Masters as Fathers—The Experiences of Apprenticeship in Late Medieval England

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While the basic model of learning masculinity is fathers, how, exactly, a fatherless boy learned masculinity? How and where did the children growing up without traditional family structure learn to be men? This study examines a specific group of children—young apprentices in medieval England—in order to reconstruct how fatherless sons learned the concept of masculinity. To further the question—did the separation of their natal fathers during their youth make boys less masculine? By examining the indentures, court records and various administrative records, this study demonstrates that, apprentices went through more masculine relationships than the children grew up with their fathers’ presence, because masters wielded supreme power which made them de facto “surrogate fathers”. This study also manifests that apprenticeship was the extension of fatherhood, because it led apprentices to experience absolute subordination to their masters, reducing them to the position of “full-dependence” in their social communities.

Keywords: masculinity, apprenticeship, apprentices, surrogate fathers, fatherhood

Introduction

While scholarship concerning the development of masculinity during the Middle Ages has been widely studied over the past 20 years, few scholars have focused on fatherless children such as orphans and boys who grew up without their fathers in daily life.¹ Traditional medieval society recognized the relationship between father and son as the basic mode of transferring masculinity; within the nuclear family, the father was the model of masculinity. How, then, did these children without a traditional family structure learn to be men? How did fatherless sons learn popular medieval conceptions of masculinity? Who or what served as a father figure for a fatherless child?

First, I should briefly encapsulate what constituted masculinity in medieval England. The exercises of power and authority over women, younger men, and men of lower status were the traditional images of a father (Murray, 1999, pp. ix-xx). However, there is no one form of masculinity that is found everywhere because the ideologies of masculinity vary from time, social position, and individual experience. R. W. Connell suggests that “gender roles were understood as patterns of social expectation, norms for the behaviours of men and women, which were transmitted to young people in a process of ‘socialization’” (2000, p. 10). Likewise, Butler argued that masculinity is defined through a cultural process rather than a biological connection to a certain sex.

¹ It is a true shame that I could not list all the brilliant scholars here; therefore, I will just name a few here: David D. Gilmore, Maurray Jacqueline, Maureen C. Miller, Janet L. Nelson, and W. M. Aird.
If socialization is an essential part of forming a masculine identity, a youth’s experience in a social institution will shape his masculine identity.

Most fatherless families were run by a single mother. When a child lost both parents, the city court would assign the wardship of the orphan to the child’s near kinsman. Otherwise, charitable guardians would take over the wardship if this orphan had no near kinsman (Clark, 1990, pp. 168-187). In the countryside, hospitals were established to take care of the sick, the crippled, and orphans. Orphans who were left in the hospitals were raised until the age of seven and were then sent to an apprenticeship in order to guarantee them a future. Besides hospitals, the Church made efforts to keep orphans and abandoned infants alive (Shahar, 1990). In lieu of the father, different people and institutions filled in the position of a father for a fatherless child throughout his childhood.

Many children suffered from the absence of their biological fathers during their formative years. These groups included illegitimate children, orphans, boys in monasteries, apprentices and so on—each category had their own unique relationship to the transmission of medieval masculine mores. The group I will examine in this paper is apprentices, who had not necessarily suffered from the loss of their biological fathers, but detached from their natal families and sent to grow up in another institution—masters’ household. The questions which need to be addressed in this study are as follows. Did the separation from their natal fathers during their youth make boys less masculine? Placed on the lowest status of the social order, how did that influence young apprentices’ acquisition of masculinity?

**Historiography and Sources**

Twenty years ago, Barbara A. Hanawalt perceived that academia paid less attention to the relationship of apprentice and master. She demonstrates the unease of the relationship between an apprentice and his master’s family. Also, she suggests the very inferior status that an apprentice had made them suffer abuse easily from their master in *Growing up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (1995, p. 129). More specifically, she discusses the domestic violence between masters and apprentices in “Violence in the Domestic Milieu of Late Medieval England” (Hanawalt, 2000, pp. 198-214). Recently, more and more researchers have come to the issue of the relationship between masters and apprentices. Caroline M. Barron explores the low status that apprentices enjoyed by examining the apprenticeship indentures and legal disputes in “The Child in Medieval London: The Legal Evidence”. Harsh beating, excessive works, and strict obligations made apprentices prey for their masters (Barron, 2007, pp. 40-53). Jeremy Goldberg in his “Masters and Men in Later Medieval England” mentioned the masculine behaviours that masters did to their apprentices. Masters were playing the role similar to that of fathers. They had authorities and they could even arrange the marriage of an apprentice (Goldberg, 1999, pp. 56-70).

As I clarified previously, the research will focus on apprentices’ experiences with masters in later medieval England, and various kinds of legal documents from late medieval England will be examined here. The series of *Calendar of Early Mayor’s Court Rolls: Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall* (Thomas, 1924), which record a number of legal disputes between masters and apprentices covering the period from 1298 to 1307, will be mainly examined, and also, numerous cases related to apprentices recorded in *The Calendar of Early Mayor’s Court Rolls* concerned runaway apprentices or excessive abuse from masters will be discussed. The series of *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London* is also one of the prominent primary sources recording the citizen life. It shows interactions between masters and
apprentices, especially Letter Book D, which includes the discharge of apprentices and apprentices’ duties to civic authorities such as the enrolment of apprentices.\(^2\)

Another crucial primary source about apprenticeship is *The Book of Ordinance*, which was written in 1478 by four wardens, Hugh Byce, Henry Cooce, Miles Adys, and William Palmer. *The Ordinance* was created to regulate the Goldsmiths Guild specifically and it reveals us how the Goldsmiths Guild worked in 15th century. Also, plenty of the cases about apprentices were recorded in *The Early History of the Goldsmiths Company 1327-1509*. The Goldsmiths Company was one of the biggest Guilds during the Middle Ages in England and it preserves most members’ profiles, which are highly pertinent to apprentices (Reddaway, 1975). Likewise, *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIITH, XIVTH, and XVTH Centuries A.D. 1276-1419* conserves a lot of acts and deeds done by masters and apprentices (Riley, 1868). Some apprenticeship indentures used in this study are derived from *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, which was founded by Fordham University, the Jesuit University of New York. These apprenticeship indentures show the rights and the obligations of both parties in the medieval England.\(^3\)

The concept of *paterfamilias* had been deeply rooted since ancient Rome, which referred to “the head of the family” or “the owner of the family estate”. Then, as I questioned in the earlier part of the paper, could masters have been acted as “paterfamilias” when they were teaching apprentices? Further to the question, then how did they embody the concept of *paterfamilias*? The rest of paper below will aim to examine the masters’ roles of surrogate fathers which extended to *paterfamilias* and the extremely unbalanced relationships within apprenticeship.\(^4\)

**The Relationship Between Masters and Apprentices**

The usage of the word of “apprentice” first appeared in England in the late 13th century. When children are growing up, they have to go through different phases, one of which is adolescence. During the Middle Ages, the young, usually defined as between the ages of 14 and 25, started leaving home to work. In fact, children learned to work from the age of seven. They might be assigned to gather fruits and nuts, fish in rivers or drive domestic birds to pond or pasture. Most medieval people learned through work because few children went to school.\(^5\) Being an apprentice became the popular work choice for medieval adolescence.

Most apprentices in cities were from the countryside where there was high availability of work. Therefore, these youngsters had to leave their birth family and enter into another completely different world. Barbara A. Hanawalt pointed out that “young people learned not only a craft but the characteristics of the role they would eventually play as adults” (1995, p. 129). Indeed, apprenticeship denotes an eminent break from the phase of being a child. Apprentices spent most of their time with masters and other apprentices, slept in the shop, and received discipline from their masters. In other words, they detached from the original family and entered into another “family”. By receiving masters’ discipline, the masculinity in the relationship with apprentices and masters could be discerned. How did apprentices learn to be “men”? Where did masculinity in such a

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2 Letter Book D 1309-1314, Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall (Burlington: Tanner Ritchie Publishing in collaboration with the Library and Information Services of the University of St Andrews, 2008), Ix.


relationship start? First, I should look at indentures of apprenticeship.

An apprenticeship indenture was a regulation, part of the custom and social network. In fact, every indenture differs from others because one of the parties might add additional clauses to it. Usually, the years of apprentices were from seven to ten. The city of London regulated seven years as the minimum term at the beginning of the 14th century; however, there was no maximum year of the term, therefore, lots of apprentices worked for over 10 years.\(^6\) Indentures encompass agreements of premiums which should be paid to masters and education and teaching to be offered. The emphasis of the apprenticeship indenture was on the actions expected of both sides. The following is the agreement made by two parties, the master and the apprentice, on April 13, 1248.

I, William, barber of Sestri, in good faith and without equivocation, place myself in your service and engage myself to work for you, Armand the barber, making my home with you, for learning the art or craft of barbering for a period of two years, at the salary or wage of forty solidi in the mixed money now current in Marseilles, promising to be faithful to you in all things, not to rob you, or take anything away from you, and not to leave you for a greater or less wage for any reason whatsoever, and to give you in good faith whatever money I am able to take, to tell you the truth, and to bear faith to you in all that I do.

I also promise to reimburse you for all expenses you incur on my behalf; and I promise to do all these things by agreement, and under pledge of one hundred solidi in royal crowns, the pledge being forfeited when the agreement is broken. For greater security I swear upon the Holy Gospels, touching them with my hand. And I pledge all my goods, etc., and renounce the benefit of all laws, etc.

And, I, the said Armand, admit all the foregoing, and promise by this agreement to give to you, the said William, forty solidi every year as your wage, and to provide for you, in sickness or in health, food and clothing for two complete years. Pledging all my goods, etc., renouncing the benefit of all laws, etc.

Witnesses, etc.\(^7\)

In this indenture, the apprentice apparently held the status of an inferior. The master’s authority and the expected loyalty from the apprentice were expressed explicitly. The apprentice, William, promised “to be faithful to you (the master) in all things, not to rob you, or take anything away from you, and not to leave you for a greater or less wage for any reason whatsoever, and to give you in good faith whatever money I am able to take, to tell you the truth, and to bear faith to you in all that I do”.

It seems that the faith to the master became the most important part of the apprenticeship indenture. Another indenture signed in 1248 shows that the apprentice’s father promised “by this agreement that I will take care that my son will serve his apprenticeship with you and that he will be faithful and honest in all his dealings for the whole of the said period, and that he will not depart from you nor take anything away from you”.\(^8\)

What does “keeping good faith to the master mean?” Being faithful could be basically construed as being obedient to their master. Peter Borre, placed his son, Stephen with a weaver in 1248 and said “he (Stephen) will be faithful and trustworthy in all that he does, and that he will neither steal nor take anything away from you, nor flee nor depart from you for any reason, until he has completed his apprenticeship” in the indenture. Being faithful to the master could embrace many aspects, one of which is to be obedient to the master.

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\(^6\) Letter Book C 1291-1309, Ix.


\(^8\) Internet Medieval Sourcebook, last modified on 21/07/2013, http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1248apprentice-ag2.asp.
could not behave against his masters will and should submit unconditionally to his master’s discipline. In The Orders of the Guild, an apprentice “ought to be taught to fear God and to obey his master as he would his own father” (Clune, 1943, p. 91). Moreover, he should obtain his master’s permission to go elsewhere. A case which happened in 1304 reported that Thomas, the apprentice of a shoemaker, was accused by his master of leaving without his permission (Thomas, 1924, p. 166). Only when an apprentice completed his term could he leave his master. Dyonisius le Feyner, the late apprentice, “was testified for by good men of the neighbourhood who said that he had stood with aforesaid Dyonisius for seven years as apprentice, had completed his term, and had lawfully left his master” (p. 101). Nevertheless, completing the full term was not the only condition on which an apprentice could leave their master. He had to serve his master “faithfully”. William Pikeman, former apprentice of Robert Pikeman, a fishmonger, was testified as having “well and faithfully served aforesaid Robert (the master) as an apprentice” (p. 68). The release of the indenture was based on apprentices’ “faithfully and well” service. Moreover, an apprentice should be testified by his neighbourhood.

In my opinions, being testified was reinforcement of the master’s masculinity. It made the obtainment of freedom more difficult. Apprentices’ behaviour was in fact under the surveillance of his neighbourhood instead of only by their masters, which made them more obedient and faithful to their masters. If he was allegedly to have served unfaithfully, then it would be hard for him to leave his master. A master’s authority could be reinforced by the neighbourhood’s testimony, which played a significant role in an apprentice’s future. Since numerous apprentices came from countryside to towns and city in order to seek more opportunities and have a better life in the future, most of them wanted to become citizens in the city (Hanawalt, 1995, pp. 140-141). The ordinance in the City of London was regulated as follows: “That apprentices should only be admitted to the franchise on the testimony of their masters that they had duly served their term of seven years at least and at the presence of the rulers of their masters” (p. xii). The regulation indicates that an apprentice could not obtain the franchise if the testimony of his master does not speak well of him. This regulation fortified the authority of the masters. Serve well and faithfully or no franchise.

By the time of late medieval England, the ceremony of entering into an apprenticeship was equally as impressive as it was intimidating, often reminding would-be apprentices of their inferior status. The ceremonies were solemn and they required the oath-taking form in order to strike on the minds of apprentices that they were to enter another new stage. If an apprentice refused to take an oath, then he would be forced to do so not by the authority of his master but the mayor.

Robert, son of William Halleman de Cokthorpe, apprentice of John le Longe, “hattere”, committed to Neugate by the Mayor and Aldermen for refusing to make oath that he would faithfully serve his master; afterwards, viz., on Tuesday after the Feast of St. Gregory, he came to the full Husting and was sworn. It seemed that the civic authority would impose on the apprentice who did not take the oath. The city of London also regulated that “any one procuring a servant, journeyman, or apprentice to leave his master before fulfilment of his contract pay to the Chamber 40s” (p. 160).

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9 More cases about leaving their masters with faithful service are in Letter Book D.
11 Ibid., 68.
12 Letter Book G 1352- 1374, xii.
14 Ibid., 160.
Taking an oath made the bond between the master and the apprentice tighter. *The Book of Ordinance* ruled that no apprentice could be discharged until he is sworn in.

Also that no man may release his apprentice until the apprentice has come before the wardens to be sworn well and truly to hold and keep all present or future regulations of the craft, made for the good government of the craft, upon penalty of 40s. (Reddaway, 1975, p. 229)

Once an apprentice took the oath, he was subjugated to not only his master but also the guild. This ritual was an extension of fatherhood and paternity because it created a new dominant and subordinate relationship between apprentices and social institutions.

The most important part of the ceremony of initiation was the examination of the apprentice. Guild wardens would confirm the apprentice’s age and good physical condition. By the 16th century, the apprentice should be a free man, tall and not deformed. Furthermore, the Goldsmiths required evidence of the writing skill of the apprentice. Apprentices were required to write “a book to be dominant in the treasury of the Hall” to prove their writing abilities (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 139). According to *The Book of Ordinance*, taking apprentices who can neither read nor write was a practice damaging not only to the fellowship, but also the master taking such apprentices and to the apprentice himself, because it is unreasonable to expect an illiterate child or man to have as much understanding by wit and observation alone as a child or man who has both practical experience and can read. (Reddaway, 1975, p. 261)

Contract signing, oath-taking, and physical examination were the tasks of entering another “family”. Ceremony of initiation implied that apprentices were to have access to a different world, a world dominated by their masters.

If obedience and faith that apprentices had to demonstrate towards their masters are the foundation of their subordinate position, then teaching and instructing apprentices are the performance of masculinity. Masters had their own obligations to apprentices. Since apprentices were to live in the masters’ houses, they should be well fed by their masters. As a father would, masters had to provide clothes, food, and rooms for their apprentices. Armand, a barber, he promised that “by this agreement to give to you, the said William, forty solidi every year as your wage, and to provide for you, in sickness or in health, food and clothing for two complete years.”

Most important of all, a master should instruct the young in his trade, craft, and even good manners without keeping any secret about trade and skills from his apprentices. All of the obligations were recorded in the apprenticeship agreement. In 1250, Ouede Ferconne apprenticed his son, Michael, to Matthew Haimart, a weaver. In this agreement, the father asked Matthew to “teach him to weave in four years, and that he (Michael) will have shelter, and learn his trade there without board.”

Another contract struck in 1248 also shows the master’s duties. John of St. Maximin, a lawyer, placed his son, William Deodat, with a money-changer. You (the master) may teach and instruct him in the art of money-changing, for two complete and continuous years from this date...Also I promise to give by this agreement for the expenses of the said William food, that is bread and wine and meat, fourteen heminae of good grain and fifty solidi of the money now current in Marseilles, at your request, and to provide the said William with clothing and necessaries, pledging all my goods.

Not only apprenticeship indentures, but also early mayor’s court rolls represent the masters’ obligations.

Thomas de Kydemenstre, “Chaucer”, was summoned to answer William de Beverlee, because he did not clothe, feed, and instruct his apprentice Thomas, William’s son, but drove him away…further that the master did not feed and clothe his apprentice as he ought, being unable to do so, to the apprentice’s damage 40d, but that he was now in a position to look after his apprentice. (Thomas, 1924, p. 166)

It was necessary for masters to provide daily needs and instruction to their apprentices. Likewise, the court expected masters to do their duties. It is noteworthy that in this case, Thomas de Kydemenstre was still Thomas’ master even if he had not fed his apprentice well. According to Barbara A. Hanawalt, apprenticeship was a quasi-familial relationship (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 137). Therefore, this kind of relationship should be kept no matter what happened. The role of surrogate father that the master played was so important that it should be maintained as much as possible. Like this case, after being given the fine, the master still needed to look after his apprentice.

Besides the providing basic needs of living for apprentices, masters had to keep the young in good discipline because they had apprentice living in their households. Undoubtedly, when masters gave disciplines and instructions to apprentice the performances of masculinity was shown, and the interesting part is the content of the discipline.

In order to make apprentices have good manners, an apprentice had to swear not to marry or engage in premarital fornication. Moreover, he could not have sexual relations with anyone in his master’s house. He was not allowed to engage in drinking, gaming, and going to theatres. Most important of all, he could not gossip about affairs especially those about master (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 135). It was reasonable to forbid an apprentice from getting married because he was still required to learn. If an apprentice did marry within their term, they would experience conflicting loyalty. Adam de Wytton was forbidden to return to his service after he left by his own will because getting married within his term was regarded as a result of trespass (Thomas, 1924, p. 48). It is noteworthy that getting married means the young man acquires the ability of himself embarking enter fatherhood. The kingdom could have only one king, likewise, there can be one fatherhood existing in the household. The anxiety from a master could be discerned in the following case. Richard le Keu drove away his apprentice, Henry, though the latter had served him faithfully. Richard argued that Henry “had left his service of his own free will, by going to a certain woman night and day with his master’s possessions, for which he had rendered no account” (Thomas, 1924, p. 83).

An apprentice could be the potential son-in-law and successor of his master; therefore, some apprentices married the daughters of their masters. A master typically was happy that his apprentice, to whom he had grown close, would succeed him as head of his household (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 131). However, the premise of the new fatherhood founded by the apprentice should be lawful. The point of the case mentioned above is that the apprentice left without the permission from his master and had unlawful relationship with a certain woman who belonged to his master. A master should have controlled over the sexuality of his dependents, including his wife, children, apprentices, and servants, which is one of the constituents of authority. Such unchaste behaviour could disturb the order of the household (Goldberg, 1999, pp. 56-70). Most important of all, I suggest, is that the fornication of an apprentice could menace the superior status of his master and undermine the patriarchy.

As a master, it was righteous for him to correct his apprentices who behaved wrongly. Correcting children is the born right of parents, especially for fathers in the Middle Ages. A father was the head of the household and he was responsible for maintaining the peace in his house. Nevertheless, punishment frequently became domestic violence (Hanawalt, 2000, pp. 198-214). Holding the great power, masters were prone to give
excessive punishment to their apprentices. Driving out apprentices was the most common violence by masters in the Middle Ages. *The Mayor’s Court Rolls* record a number of such disputes. However, most of the masters argued that the apprentices had offended them first. In the case I mentioned previously, Richard drove his apprentice out of his house for committing fornication. Similarly, in 1305, John le Botener was accused of expelling Thomas, his apprentice, unjustly. He afterwards said “the boy was so malicious and caused so much damage” (Thomas, 1924, p. 190).

Was expelling wrong-doing apprentices a lawful punishment? As previously discussed, masters, surrogate fathers, did have the right to punish their apprentices. However, in most apprenticeship indentures, returning an apprentice or reimbursing masters were the expected punishment instead of driving apprentices away. The apprenticeship agreement signed for Weavers in 1250 shows that the master should return the misbehaved apprentice to his mother.\(^\text{18}\) Another contract records the apprentice would

> neither steal nor take anything away from you, nor flee nor depart from you for any reason, until he has completed his apprenticeship. And I (father) promise you by this agreement that I will reimburse you for all damages or losses that you incur or sustain on my behalf, pledging all my goods.\(^\text{19}\)

Likewise, the willingness to compensate the master is expressed clearly in the following contract:

> I (father) promise by this agreement that I will take care that my son will serve his apprenticeship with you and that he will be faithful and honest in all his dealings for the whole of the said period, and that he will not depart from you nor take anything away from you. And if it should happen, which God forbid, that the said William should cause you any loss I promise to reimburse you by this agreement, believing in your unsupported word.\(^\text{20}\)

Dismissing apprentices within the term was sometimes provoked by apprentices’ misbehaviour. John de Tottenham dismissed his apprentice, Philip Dode, after six and half-year service by Philip while the apprenticeship indenture had a term of ten years. John de Tottenham pleaded that Philip Dode committed a lot of offences and left by his own will (Thomas, 1924, p. 46). On the contrary, some masters were accused of not feeding their apprentices well. Hugh de Stubbi not only drove away his apprentice, Robert le Fraunceys of Malteby, but also intended to let Robert die of hunger (Thomas, 1924, p. 268). Within different kinds of punishments, beating was the most common, but it was also the one which would be possibly regarded as domestic violence. William de Raveneston, an ironmonger, beat his apprentice and drove him out naked (Thomas, 1924, p. 222). When beating was too much and harsh to an apprentice, he would possibly run away. Thomas, apprenticed by the shoemaker, was frightened by the beating and fled (Thomas, 1924, p. 166). More violent beating can be seen in the early Goldsmiths record. “Edward Bowden, who violently and suddenly, beat his mistress violently and suddenly, reviling her, seizing her by the throat and making to strangle her”. In order to punish Edward Bowden, the Guild decided to “strip and beat him in the Hall kitchen until blood flowed, as it had from his mistress” (Reddaway, 1975, p. 285). Since the Guild wanted to beat Edward Bowden until he bled as much as his mistress did, this decision was not so much the punishment as the revenge.

In regard of the relationships between apprentices and their masters, some ideas could be discerned from “Who’s your Daddy? New Age Grails”. Laulie Finke and Martin B. Shichtman suggest that, sons always want to surpass their father as a result of intergenerational intensions (2009, pp. 25-33). Such intentions could lead to


\(^{19}\) *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, last modified on 21/07/2013, http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1248apprentice-ag2.asp.

frustrated relationships between sons and fathers. W. M. Aird points out that the conflict between William the Conqueror and his eldest son, Robert Curthose, was the result of the desire of Robert Curthose to establish his own dominant masculinity (Aird, 1999, pp. 39-56). Similarly, some apprentices acted rebelliously in order to resist the control from their masters. Or, apprentices wanted to create their own dominant masculinities. Apprentices were potential masters in the future, which means they could create their own dominant masculinities after leaving their masters. In order to free themselves of the control from masters, some apprentices bought their own unexpired contracts. Before the early 15th century, apprenticeship indentures could be sold to apprentices themselves or to other masters.\(^{21}\) Sometimes, masters would transfer their goods, chattels, and apprentices to another family member. For instance, apprentices were often left to widows in their masters’ wills (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 141). However, selling unexpired indentures to apprentices themselves was forbidden by the end of the 15th century. In *The Book of Ordinance*, the sale of an apprentice’s term and the right of purchasing the contract from the apprentice himself was restricted.

Also because several members of the craft take apprentices who, as soon as they have a smattering of knowledge and have been entered in the craft and know its privities, buy their terms from their masters, and go to other cities, boroughs and towns where they work neither properly nor truly, as has often been proved to the great disgrace of the craft, therefore it is ordained by the common assent of all the fellowship of the craft that in future an apprentice’s term may not be sold to the apprentice himself not to anyone belonging to another craft but only to a freeman of the same craft. (Reddaway, 1975, p. 229)

Although the reason why the Guild withheld an apprentice’s right of buying his own term was the fear of disgrace by an apprentice’s poor performance, it is more possible that the Guild and masters did not want apprentices to compete with them. Masters used different methods to prevent apprentices from leaving and starting their own business. The anxiety of producing more rivals can be shown clearly in another regulation that no young man keeps shop until the expiry of his term of apprenticeship.

If any apprentice belonging to the craft purchased his term or any part of it from his master, or if his master remitted his term or released him, or if anything happened to cause him to be discharged before the expiry of his term, nevertheless, he should live and serve as a lowyce\(^{22}\) for as long as he should have been an apprentice and until his term be expired. (Reddaway, 1975, p. 230)

It is understandable that masters had uneasiness concerning these potential competitors because during the term of the apprenticeship, masters ought to teach the youth all the secrets of the craft (Clune, 1943, p. 91). The tensions between masters and apprentices can also be perceived in the following case. William Bolecley put himself as apprentice to Robert. One day, he withdrew himself from the service of his master unlawfully and departed. He started running a business trading in different places, as well on this side of the sea as beyond. Robert, William’s master, feared that he might possibly be damned by William so he went to the court.

If he (William) should appear under the feigned colour of being the factor and attorney of this said master (Robert), while so living at large, as he might in the name of such master receive divers quantities of things and merchandises, and various sums of money…the said Robert Arnold came here, before the Mayor and Aldermen, and the full Court repudiated and renounced whatever the same apprentice should have done, as being his factor and attorney, from the time that he so withdrew himself and departed, or should in any parts whatsoever in future do for him, or in his name. (Riley, 1868, p. 629)

\(^{21}\) Walter Parrok purchased his unexpired portion of his apprenticeship in 1298. See *Calendar of Early Mayor’s Court Rolls: Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall, A.D. 1298-1307*, 47.  
\(^{22}\) *Lowys*: the term used in the Company’s records to describe those who are allowed to practice the craft.
Robert Arnold was afraid of the competition from his own apprentice and relinquished every right he had, whereas William Bolecley was eager to establish his own business and to be a master, leaving his master unlawfully with the skills and secrets he had learned. Apprentices left their masters for various reasons, such as excessive beating and training. Nonetheless, setting up their own trade and business was the most serious offence to their masters. Once apprentices perceived they could surpass their masters, the *paterfamilias* that masters had was under threat. Intergenerational tensions always existed between fathers and sons in the Middle Ages. Sons wanted to be recognized by the public and build their own *paterfamilias*. To masters and apprentices, the intergenerational tensions were more complicated. Unlike a biological father, whose responsibility is to ensure the intact and continuity of the household, a master was surrogate father and his successor to the household was not his apprentice. An apprentice might succeed to his master’s craft, but not his name and family. The sharp intensions made masters’ duty of being surrogate fathers only include feeding, clothing, and teaching.

The moment that an apprentice established his own workshop onwards the relationship between him and his master would highly possibly meet a turn for the worse. In this regard, they were rivals and foes. On the other hand, the relationships between masters and apprentices sometimes remained very close. One master could only have one to two apprentices because the master should guarantee his apprentices would be properly trained. Although in the records of Goldsmiths Company some masters kept over 20 apprentices, most masters could only had small group of leaners (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 137). Furthermore, having too many apprentices only created excessive competitors in the future with the result of reducing wages (Clune, 1943, p. 86). The small group of leaners suggests that relationships between masters and apprentices could be very intimate. The following case showed the trust that the master had towards his apprentice.

Thomas Moricz, Common Serjeant of the City, showed to John de Stodeye, the Mayor, and the Aldermen that a certain William de Wandlesworth, corder, had died after appointing as his executors Henry Precious, his apprentice, and Alice his wife, now married to John de Swalclyve, cordwainer, and he desired that the said Henry and John might be summoned to answer for the property in their hands.23 (p. 107)

Closer relationships could be seen when a master bequeathed to his apprentice. Richard, who died in 1441, took seven apprentices between 1425 and 1440. In his will, he said “left to his one existing and two former apprentices his best, second and third best anvils, and to his two apprentices a clenching anvil each” (Reddaway, 1975, p. 285). According to Barbara A. Hanawalt’s calculation, three percentages of the 3,330 men whose wills were registered in the Husting Court left their apprentices bequests, which included shops, money, goods, and so on (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 225).

When a master regarded his apprentices as someone he was familiar with and treated him as his own son, it was in the master’s best interest to marry his daughter to his apprentice. Therefore, he could continue his household with someone who had the same craft and skills. For example, Woode Thomas, who died in 1504, was one of many masters whom married his daughter, Juliana, to Henry Worby, one of Wood’s former apprentices (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 315). Once a master found that his apprentice was trustworthy, he created the filial relationship with the apprentice and his role of the surrogate father turned into the father-in-law.

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Conclusion

A Father, instilling morality and education in his sons, plays the most important role in establishing masculinity. However, apprentices were brought up in an environment without their birth fathers. Did the detachment of the young from their natal fathers make them less masculine? This study shows that they went through more masculine relationships because the societies in which they were raised. For an apprentice, his master wielded the supreme power. Beyond a master, there were the Guilds and city courts, where he should also be subjected to.

Friends? Foes? Rivals? Or father-and-son-alike? The relationship between apprentices and masters was far more than complicated. As surrogate fathers, masters wield dominant masculinity as much as birth fathers did, though they did not have biological connections with the masters built their own paterfamilias in their societies. Apprenticeship indentures conferred the masters righteous power and obligations to act like fathers. Furthermore, they were teachers, who should receive more respect than fathers at the same time. The role of surrogate fathers which masters played combined the characteristics of a father and a teacher, which reinforces their dominant masculinity. More importantly, after apprentices left the households and established their own career, the relationships between apprentices and masters changed from father-and-son-alike to rivals.

This study manifests that apprenticeship was the extension of fatherhood. Compared with the children brought up by their own biological fathers, apprentices learned masculine identity through much more masculine relationships. They obtained their gender identities by experiencing the relationships with absolute subordination. The young are the people who enjoy the position of “semi-dependence” (Hanawalt, 1995, p. 94); however, I believe that apprentices were people on the position of “full-dependence” in their social communities; moreover, as the paper investigates, masters’ households functioned as the institutes which demonstrated all the characteristics of masculinity on apprentices; therefore, it is far wrong to assume that all fatherless children were effeminate because once young boys were sent to the masters, they were expected to experience a more subordinate status than they would have had in their natal families. We are certain that, as the surrogate fathers, masters taught apprentices masculinity by wielding the supreme power of paterfamilias.

References

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