

Jack of Newbury. Thomas Deloney.

Ed. Peter C. Herman. Broadview Anthology of British Literature. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2015. 174 pp. \$14.95.

Thomas Deloney's work offers modern students a lively and challenging window into early modern popular culture. As the child of Protestant French immigrants to England, Deloney embraced and celebrated the virtues of his new country. He supported himself as a member of the London Weavers' Company and marshaled his rhetorical talents to promote the welfare of his guild against other interlopers, particularly French weavers who sought refuge on the margins of London. His linguistic gifts earned him fame as the author of numerous ballads, inexpensive verses sung and sold to popular audiences, some of which survive in modern archives. And near the end of the century, Deloney turned his attention to writing popular fiction. His narratives, including *Jack of Newbury*, achieved remarkable popularity; early editions of this book and others seem to have been read to pieces. Given the significance of Deloney's literary output, the publication of a small, affordable edition of *Jack of Newbury*, with a useful selection of contextual materials, is welcome to those of us who teach surveys of British literature, seminars in the Elizabethan period, or courses on the early English novel. Peter Herman's excellent edition of *Jack of Newbury* brings together a lucid, readable edition of the text with several intriguing pieces of contextual material and an introduction that outlines the stakes of encountering Deloney in one of these courses.

In addition to describing Deloney's biographical information and discussing the popularity of his works, Herman's introduction emphasizes two of the remarkable qualities of this protonovel. On the one hand, Herman notices Deloney's sympathetic treatment of women in his work. That sympathy is probably most on display in some of Deloney's ballads, but Herman finds it as well in the treatment of the protagonist's wives in *Jack of Newbury*. One could add that the book, a sort of historical fiction based on the life of John Winchcombe in the reign of Henry VIII, puts Katherine of Aragon in a remarkably positive light as well. In the second thread of the introduction, Herman focuses on the complex treatment of social mobility in Deloney. As a balladeer, Deloney seems to have produced conflicting ideas about the early modern social hierarchy, with some ballads praising Henry IV's deposition of Richard II and other ballads condemning the popular uprising against that same king. *Jack of Newbury*, a rags-to-riches tale of the sort Horatio Alger later made famous, celebrates the ascent of a humble workman to a prominent position as a wealthy merchant and protoindustrialist. Refusing a knighthood, the hero instead celebrates others who similarly achieved prosperity, hanging portraits of these exemplary figures in his home. The stories associated with these successful men are

derived from Pedro Mexía's *The Forest*, and Herman helpfully includes the relevant chapter of that source as one of the contextual readings in this edition. For students used to hearing about the Great Chain of Being, Deloney's fictionalized narrative of Winchcombe's economic ascent will come as something of a shock. Herman usefully includes portions of the Edwardian "Exhortation Concerning Good Order and Obedience," and the Elizabethan "Homily against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion," to highlight Deloney's unusual celebration of this protagonist's success.

These contextual readings, in combination with the nicely annotated text, will make this piece of fiction approachable for student readers. Among the contextual documents, Herman even includes a number of Continental illustrations, engravings, and paintings of the cloth trade, a wonderful touch that many students are sure to appreciate. In one small oversight, Herman does not adequately identify the location of these contextual materials — the ballads, sermons, and sources — in case an intrepid student wanted to locate the materials and read more than the excerpt included in the appendix. Some students are sure to be intrigued by the excellent work Herman has done to put *Jack of Newbury* in context and might want to read more of that context on their own. Peter Herman and Broadview have done teachers of Elizabethan culture and fiction a great service by making this important text available in this convenient and accessible classroom edition. It is sure to find a wide audience.

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