayor and aldermen foresaw public disorder. In February 1532 they carried out an audit of all the 'greynes' throughout the walled city, north and south of the river Wensum.[96] In the same month, a Norwich mercer 'agreed' to bring to the marketplace 60 combs of wheat, which his servants would sell under the market price ('vnder the market') every Saturday in instalments of 10 combs. In the minds of Norwich's aldermanic elite, food security was the substance and sustenance of the city's autonomy, which occasionally had to be reinforced in stone. At the beginning of April, two newly-elected aldermen each paid money 'to be expendid vpon y^{e} walles wher y^{e} [i.e. they] be aldermen'. In May and June 1532, two citizens, one a grocer, each 'graunted' that they would sell weekly consignments of wheat in the city's marketplace, at the going rate ('as the price gooeth', 'after the price of the market'). On the weekend of 20 and 21 July 1532, the time of the week when supplies of grain typically came into the city, there was an 'insurreccion' in the market: in the official record, an insurrection 'within the Citie of Norwich of women'.[97]

The summary of this insurrection, enrolled by the town clerk in the records of the mayor's court, was provided in the introduction. To this outline, we can add now information in the depositions of two of the women examined under oath by the mayor and aldermen in August 1532.[98] Elizabeth Barret, a widow, explained that on Saturday 20 July she happened to be by the market cross, where she saw the servant of 'one Hede' beat a woman for measuring corn. 'Hede' was almost certainly the William Hede who earlier in the year had negotiated with the mayor and aldermen to sell wheat in the marketplace. Elizabeth did not know the woman, who was 'a stranger', but 'haveng pitie of the woman', she went to her aid and 'bete the seid servaunt'. Her feelings roused by the sight of another's suffering, Elizabeth's compassion was all that we might suppose from gender ideologies, which rendered women empathetic and emotional, as peacemakers and intercessors. Less predictably, she matched the (male?) servant's assault with violence of her own. When she returned to the marketplace, she saw 'one moder [i.e. mother] Perne and other women' come into the market with a cart carrying sacks of wheat, which were then placed 'upon an hepe' by the market cross. Once the wheat had been unloaded, after 'moche wordes ther wer emonges', the women 'agreed' how they would sell it and at what price. Elizabeth herself spread out the sacks of wheat for public sale at the cross, and she, and other named women, proceeded to sell measures of wheat. After which, Elizabeth and four others 'drank to geder at Thomas Sylam', perhaps the name of the owner of an alehouse or a householder.[99] Habits of female socialisation, in which women drank with female friends and associates, without men, might be condemned in contemporary texts such as the fifteenth-century ballad known as 'Wives at the Tavern', or else 'The Gossips Gathering'.[100] However, in drinking together in July 1532, the women in Norwich were sealing a social bond.

The map of Norwich enables us to document and to trace the women's movements through the public spaces of the city, between its quays, its market, and its houses. Through the women's actions, these spaces had meaning *and* created meaning. The women's collective actions transcended, yet combined, households, re-forming and reforming the concept of the city as a collection of houses, and households. Agnes Haddon, another Norwich deponent, stated that after she had bought some of the wheat, she 'departed home to hir house'. It was here, after lunch on the following day, that she was visited by a small group of women: a Joan Norton of the Norwich parish of St Stephen, another unnamed person of the same parish, and one of the women who had sold wheat the day before. From Agnes's house, this party then went to the house of another of the female associates. At 'Oldeman house in Conesford', the visitors spoke to Oldeman's wife, one Agnes Oldeman, to ask what they should do with all the money they had collected from the sale of wheat. The insurrection was neither made in, nor mobilised through, the craft guild or craft hall but the household.

To say that the household was a resource, however, suggests that the Norwich rebels of 1532 reached only for what was available to them. The household *was* politicised, not because it was the only permissible space in which women could gather, but because the conflict was *about* the household. What was at stake was not only its economic survival, but the location and exercise of authority within and without the urban household. When Agnes Haddon and others went to Oldeman's house in Conesford, they found 'Oldeman at home and hys wiff also'; there they asked 'Oldeman wiff before her seid husbond' to whom they should deliver 'the money for the whete'. It was then that the husband interjected ('And Oldeman hym self seyd') to give his opinion: they should hand the money over to the city's mayor. He also rebuked them for what had transpired in the marketplace the day before: 'Ye are to blame and dede nat

well in selling the seid whete.' However, the women continued to talk for several hours, until after evensong, Agnes Haddon said under examination. Even before a court of law, the deponents did not pretend that they had acted at their husbands' command. The law, too, acknowledged their separate public, legal identity. The 12 women registered as the 'principall offenders' in the Norwich insurrection were charged in their own right; the authorities were careful to record their first and second names accurately and corrected mistakes.[101] The women were not represented by men, whether a father or a husband, accountable and liable for their misconduct. Sentenced to be whipped publicly around the marketplace, six of the women also paid a fine for their offence, one of whom, Alianora Yong, was excused for ill health ('*quia infirma*'). The urban household was a political space, where the system of power relations was unstable and contestable.

What we catch sight of in the events in Norwich in the later 1520s and early 1530s is something more precarious, fluid, and pragmatic than the rigidity of the concept of gender hierarchies, the gendered division of labour, or the notion of separate spheres. On Sunday 21 July 1532, the day after the scenes in the marketplace, James Cootes reportedly said to a butcher and two other men in the house of Thakker's widow on Ber Street: 'iff my wiff woll nat goo forth with the women surely I will despleace her for the same and he that shall hurte my wiff for the same doyng shall hurte'.[102] Cootes's words implied the probability of further collective action; but, more tellingly, they are a window on to the gendered dynamics of the family and relations between husbands and wives. The promise to defend his wife if she should come to any physical harm, an injury that he believed would be inflicted by a man ('he that shall hurte my wiff'), was not a chivalric act on behalf of the weaker sex. Cootes's words did not invoke female honour or reputation. They were straightforwardly direct; violence would be met with violence. If the correlation between physical action and reaction was characteristic of

male aggression, it was not a male prerogative, as Elizabeth Barret's deposition showed.[103] Cootes's contention that he would be displeased if his wife did not join 'the women' did not curtail her capacity for self-determination. In the end, it was her choice whether she would 'goo forth' with the other women.

This autonomy extended to other protagonists. From the evidence of five depositions and an untitled list among a bundle of miscellaneous court records, we have the names of around 40 women who took part in the Norwich insurrection.[104] After the discussion in Oldeman's house that did not finish until after evensong, 'one Skynner wiff of Coslany', a woman 'which had iij children at a burden', and nine or ten 'more women onknowen' met Agnes Haddon and the other women who had assembled in Oldeman's house.[105] They told Agnes and her associates, 'Ther ben women in the Hall for sellyng y^{e} whete late [i.e. let] us goo and helpe them out.' The 'Hall' was the Guildhall, Norwich's town hall and the seat of magisterial authority, immediately adjacent to the marketplace (see map). Agnes and her companions declined, with the profession that they would 'no furder medill'. Participation, therefore, was a choice, whose beginning and ending were not scripted.

This agency should not be confused with the argument that women knowingly made 'frequent use' of a 'gendered identity' in 'protests over food, access to land and taxation'.[106] Although not the intention, the emphasis on women's domestic duties undermines the point that it wishes to make. It accepts a patriarchal ideology that encased women's lives and functions within the household and the family.

What was the household, and who represented the household publicly? Was it the male head of the household, or was it the wife, mother, and widow, who were consumers, buyers, and sellers?[107] Did it have to be one person, or could it be several? When, in 1523, the mayor and aldermen of Coventry commissioned a local census to

calculate the amount of grain needed to feed the city, they discovered two things that privately they may have known already: that there were 20% more women than men living in the city; and that comparatively few of the households, it turned out, actually fit the model of a married couple with children and servants and more of which were single-person households.[108] In Norwich, in 1532, three married couples were among the insurgents, who otherwise consisted entirely of women.[109] In Norwich the house of the widow of Robert Thakker in Ber Street was an enduring, or at least recurrent, place of gathering and conversation. A house that received a stream of visitors became, however fleetingly, a public space. Agnes Haddon's statement began by contextualising her external movements, to and from the home: 'as she went homeward from market'. The women, some widows and heads of households ('Mother Perryll'), others wives, lived in dispersed areas of the city, which are highlighted on the map: from Ber Street and Conesford in the south, to St Stephen and St Giles in the west, to Coslany north of the river.[110] Shared experiences of home, household, and family created multiple configurations of female solidarity, which disturbed the normative hierarchies between men and women, challenged male control of the female body, and cut across the occupational sub-groups of organised, male labour. The insurrectionaries came from households of carpenters, shearmen, fishermen, worsted weavers, watermen, butchers, and tanners.[111]

In 1532 groups of women distributed and sold grain in the marketplace; they drank and talked together; and paid visits to each other's houses. These activities displaced loyalties to neighbourhood and parish. How did Elizabeth Barret know that the wheat unloaded in the market came 'from Conesford', the south-eastern area of the walled city next to the river Wensum? Along the banks of the river, in Conesford, were

the city's most important wharves and the city's common staithe (see map). This was a wider conspiracy, which started with the appropriation of grain as it entered the city.

In Norwich, in 1532, household fears around food provision *did* motivate the women who led and who joined the 'insurreccion', but the protection of the household and the family's subsistence needs were inseparable from larger, and no less pressing, issues. How legitimate was a government that could not feed its subjects and give them their daily bread? Robert Palmer, whose malt the women took and carried from Conesford to the marketplace, was a mercer, whom the mayor and aldermen had commissioned to bring wheat to the city's market in February 1532.[112] Despite the deals struck with some of the city's merchants, there was cause to doubt their integrity when members of the urban elite, such as the Norwich mercer and citizen John Parys, applied successfully for a royal licence to export grain through the port of Great Yarmouth at the same time.[113] Around Christmas 1527, according to a Norwich writer, 'the commons of the Cytte wer redy to ryse vpon the ryche men' because of the scarcity of corn.[114] Robert Jannys's extraordinary wealth made him the object of allegations of financial malpractice and political fixing. In 1525 Jannys was taxed on movable goods valued at 1,425 marks (or £950), for which he paid over £47 towards Norwich's parliamentary subsidy.[115] Examined for the words he reportedly said as he descended the stairs from the council chamber, a common councillor affirmed that 'it was foly' for anyone to 'be called' to the council, since the mayor would 'enforse them to make actes whether they wolle or no'. Behind this abuse of power was the figure of Jannys. The mayor had previously reprimanded the common councillor and another councillor because 'they wold not consent' to 'an acte' of Jannys, which the mayor 'entende to … be enacted'.[116] Suspected of profiteering in 1529, Jannys also had the ear of the city's mayor.

Conversely, if private citizens could act in the room of government, where did authority lie, and to whom did it pertain? In Coventry, Laurence Saunders, the popular champion of the city's common lands, knew the answer. In his public address of August 1494, he cried out: '"Sirs, here [i.e. hear] me! We shall neuer haue oure right"' until we have cut off the heads of three or four of '"thes Churles hedes that rulen vs"'. Saunders's other, more elliptical proclamation was just as menacing. Saunders said that he would force one William Boteler, the son of the city's former chief legal officer, to '"drive his Cart laden with Otes"' into the market area of Cross Cheaping and there unload the cart. Saunders was as good as his word. From the marketplace he declaimed, '"Come, Sirs, & take þis Corn who so wyll as your owne"'. Finally, and 'without auctorite', Saunders ordered Boteler's arrest and imprisonment. In seizing corn, making it freely available, and performing a public service, Saunders was in fact seeking to establish his own civic authority.[117]

In Norwich, the 1532 insurrection was part of an intense period of sustained public confrontation with authority, which ranged from individual acts of disobedience to riots and obstruction, and which involved men and women. Many of these actions, there is no doubt, were committed specifically by men.

We can usefully discern the lineaments of a distinctly male citizenship. This was a formal citizenship of rights and duties *and* a masculinity of public display: assertive, insistent, competitive, and quick to right perceived wrongs among one's community of male peers.[118] In 1524, for example, a citizen by the name of John Pitman repeatedly refused to pay his tax assessment of 40s. The tax collector in the ward where Pitman lived (St. Stephen's) called upon the services of one of the city's constables to enforce collection, or else to seize Pitman's goods in lieu of payment. In June 1524, Pitman told the tax collector and the constable 'that he hadde not the money' and locked himself in

his house to prevent the process of distraint. The civic officials having 'entred his hous & sperd his dorez', Pitman said that they should not take his property, nor 'the meier neyther if he wer ther'.[119] The jurors appointed in February and April 1527 'to enquere vpon' certain 'Riottes', which occurred in February 1527, were just as headstrong. These riots are known to us only because the jurors refused to co-operate with the mayor's and aldermen's inquiries. The jurors' insubordination was a repudiation of the peculiar blend of trust, mutuality, and deference demanded of urban citizens. Many of the two panels of jurors, the second commissioned perhaps because of the recalcitrance of the first, did not swear their oath. They submitted (though still not all of them) to the order of the mayor and aldermen only in the mayoralty of Edward Rede (1531-32), by which time one of the jurors, the smith Robert Bryan, had died and another 'submytteth hym selfe' in Bryan's place. William Lynnes, a thick woollen weaver, was implacable and affirmed that he 'will swere y^{t} he was foresyke', that is, he did not respect the mayoral command.[120] The collective withdrawal of labour was a strike in all but name. Like voting or the holding of office, it was a form of politics that did not include women. On 3 August 1532, two weeks after the insurrection, a Norwich goldsmith faced the city's justices of the peace for certain words that he had uttered about the penalty of a whipping around the marketplace for the 12 female leaders: 'iff his voiss shuld suffer like payn it shuld greve hym to suffer it'.[121] The fact that he, too, found himself before the authorities, does not alter the insight offered by his self-awareness: a male citizen, he believed that he was entitled to speak publicly and could not envisage a situation in which the expression of his own opinions in the public sphere were punishable.

Yet what is striking is that in Norwich the female protagonists behaved, visibly and audibly, as citizens *and* as councillors. At the market cross, women assembled and

debated the best course of action, before they arrived at an agreement. In the marketplace, in a house in Conesford, in a street outside the town hall, they repeatedly made their own decisions. They made decisions for themselves, and their households, but also, critically, on behalf of others: not exclusively other women, but a larger group of consumers. Their deliberations recall the official practices of town council meetings, in which male citizens prized the freedom to speak and were content to disagree, so long as the variance of opinions led, in the end, to consensus.[122] What they did, and how they conducted themselves in 1532, was not a direct extension of women's domestic role, which granted them a momentary dispensation or 'special licence' to be political.[123] What unfolded in 1532, both in words and deeds, in locations both public and private, happened only because of the common coordinates of town politics – household, citizen, and city – which gave women political agency.

We should not exaggerate the group cohesion of the women in 1532. They did not speak with one voice; there were divergent views.[124] Agnes Oldeman, Agnes Haddon, and others told the group of women, whom Agnes Haddon did not recognise, that they would take no further part. Women's lives, just like men's lives, were shaped by various social forces: from the bonds of family and household, legitimised and destabilised by assumptions and practices of gender, to the formation of class. At the time of the insurrection, Agnes Oldeman's husband, Henry, was a common councillor, whose taxable wealth of £10 in 1525 placed the household comfortably within the middle stratum of Norwich society.[125] Another participant, however, was the wife of a musician (a taborer).[126] At least eight of the wives lived in the ward of South Conesford, where their husbands were taxed in the 1525 subsidy: four, Henry Estrowe, William Buntyng, Robert Grigges, and John Warnys, were wage-earners and, with an annual wage of around 20s., paid the minimum rate of fourpence; Reginald Grey and Roger

Hede had movable goods worth 40s. and paid a higher rate of tax, as did William Horne, whose goods were valued at £8, and Henry Oldeman.[127] Pre-existing economic inequalities, and comparative socio-economic position, made the experience of poverty uneven between households. The intersection between gender and class generated different levels of agency. Being political was a mixture of capacity, necessity, and intention, but some people *wanted* and others *needed* to be politically active.

In bringing grain to the public market, in deciding on their own prices contrary to the mayor's, and in selling the grain from the market cross, a place of official proclamation and law making, the Norwich rebels in 1532 had a message for the city's mayor and aldermen: satisfaction of the common good was grounded not only in what happened in the town hall but in the daily, socio-economic life of the community.

Conclusion

In the introduction, I wrote that current models of urban politics, caught between narratives of democratisation and oligarchisation, cannot explain the insurrection of women in Norwich in 1532. Meanwhile, seminal studies of women's participation in food riots and enclosure riots in early modern England tell us more about popular politics than urban politics. In the first two parts of the article, I suggested that we need a new way in which to approach and to analyse the 1532 episode. The events in Norwich, explored in the third section, force us, in turn, to rethink the framework of town politics.

In conclusion, this article does not present a new social history of the late medieval town, but it does argue that the urban household can help us to reconfigure politics and to write a social history of town politics, which means looking again at the roots, nature, and location of political action. Historians have paid too much attention to

the working people of the crafts and to the venues of male power. These histories privilege the confluence of urban citizenship and membership of the urban craft guild.[128] The ascent of the crafts, their revolts against urban patricians, and their incarnation as 'political guilds' (*politische Zünfte*), are still key features of a political history of German towns that pits the town council (*Rat*) against the urban citizenry (*Gemeinde*), or else seeks to explain their congruence and interdependence.[129] Revolt in the cities of the southern Low Countries, on which there has been so much excellent recent research, appears the result of the mobilisation, armed power, and historical memory, of the urban craft guilds.[130] Behind these historiographical traditions is a series of venerable suppositions: that politics is a public activity; that town politics is a politics of formal political participation; and that the public/private dichotomy barred women from urban politics. We have a town politics that is constitutional not political, in which the stakes of politics are properly speaking the making and unmaking of urban constitutions.

Urban citizenship did structure urban political life, I argue, but not in the ways in which I and other historians have previously proposed. Citizenship has usually been defined in strictly legal and/or narrowly political terms. It was both a formal right and an official duty, a conduit of political participation and the foundation of good governance. It was also, it is generally agreed, an entitlement afforded only some people within urban society. Most urban inhabitants were never citizens. Citizens were a privileged minority: male, middle class (or, at least, from the middle strata of urban society), and professional (that is, belonging to a craft and pursuing a trade). It was from this social constituency that an even smaller group of townspeople, variously described as merchants, patricians, or oligarchs, were active citizens. As electors and voters,

officers and councillors, they were active politically and their activities were underwritten by the swearing of oaths.

In the same way in which medievalists have recast law as both a social and a highly localised phenomenon, the product of ordinary people's equally ordinary, everyday legal activities and engagements, urban citizenship was fundamentally social and performative.[131] The important thing is not that so many townspeople, in any town and at any one point, were living, working, and existing outside the civic franchise as to make citizenship irrelevant, but that so many people were keeping shop and trading *as if they were* citizens. In a continuous run of indictments from the mid-1460s to the early 1480s, the juries of Portsoken ward, close to the Tower of London, habitually reported individuals every year who were 'occupyeng as a freman' when they were not citizens.[132] Men and women separately and together, as married couples, were accused: they were charged with being neither a 'freman' and 'frewoman' nor 'frefolke'.[133] Citizenship was obtained by the few, but it was 'done' by the many. Townspeople could act like citizens and assert a type of citizenship even when they had not sworn an oath. The Middle English verb 'occupien' had several, related meanings: to take the place of something or someone; to practise a trade or craft; to hold an office or a seat, as in a council.[134] None of those indicted in the London ward of Portsoken did hold office, but the slippage is revealing of the different senses, or shades of citizenship, which make it difficult to detach economic from political citizenship.

The boundary between the *acquisition* of citizenship and the day-to-day *practice* of citizenship was porous because of the ties between the household and the citizen, which were at once fluid yet durable. They were *fluid* because a citizen was almost always a householder and the keeping of a well-ruled household was a civic ideal, yet there was no one kind of household, the composition of the household was never stable,

and all householders were not formally citizens. They were *durable* because, while membership of a craft came to define a citizen's status, it was never the sole criterion or even principal characteristic. What persisted was the connection between property and citizenship, or, rather, the overlapping identity of citizen and householder. The terms 'householder' and 'citizen' remained equivalences. In Coventry they were synonymous and interchangeable into the sixteenth century.[135] If the relationship between the household and citizenship was not an exact correspondence, it was close enough for many more townspeople than the names of citizens enrolled in official lists of urban freemen to access citizenship, which was a complex bundle of rights.

As single women, as wives, and as widows, women constituted their own households, headed households, and managed households. Real urban households were not, whatever town councils might hope, complicit and co-operative units of town government. They were political because actual household structures and household relations were a good deal more complicated than the normative hierarchies of power. Women did not take part in urban government, occupy positions of civic authority, or have a voice in the public politics of voting and office holding, but the politics of the household, where women did have rights and responsibilities, was not divorced from the forms of male-centred politics with which we are familiar.

Agnes Oldeman, who ignored her husband's rebuke in 1532, was not the only member of her family with a rebellious streak. Her son John was a supporter of Robert Kett and one of the Norwich rebels in Kett's camp on Mousehold Heath in 1549. Twice in 1550 he was prosecuted by the mayor and aldermen of Norwich for uttering seditious words that threatened the possibility of a second uprising.[136] When Henry (Harry) Oldeman, who was John's father and Agnes's husband, made his will in 1553, he disinherited John in favour of his daughter, another Agnes like her mother.[137] Harry, a

long-time common councillor for the ward of Conesford, gave his son £10, but only in increments of 20s. a year and on condition that he neither vex nor trouble his wife and daughter. He feared that John would contest the will and he appointed a fellow citizen and Norwich alderman as the supervisor, to 'stonde by' his wife. Harry's wife, who was the sole named executor, was treated more generously; Harry was a freshwater fisherman and he left to her his boats, nets, and other fishing gear. However, it was his daughter Agnes who fared best. Harry's wife was to live in the family home after his death, but only until his daughter reached the age of 21, when the home would become hers and his wife had to move out. We cannot be sure that Harry was still angry with his wife because of her leading role in 1532, but it is tantalising to think that Oldeman's household was a nursery of radical politics and that it was from Agnes, his mother, that John inherited his understanding of citizenship.

If we focus on the urban household, rather than the urban craft guild, a new picture of town politics begins to materialise. This was a town politics that cannot be restricted to a set of binaries: the constitutional relationship between town councils and enfranchised citizens; the formal, institutional balance of power between oligarchs and commons; the tensions between guildsmen and patricians over the allocation of council representation; or even the social and political division between artisans and merchants. It was a politics inflected by the politics of everyday life.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Emma Hamlett, Rachael Harkes, Shannon McSheffrey, and Andy Wood for their comments on earlier versions of this article and the anonymous readers for their insightful questions and helpful suggestions.

References

[1] Norfolk Record Office [NRO], NCR, 16a/2, 269. We know, from Agnes Oldeman's deposition, that one cart of wheat had belonged to John Rase, while a cart of malt had been Robert Palmer's: NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[2] A much-cited article is S. Federico, 'The Imaginary Society: women in 1381', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), 159-83. More recent work includes J. Haemers and C. Delameillieure, 'Women and contentious speech in fifteenth-century Brabant', *Continuity and Change*, 32 (2017), 323-47.
[3] S. Cohn Jr., 'Women and Revolt in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in J. Firnhaber-Baker and D. Schoenaers (eds), *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt* (Abingdon, 2017), 208-19.
[4] A. Raw, 'Gender and Protest in Late Medieval England, *c.*1400–*c.*1532', *English Historical Review*, 136 (2021), 1159.
[5] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), 63; E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), 76-136.
[6] J. Stevenson, 'The "Moral Economy" of the English Crowd: myth and reality', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), 232.
[7] A. Shepard, 'Provision, Household Management and the Moral Authority of Wives and Mothers in Early Modern England', in M.J. Braddick and P. Withington (eds), *Popular Culture and Political Agency in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Woodbridge, 2017), 73-6.
[8] For this second point, see N.Z. Davis, 'Women on Top', in N.Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford, 1975), 146.
[9] The seminal study is J. Walter, 'Grain Riots and Popular Attitudes to the Law: Maldon and the crisis of 1629', in J. Brewer and J. Styles (eds), *An Ungovernable People: The English and their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1980), 47-84.
[10] J. Walter, 'Public transcripts, popular agency and the politics of subsistence in early modern England', in J. Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), 196-222.
[11] N. Whyte, 'Custodians of Memory: women and custom in rural England *c.* 1550–1700', *Cultural and Social History*, 8 (2011), 153-73.
[12] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, *sub* 'insurrectio' and 'insurrector'; *Middle English Dictionary*, *sub* 'insurreccion'.
[13] See, for example, references in the parliaments of November 1381, October 1382, February 1383, October 1383: *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275–1504*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (16 vols., Woodbridge, 2005), VI, 214-15, 223-4, 227, 284, 288, 315, 324-5.
[14] H. Pirenne, *Belgian Democracy: Its Early History*, transl. J.V. Saunders (Manchester, 1915), which later appeared in a new edition that had a more accurate translation of the original title: *Early Democracies in the Low Countries: Urban Society and Political Conflict in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York, 1963); M. Weber, *The City*, transl. and ed. D. Martindale and G. Neuwirth (London, 1958).
[15] On Castile, see M.Á. Ladero Quesada, 'Lignages, *bandos* et partis dans la vie politique des villes castillanes (XIV^{e}–XV^{e} siècles), in M. Rigal (ed), *Les sociétés urbaines en France méridionale et en péninsule ibérique au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1991), 107-9.
[16] See, for example, T. Dutour, 'Le consensus des bonnes gens. La participation des habitants aux affaires communes dans quelques villes de la langue d'oïl (XIII^{e}–XV^{e} siècle)', in P. Hamon and C. Laurent (eds), *Le pouvoir municipal de la fin du Moyen Âge à 1789* (Rennes, 2012), 199-202.
[17] For a very useful account of their changing influence on German scholarship, see G. Dilcher, 'Max Webers Stadt und die historische Stadtforschung der Mediävistik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 267 (1998), 109-13. On Pirenne, see M. Boone, *A la recherche d'une modernité civique: La société urbaine des anciens Pays-Bas au bas Moyen Age* (Brussels, 2010).
[18] M. Prak, *Citizens without Nations: Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World c.1000–1789* (Cambridge, 2018), 3.
[19] Prak, *Citizens without Nations*, 5.
[20] C.D. Liddy and J. Haemers, 'Popular Politics in the Late Medieval City: York and Bruges', *English Historical Review*, 128 (2013), 771-805; C.D. Liddy, *Contesting the City: the politics of citizenship in English towns, 1250–1530* (Oxford, 2017).
[21] On urban elections and the right to vote, see the various contributions in part two of S. Ferente *et al.* (eds), *Cultures of Voting in Pre-Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2018).
[22] G. Albini, '"Civitas tunc quiescit et fulget cum pollentium numero decoratur". Le concessioni di cittadinanza in éta viscontea tra pratiche e linguaggi politici', in A. Gamberini, J.-P. Genet, and A. Zorzi (eds), *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th–17th Centuries* (Rome, 2011), 97-8.

[23] W. Ebel, *Der Bürgereid als Geltungsgrund und Gestaltungsprinzip des deutschen mittelalterlichen Stadtrechts* (Weimar, 1958); G. Dilcher, 'Bürgerrecht und Bürgereid als städtische Verfassungstruktur', in R.C. Schwinges (ed), *Neubürger im späten Mittelalter. Migration und Austausch in der Städtelandschaft des alten Reiches (1250–1550)* (Berlin, 2002), 83-97.
[24] K. Arnold, 'Frauen in den mittelalterliche Hansestädten. Hamburg, Lübeck und Lüneburg - eine Annäherung an die Realität', in B. Vogel and U. Weckel (eds), *Frauen in der Ständegesellschaft. Leben und Arbeiten in der Stadt vom spätmittelalter bis zur Neuzeit* (Hamburg, 1991), 73.
[25] W. Blockmans, 'Exclusive Citizenship in Preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Urban History*, 47 (2021), 893-98.
[26] *The Little Red Book of Bristol*, ed. F.B. Bickley (2 vols., Bristol, 1900), II, 48.
[27] *The Great Red Book of Bristol, Vol. 3*, ed. E.W.W. Veale (Bristol Record Society, 8, 1938), 50.
[28] M. Vallerani, 'La cittadinanza pragmatica. Attribuzione e limitazione della civilitas nei comuni italiani fra XIII e XV secolo', in S. Menzinger (ed), *Cittadinanze medievali. Dinamiche di appartenenza a un corpo comunitario* (Rome, 2017), 110-11, 122-3.
[29] For a randomly chosen period, 1431-44: NRO, Y/C 4/140, mm. 13^{d}-14^{d}; /141, mm. 12^{d}-13^{r}; /142, mm. 14^{r}, 15^{r-d}; /143, 13^{r}, 14^{r-d}; /144, m. 12^{d}; /145, m. 13^{r}; /146, mm. 13^{r}-14^{r}; /147, m. 16^{r-d}; /148, mm. 19^{r}-20^{r}; /151, m. 8^{r-d}.
[30] NRO, Y/C 4/154, m. 18^{r}; /156, mm. 10^{r}, 11^{r}. My emphasis.
[31] NRO, Y/C 4/171, m. 18^{d}. My emphasis.
[32] Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: literature and law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, 1999), 2.
[33] The statute is quoted in Vallerani, 'La cittadinanza pragmatica', 113. We see in this example
[34] On 'good' and 'bad' citizenship, see C.D. Liddy, '"Sir ye be not kyng": citizenship and speech in late medieval and early modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 60 (2017), 592; A. Brown, 'Medieval Citizenship: Bruges in the later Middle Ages', in A. Brown and J. Griffiths (eds), *The Citizen: past and present* (Auckland, 2017), 107.
[35] C. Obradors Suazo, 'Making the Citizen, Building the Citizenry: family and citizenship in fifteenth-century Barcelona', in A. van Steensel and J. Colson (eds), *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2017), 25.
[36] K.G. Szende, 'Some Aspects of Urban Landownership in Western Hungary', in F.-E. Eliassen and G.A. Ersland (eds), *Power, Profit and Urban Land: landownership in medieval and early modern Northern European Towns* (Aldershot, 1996), 147.
[37] Coventry Record Office [CRO], BA/F/10/4/3. See also *The Coventry Leet Book*, ed. M.D. Harris (Early English Text Society, 134-146, 1907-1913), 510.
[38] Dutour, 'Le consensus des bonnes gens', 193.
[39] S. Cerutti, R. Descimon, and M. Prak, 'Cittadinanze: premessa', *Quaderni storici*, 30 (1995), 283.
[40] M. Scheutz, 'Bürger und Bürgerrecht. Rechte, Pflichten und soziale Felder der mittelalterlichen und neuzeitlichen Bürger im Heiligen Römischen Reich', in Elisabeth Gruber *et al.* (eds), *Städte im lateinischen Westen und im griechischen Osten zwischen Spätantike und Früher Neuzeit. Topographie - Recht - Religion* (Vienna, 2016), 142.
[41] Walsall Archives, 277/238, m. 1^{r}.
[42] Liddy, *Contesting the City*, 207-8; C.R. Friedrichs, 'House-Destruction as a Ritual of Punishment in Early Modern Europe', *European History Quarterly*, 50 (2020), 618-20.
[43] S. Cerutti, 'Giustizia e località a Torino in età moderna: una ricerca in corso', *Quaderni storici*, 30 (1995), 445-6.
[44] On the concept of *Gästerecht*: Scheutz, 'Bürger und Bürgerrecht', 141.
[45] For an interdisciplinary perspective, see the contributions to Sarah Rees Jones *et al.*, 'The later medieval English urban household', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), 112-58.
[46] For example, S. Rees Jones, *York: The Making of a City, 1068–1350* (Oxford, 2013), ch. 6.
[47] S. McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), ch. 6; P. Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Medieval Norwich* (London, 2004), 189-212; S. Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government in the Later Middle Ages', in M. Carlier and T. Soens (eds), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities: Italy and Northwestern Europe compared* (Leuven, 2001), 71-88.
[48] K.L. French, *Household Goods and Good Households in Late Medieval London: Consumption and Domesticity After the Plague* (Philadelphia, PA, 2021), especially ch. 4.
[49] For example, C.M. Barron, 'Introduction: the widow's world in later medieval London', in C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton (eds), *Medieval London Widows, 1300–1500* (London, 1994), xiii-xxxiv.

[50] P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Coventry's "Lollard" programme of 1492 and the making of Utopia', in S. Rees Jones and R. Horrox (eds), *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideals and Communities, 1200–1630* (Cambridge, 2001), 97-116.
[51] *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1868), 609-12. I would like to thank Manos Chatziathanasiou for bringing this reference to my attention.
[52] M. Howell, 'From Land to Love: commerce and marriage in Northern Europe during the late Middle Ages', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis*, 10 (2007), 216-53; M. Howell, 'Merchant Masculinity in Early Modern Northern Europe', *Cultural and Social History*, 18 (2021), 275-96.
[53] K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (New edn, London, 2003), 98-101.
[54] London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CC/01/01/003, fo. 115[r].
[55] I take this term from N. Tadmor, 'The concept of the household-family in eighteenth-century England', *Past & Present*, 151 (1996), 111-40.
[56] B. Studer, 'Frauen im Bürgerrecht. Überlegungen zur rechtlichen und sozialen Stellung der Frau in spätmittelalterlichen Städten', in Schwinges (ed), *Neubürger im späten Mittelalter*, 169 n.1.
[57] Walsall Archives, 277/238, m. 1[r]; *Register of the Freemen of the City of York, Vol. 1*, ed. F. Collins (Surtees Society, 96, 1896), 138.
[58] Walsall Archives, 277/238, m. 1[r].
[59] S. Rees Jones, 'Women and Citizenship in later medieval York', in D. Simonton (ed), *The Routledge History Handbook of Gender and the Urban Experience* (Abingdon, 2017), 170-1.
[60] Walsall Archives, 277/238, m. 5[d].
[61] Walsall Archives, 277/238, m. 12[d]./
[62] *Little Red Book*, ed. Bickley, I, 37.
[63] M.C. Howell, 'Citizenship and Gender: women's political status in Northern Medieval Cities', in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA, 1988), 40, 41.
[64] Howell, 'Citizenship and Gender', 37.
[65] The phrase is that of A. Löther, in 'Unpolitische Bürger. Frauen und Partizipation in der vormodernen praktischen Philosophie', in R. Koselleck and K. Schreiner (eds), *Bürgerschaft. Rezeption und Innovation der Begriffslichkeit vom Hohen Mittelalter bis ins 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1994), 239-73.
[66] Studer, 'Frauen im Bürgerrecht', 176-7.
[67] See, for example, K. Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox, and S. Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), 10-46.
[68] L. Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (London, 2012), 29.
[69] Among the now considerable secondary literature on popular politics, Andy Wood's publications stand out. For an early synthesis, see A.Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002).
[70] Liddy and Haemers, 'Popular Politics', 796-8.
[71] P. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London, 1993), plate 46.
[72] The classic article is M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past & Present*, 98 (1983), 3-29.
[73] J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, '"A Bad Chicken was Brooding": subversive speech in late medieval Flanders', *Past & Present*, 214 (2012), 75-6.
[74] J. Davis, 'Baking for the Common Good: a reassessment of the assize of bread in medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 57 (2004), 465-502.
[75] CRO, PA 351/1, 16.
[76] CRO, PA 477/2, 12; PA 478/2, fo. 2[v].
[77] CRO, PA 478/2, fo. 3[r]; PA 477/2, 14.
[78] CRO, PA 477/2, 18. See also PA 1971/1, fo. 4[v].
[79] CRO, PA 477/2, 24; PA, 958/1, fo. 12[v]. See also PA 1971/2, fo. 18[v].
[80] *Coventry Leet Book*, ed. Harris, 519.
[81] G. Dameron, 'Feeding the Medieval Italian City-State: grain, war, and political legitimacy in Tuscany, c. 1150–c. 1350', *Speculum*, 92 (2017), 976-1019.
[82] CRO, PA 477/2, 8.
[83] H. Carrel, 'Food, Drink and Public Order in the London *Liber Albus*', *Urban History*, 33 (2006), 184.
[84] On Ghent, see M. Howell and M. Boone, 'Becoming early modern in the late medieval Low Countries', *Urban History*, 23 (1996), 311-16.
[85] Dameron, 'Feeding the Medieval Italian City-State', 995, 1002; C.M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: government and people, 1200–1500* (Oxford, 2004), 54-5.

[86] For the situation in Coventry, see J.S. Lee, 'Grain Shortages in Late Medieval Towns', in B. Dodds and C.D. Liddy (eds), *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), 63-80. For a survey of urban conditions and responses: B. Sharp, *Famine and Scarcity in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: the regulation of grain marketing, 1256–1631* (Cambridge, 2016), chs. 6-7.
[87] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 138.
[88] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 163.
[89] *Records of the City of Norwich*, ed. W. Hudson and J.C. Tingey (2 vols., Norwich, 1906-10), II, 201; J. L'Estrange, *Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich, from 1317 to 1603* (London, 1888), 58, 63, 64, 120.
[90] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 204.
[91] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 207, 208.
[92] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 210.
[93] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 227. 'Thakker' was Robert Thakker, a shoemaker and citizen, assessed in Ber Street ward on 40s. of movable wealth in the 1523-27 subsidy rolls: L'Estrange, *Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich*, 136; The National Archives [TNA], 179/150/264, m. 2[r]. 'Spirling' was Robert Spirling, a carpenter in the ward of Ber Street, where Thakker's house was located: TNA, 179/150/264, m. 2[r], and 179/150/218, m. 3[r].
[94] TNA, E179/150/218; NRO, NCR, 16d/2, fo. 142[v].
[95] The sawyer, Roger Warde, became a citizen of Norwich in the second year of Henry VIII's reign, while John Wright entered the freedom in the sixteenth year of Henry VIII's reign: L'Estrange, *Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich*, 144, 152.
[96] *Records of the City of Norwich*, ed. Hudson and Tingey, II, 163. For the following references, see NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 258, 260, 263, 265.
[97] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 269.
[98] The two depositions are in NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[99] A John Sylam, perhaps a relation, paid tax to the king in 1523, when he resided in Ber Street: TNA, 179/150/264, m. 2[r].
[100] French, *Household Goods and Good Households*, 148-9.
[101] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 269. Alianora, instead of Agnes, Yong; Anna, rather than Elizabeth, Waryns.
[102] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 268.
[103] On chivalric, or knightly, masculinity: R.M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), ch. 2.
[104] NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[105] The original numbers in the manuscript were six or seven, but they were crossed through: NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 320.
[106] J. Walter, 'Faces in the crowd: gender and age in the early modern English crowd', in H. Berry and E. Foyster (eds), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), 111.
[107] Shepard, 'Provision, Household Management', 78-85.
[108] 'The Numbering of People, 1523', in M.H.M. Hulton (ed), *Coventry and its People in the 1520s* (Dugdale Society, 38, 1999), 128-76. For comment, see C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the urban crisis of the late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), chs. 19, 22.
[109] NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[110] For 'Moder Perryll': NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[111] For some of the occupations: NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[112] NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 258.
[113] TNA, SP 1/66, fo. 167; L'Estrange, *Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich*, 106.
[114] NRO, NCR, 17b, 18; F. Blomefield, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 3* (London, 1806), 198.
[115] TNA, E 179/150/218, m. 7[d].
[116] NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 2, undated).
[117] *Coventry Leet Book*, ed. Harris, 556-7. For the context, see Liddy, *Contesting the City*, 81-4, 153-4. For Boteler, see 'History of Parliament Trust, London, unpublished article on Henry Boteler II / Great Bedwyn and Coventry for the 1461-1504 section by Simon J. Payling'. I am grateful to the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to see this article in draft.
[118] Walter, 'Faces in the crowd', 100-3.
[119] TNA, E 179/150/264, m. 2[d]; NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 173.
[120] NRO, NCR, 17b, 246. For Bryan and Lynnes: L'Estrange, *Calendar of the Freemen of Norwich*, 23, 90.
[121] NRO, NCR, 20a/1, fo. 124[r].

[122] C.D. Liddy, 'Who decides? Urban councils and consensus in the late Middle Ages', *Social History*, 46 (2021), 406-34.
[123] Walter, 'Faces in the crowd', 111-12.
[124] On the danger of reducing women's role in popular politics to a single motive, see Raw, 'Gender and Protest', 1155.
[125] For officeholding: NRO, NCR, 16d/2, fos. 146[r], 154[r], 156[r], 158[r], etc. For socio-economic status: TNA, E 179/150/218, m. 1[r], and J.F. Pound, 'The Social and Trade Structure of Norwich 1525-1575', *Past & Present*, 34 (1966), 50-1.
[126] NRO, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3).
[127] Cf. NRO, NCR, 16a/2, 269, NCR, 11g BOX 1 (bundle 3), and TNA, E 179/150/218, m. 1[r].
[128] For example, B. Eersels and J. Haemers (eds), *Words and Deeds: shaping urban politics from below in late medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2020).
[129] R. Giel, *Politische Öffentlichkeit im spätmittelalterlich-frühneuzeitlichen Köln (1450–1550)* (Berlin, 1998).
[130] A key article, which also set out an agenda for future research, is J. Dumolyn and J. Haemers, 'Patterns of urban rebellion in medieval Flanders', *Journal of Medieval History*, 31 (2005), 369-93.
[131] T. Johnson's *Law in Common: Legal Cultures in Late-Medieval England* (Oxford, 2019) is the most nuanced account of the relationship between law and society.
[132] LMA, COL/AD/05/001, mm. 1-14.
[133] LMA, COL/AD/05/001, mm. 3, 6.
[134] *Middle English Dictionary*, *sub* 'occupien'.
[135] Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, 80.
[136] A. Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), 77, 211, 213.
[137] For this and what follows, see NRO, NCR Will Register Wilkins, fos. 114[r]-115[v].