

Tom Lombardi: "Apprentices and Apprenticeship in Early
Fourteenth-Century London"
HSGA 8150: May 1996

Well, you get the prize for most improved essay. I am very happy and pleased to see that you have successfully addressed the problems I noted in your first draft and have vastly improved the essay as a result. The writing in this version is much better: less repetitive, more concise, and without the recurrent grammatical problems I saw in the first draft. Progress is also evident in your topic sentences, which now provide a better guide to the analytical content of your paragraphs, and in your removal of the excessive detailing of numbers and dates. The whole essay is easier to read and the points you make are clearer than previously. I am especially pleased at the more authoritative stance your essay possesses now and the insights you offer on several key points; your ability to advance here is due in part to the greater historiographical content of this version, but also to the better judgement you have attained after working closely with this material for so long. All in all, this essay shows original thinking and firm judgement on a wide variety of contentious historical issues. Of course, improvements can always be made so the rest of my comments will focus largely on the weaker aspects of your essay.

While the new introduction is better than the old, it is serviceable rather than stimulating and exciting. You can make your topic appear more important to the reader by spending a bit more time in the first paragraph detailing the importance of apprenticeship. You could do this by mentioning all the specific areas of life the institution touched, or by placing the institution of apprenticeship in a wider historical context rather than focusing just on London. Note too that the second paragraph is a bit misleading since you claim the institution has been little studied but then cite works by Thrupp and Hanawalt as well as older studies by Thomas. A more specific discussion of the thrust and conclusions of these authors and others on medieval apprenticeship would place your comments in a wider and therefore more helpful context for the reader. Your stated aim is also a little too open-ended: "the social, economic, and political roles of apprentices and apprenticeship..." is a tall order and one you don't really fulfill. It would be better to state a less ambitious and smaller aim that you really do reach. Focusing on the uniqueness of the register (its early date, full details on a large number of apprentices--indeed, the only such surviving list for all of the middle ages) and what it can tell us about apprenticeship at a certain period--a snapshot you could say--might be one way to go.

Although you have greatly improved the historiographical context of your essay, still more can be done, as my comments about the introduction indicate. Your bibliography of secondary sources, for example, is the shortest of any student's... Extending your reading to more works about urban guilds and

apprenticeship elsewhere (see S. Epstein's new book *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe*, N.J.G. Pounds's book, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe*, Richard MacKenney's book on Venetian guilds, Derek Keene's book and articles on Winchester, S.

Rappaport's essay on London apprenticeship in the sixteenth century, Kowaleski and Bennett's article on women's guilds, Elspeth Veale on London craftsmen, Edward Miller's VCH article on medieval York, Heather Swanson's *Past and Present* article on medieval guilds, Dobson's article on urban freedoms, Gervase Rosser's book on medieval Westminster and his articles on guilds and fraternities, etc...) would improve the analytic value of your essay.

While the historical content of this essay is better than in your first essay (the section on the fines is especially helpful and clear now), I still feel a bit more explanation about the immediate circumstances of the register and its contents would help in the first section of this paper. Here you might want to consult more recent works on London, including Pamela Nightengale's important article "Capitalists, Crafts and Constitutional Change in Late 14th-Century London," *Past and Present*, 1989, and perhaps some of her other articles on early London, as well as Williams, Thrupp and Thomas.

While I appreciate your conciseness in this final draft, at times you need more discussion of important points. Your section on apprentices' origins, for example, now barely covers one page and offers more generalization about the work of Russell and Thrupp than I care for. What are the ramifications of yours and their conclusions about the origins of apprentices? How do London apprentices compare with apprentices elsewhere? Similarly, your section on economic investment focuses on fines and payments, but says little about the contractual relationship between parents and apprentice on one hand and the master and his family on the other. Here comments by historians on the economic return of apprentices to masters would be helpful; scholars have, for examples, calculated when an apprentice starts being an asset to a master; you could benefit from thinking about some of these issues here and later (page 36 for example). Your last section on emotional investment was good but here too I thought more could be said; widening your reading would be helpful here I am sure.

Some minor points: 1) use Arabic numerals with "percent" in the text. 2) how come so many of the figures in your tables (the percentage columns) don't add up?? You MUST fix this for the last version you hand in. 3) For some reason, you lapse back into the old problems in your conclusion; you need to rewrite this for style (see my comments) and for substance. Try to identify for the reader, for example, where you have added to our understanding of the institution of apprenticeship or London guilds and politics, and where you have agreed with the findings of others.

DISCUSSION, REPORTS	B+	FINAL GRADE	A-
PRESENTATION	B+/A-		
FIRST DRAFT	B		
FINAL DRAFT	A-/A		

① Pounds HC243 P68
② +DA 690.W6W5.072