Preface to SSL 44.2

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Compared with his contemporary, Jane Austen, Walter Scott has not fared nearly so well, of late, in the “reworkings” department. Where Austen’s life and novels continue to inspire film adaptations, fan clubs, biopics, YouTube series, zombie plots, and even koozies, many of Scott’s works struggle to stay in print. It is true that bits of Waverley can be glimpsed in the story line of the popular romance and television series, Outlander. And the historical novel that Scott helped pioneer remains a thriving genre in the twenty-first century—and not just in the English-speaking world. Still, as Daniel Cook and Lucy Wood explain in their introduction to this SSL special issue, “‘The Great Unknown’ is now indeed unknown again,” and this time the reasons have nothing to do with fame, mystery, merit, or interest.

Critical attention to Scott’s work, however, has been on the rise these last couple of decades, thanks to excellent scholarly editions of the novels and—now—the poetry. There have been field-changing studies of Scott’s fiction by Ian Duncan, Anne Rigney, Ina Ferris, and others, and a triennial international conference recognizes the importance of encouraging younger scholars to contribute to the discussion of Scott’s work.

This journal’s interest in Scott’s influence, reception, and reworking in later writing and culture is of long standing. Notably, nearly fifty years ago now, SSL published one of the first of Jerome Mitchell’s influential studies of how Scott was reworked in opera.¹ Nearly a decade before that, SSL’s second issue included one of the first of William Montgomerie’s studies of ballad manuscripts, tracing how manuscript ballads in Scott’s collection were transmitted and reused by the American scholar F.J. Child.² In more strictly literary terms, SSL has published articles about Scott’s influence on Nathaniel Hawthorne and about negative attitudes to Scott in the twentieth-

century Scottish Renaissance movement, just as his historical fiction was
drawing new interest from European theorists such as Georg Lukacs. A
recent article discussed the several visual tributes in Edinburgh to Scott’s
continuing presence in the Scottish canon.

Thus we are pleased to be able to publish this special issue of SSL on
Reworking Walter Scott, edited by Daniel Cook and Lucy Wood. The
articles published here are taken from edited versions of the papers
originally presented in April 2017 at the University of Dundee. They
feature reworkings of Scott in many different genres and suggest a number
of exciting new directions for scholarly engagement with his work. It may
be some years yet before we get Waverley, the Musical, or The Rose
Bradwardine Diaries. Together with other recent publications, such as the
MLA volume Approaches to Teaching Scott’s Waverley Novels, and
forthcoming ones, such as the essay-collection Twenty-First-Century
Walter Scott, edited by Caroline McCracken-Flesher and Matthew
Wickman, this special issue on Reworking Walter Scott will ensure that the
Author of Waverley’s work continues to find a place not only in
discussions of Scottish literature, Romanticism, and the nineteenth-century
novel, but also of popular culture, comic books, affect theory, and media
studies.

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Reworking Walter Scott is the second of the two special-topic issues
this spring, following SSL 44.1, Scottish-Russian Literary Relations. They
will be followed by three regular general issues, with articles drawn from a
wide range of literary periods. Coming next, in SSL 45.1, are essays by
Nigel Leask, Penny Fielding, Gerard Carruthers, and Tomás Monterrey,
and we are beginning to commit space in issues after that. We continue to
welcome the opportunity to consider scholarly articles on all periods of
Scottish literature and from varied perspectives.

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