

E. J. Clery, *Jane Austen, The Banker's Sister*. London: Biteback Publishing, 2017. Pp. 361. £20/£29.95. ISBN 9781785901768.

The choice of Jane Austen as the portrait on the Bank of England's new ten pound notes (introduced last year to coincide with the bicentenary of the author's death) was more appropriate than the bank probably intended, for not only has Austen been widely recognized (and, by W. H. Auden, satirized) as a novelist peculiarly alert to 'the economic basis of society', but £10 was a significant sum in the history of her authorship. Had she had access to £10 in 1809, Austen would have been able to purchase back the copyright to her novel *Susan*, bought but not published by Benjamin Crosby six years before, and her career in print might have started sooner.

Also, as E. J. Clery points out in this engaging and informative study of the Austens and money, there has been an 'Austen' ten pound note before, issued in the early years of the nineteenth century by one of the private banks in which Jane's ambitious older brother, Henry, had an interest. Henry Austen was the most social and worldly of the siblings, an important facilitator of his sister's career and her first biographer; as such, he has attracted the scholarly attention of T. A. B. Corley, Clive Caplin and Deirdre le Faye (among others), but this is the first full-length book to look in detail at his character and career in relation to that of his famous sister, and to link the two through their economic histories. The juxtapositions are original and illuminating.

Clery invites us to see the siblings as individuals closely matched by nature and nurture but starkly divided by circumstance: Henry male, sexually active and licensed by society to pursue self-interested life-strategies (legal or not); Jane, virginal, poor and powerless except in the field of fiction. Henry was instrumental in getting Jane's novels published, but was in some ways an odd choice as agent; Clery sees him as 'the early nineteenth-century embodiment of the "animal spirits" identified by John Maynard Keynes as the mainspring of capitalism'(8), whose risk-taking temperament and preference for abrupt action couldn't have been less like his sister's. He was bemused by her desire to put aside money against the possible failure of *Sense and Sensibility* (which she published on commission, sharing both costs and profits with the publisher) and significantly undersold the copyright of *Pride and Prejudice* out of impatience. When, during Henry's long illness in 1816, Jane was forced to manage some of her own dealings with John Murray, she found that she not only enjoyed acting on her own behalf, but was possibly better at it than her brother.

Clery compares ideas of market worth, risk, exchange and depreciation in the different worlds of the banker and the novelist, weaving them together deftly. Speculation was what powered Henry through his careers in the army, in finance and, one might even say, in his final calling to Holy Orders; speculation on her own talent, unrecognized for decades, was how Jane Austen tried to control her own fate and property, intellectual and otherwise. It is perhaps no joke when Lady Bertram (in *Mansfield Park*) remarks of the card game Speculation, 'Very entertaining indeed ... I am never to see my cards; and Mr Crawford does all the rest'.

Under scrutiny, Henry's charm is less obvious than his instinct to self-preservation. As Receiver for Oxfordshire, he was allowed to use land and income taxes before remitting them to the government, but ran up late payments as well as large profits. His association with the 'confidential agent' of the Earl of Moira, a shadowy figure called Major Charles James, involved him in enormous debts and illicit financial practices, at the edges of which were instances of blackmail and his bank partner's possible suicide. Henry tried to ride the downturn that peace brought after 1815, but went bankrupt in 1816, owing £44,000 to the Crown. Two of his guarantors, his brother Edward and Uncle James Leigh-Perrot, had to

repay this huge sum on his behalf, while small investors, like his sisters Cassandra and Jane, lost their savings. He ruined the whole family.

Jane remained loyal publicly, but Clery detects some reaction against Henry's values in her deliberately uncommercial determination to make Emma into 'a heroine whom no one but myself will much like'. Jane clearly resented the obligation to dedicate *Emma* to the Prince Regent, a man she hated, and resented also having to endure an acquaintance with the Regent's pompous librarian, James Stanier Clarke, because of her brother's need to keep in with the Carlton House set. She tried, as Clery recognizes, to protect him from her disapproval, bearing the shame and chagrin of his bankruptcy as well as she could, and it seems that Henry, with his breezily optimistic nature and willingness to write off failure, never understood how much she suffered. In an age of profound economic instability, his was the character more fit to survive.

Claire Harman
Durham University