Although in Barnaby Rudge sons are uniformly victimized by their fathers, the pattern of parental oppression so central to Dickens' later themes has no...
Barnaby Rudge, Charles Dickens’s historical novel set during the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots of 1780, gains momentum as it reaches the riots themselves, the fiery devastation that claims no fewer than 72 London houses. I argue that Dickens’s aggressive erasure of these spaces reflects his need to define himself by rejecting a model of domesticity established by historical novelist Sir Walter Scott. Dickens’s powerful precursor in fiction, an idea of private life codified in the three-volume Waverley Novels and embodied in Abbotsford, Scott’s iconic home. Serialization, I argue, is the material expression of Dickens’s break from Scott’s influence. I discuss how in Barnaby Rudge Dickens recasts the domestic spaces that comprised Scott’s vision of private life as menacing, claustrophobic, and oppressively masculine so as to establish his own model of domesticity, the vision that Catherine Waters describes as the “characterization of the home as an enclave of family warmth and harmony and its superintendence by a woman who embodies the domestic ideal” (121). This idea of domesticity sees its material realization in serialization.

Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit are equally vapid — colorless transcriptions of the picaresque prototype.