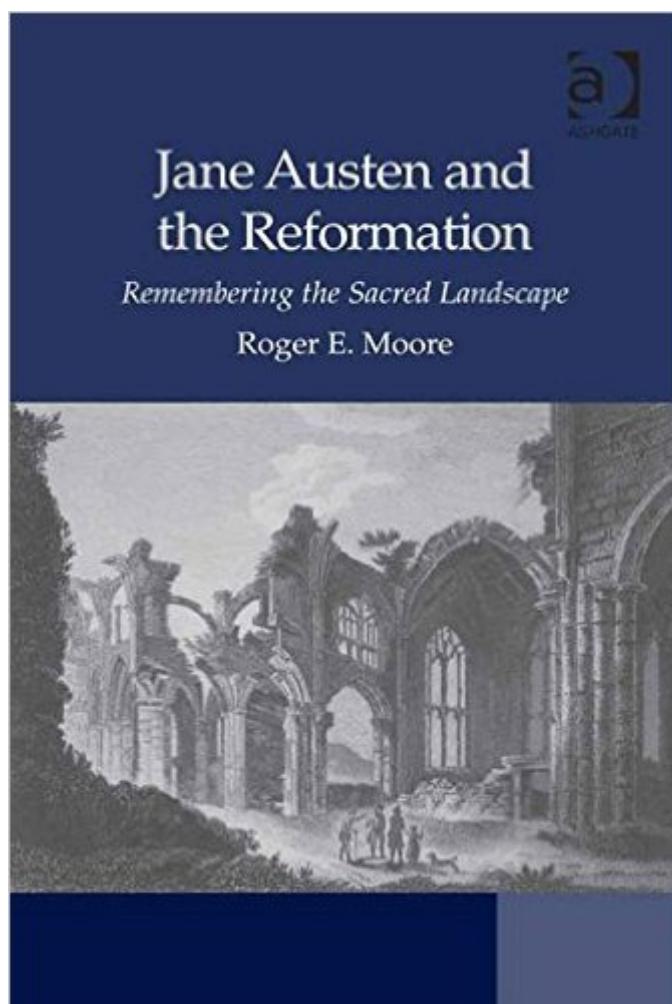


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Jane Austen And The Reformation: Remembering The Sacred Landscape



Synopsis

Jane Austen's England was littered with remnants of medieval religion. From her schooling in the gatehouse of Reading Abbey to her visits to cousins at Stoneleigh Abbey, Austen faced constant reminders of the wrenching religious upheaval that reordered the English landscape just 250 years before her birth. Drawing attention to the medieval churches and abbeys that appear frequently in her novels, Moore argues that Austen's interest in and representation of these spaces align her with a long tradition of nostalgia for the monasteries that had anchored English life for centuries until the Reformation. Converted monasteries serve as homes for the Tilneys in *Northanger Abbey* and Mr. Knightley in *Emma*, and the ruins of the 'Abbeyland' have a prominent place in *Sense and Sensibility*. However, these and other formerly sacred spaces are not merely picturesque backgrounds, but tangible reminders of the past whose alteration is a source of regret and disappointment. Moore uncovers a pattern of critique and commentary throughout Austen's works, but he focuses in particular on *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Sanditon*. His juxtaposition of Austen's novels with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts rarely acknowledged as relevant to her fiction enlarges our understanding of Austen as a commentator on historical and religious events and places her firmly in the long national conversation about the meaning and consequences of the Reformation.

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