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Abstract in German

Die Umweltverschmutzung und -zerstörung, die zu zahlreichen Problemen für Mensch und Tier führt, ist ein viel diskutiertes Thema in der heutigen Welt, wurde aber bereits in der viktorianischen Literatur thematisiert und kritisiert.

In diesem Zusammenhang beschäftigt sich diese Masterarbeit mit dem Autor Charles Dickens und seinen drei Werken *Bleak House* (1852), *Hard Times* (1854) und *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), die im viktorianischen Zeitalter und der industriellen Revolution geschrieben und veröffentlicht wurden. Diese Werke werden insbesondere im Hinblick auf die Auswirkungen der Industrialisierung auf die Umwelt analysiert. Es werden hierzu verschiedene Formen von „dirt“ untersucht, die in den Werken inkludiert werden. Dazu gehören die Formen Rauch, Nebel, Staub und Asche, Müll sowie Wasserverschmutzung. Ziel der Arbeit ist es, die bestehenden Forschungsergebnisse im Bereich des Ecocriticism zu erweitern und den bisher oft sozialkritisch verwendeten Begriff „dirt“ als umweltbezogenen Begriff in seiner wörtlichen Bedeutung zu verwenden. Dabei werden zentrale, bisherige wissenschaftliche Arbeiten zur Dirt Theory sowie zum Ecocriticism und seinen Unterkategorien Affective und Victorian Ecocriticism berücksichtigt, die den Rahmen für die Analyse bilden.

Die Analyse erfolgt mittels einer Literaturanalyse, die sich vor allem auf den Vergleich der Werke konzentriert. Dies soll ein möglichst detailliertes und aufschlussreiches Bild der Umweltauswirkungen der Industriellen Revolution und der verschiedenen Formen der Umweltverschmutzung, die in den Werken thematisiert werden, ermöglichen.

Die Analyse und ihre Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Thematisierung von „dirt“ zwei wichtige Erkenntnisse liefert: Erstens ist Umweltverschmutzung direkt sichtbar und zweitens können verschiedene Formen von „dirt“ einen direkten Einfluss auf den Menschen, seine Gesundheit, seine Wahrnehmung oder sein Aussehen haben. Diese beiden Faktoren können bestimmte Gefühle wie Ärger, Trauer oder Angst auslösen und so zu umweltkritischem Denken führen. Dieses Denken ist der erste Schritt, um die weitere Zerstörung der Umwelt zu verringern oder zu verhindern.

Abstract in English

The pollution and destruction of the environment, which causes countless problems for both humans and animals, is a much-debated topic in today's world, but was also already discussed and criticized in Victorian times.

In this context, this master thesis focuses on the author Charles Dickens and his three novels *Bleak House* (1852), *Hard Times* (1854) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), written and published in the Victorian era and the Industrial Revolution. These works will be analyzed in particular with regard to the influences of industrialization on the environment. For this purpose, different forms of dirt included in the novels will be examined. The different forms of dirt that will be analyzed include dirt as smoke, fog, dust and ashes, waste as well as dirt as water pollution. The goal of this thesis is to expand existing knowledge and theory in the field of ecocriticism, and to expand the term dirt, which has previously often been used as a socio-critic term, as an environmental term in its literal form. For this, central scientific work in the field of dirt theory, ecocriticism as well as its subcategories Victorian and affective ecocriticism will be considered. This examination of existing work will form the main basis for the analysis.

The analytical part will be carried out through literary analysis, focusing on the comparative analysis of the three selected novels. This will ensure that a detailed and insightful picture of the pollution and damage caused by the Industrial Revolution, and the different forms of dirt contained in the novels, can be created.

The analysis shows that the thematization of dirt can show two important things: firstly, pollution is directly visible and secondly, different forms of dirt can have different effects on human beings, ranging from effects on health to effects on perception or appearance. These factors can create certain emotions, such as anger, sadness or fear, which in turn can create ecological thinking. Ecological thinking is the first step to change and fight against environmental destruction.

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Introduction

During the 19th century, a famous writer thematized and criticized industrialization for its drastic changes for society and the environment – to this day, we seem to not have gained much wisdom, as we still continue to cause and worsen these problems even over two hundred years later. The English author Charles Dickens, born in 1812 in Portsmouth, experienced and lived through certain periods of the Industrial Revolution, which occurred during the 18th century, and deals with the particular aspects and changes industrialization caused in Great Britain in many of his well-known novels. Down to the present day, his writings remain relevant due to their lasting actuality in the 21st century. The author's construction of impressions of Victorian England and its hardships concerning pollution and social stratification offers the reader an image of the starting point of industrialization and a collection of problems our world still faces today. The Industrial Revolution evoked drastic changes in the country, ranging from economic and technological transformation and development, to changes in society and social classes (O'Brien 128; 143). But not only Britain's society encountered frequent struggle. Another critical issue of the Industrial Revolution is the damage done to the environment, which will be the main focus of this thesis. Next to the extreme changes in society, there was also extreme damage done to nature at the time. The general aim of this thesis is to give a specific focus to this area of interest and to analyze only the environmental damage that nature has suffered and to this day continues to suffer from. It is fairly difficult to date the beginning and end of the Industrial Revolution, however, most scholars and also this thesis will primarily focus on the time period ranging from 1740-1850 to ensure a clear limitation for this thesis (More 2).

In order to provide the main basis for analysis, the first chapter of this thesis will focus on the development, past history and the historical background of the Industrial Revolution. The overarching aim is to paint a picture of the circumstances and conditions that mainly influenced the society at the time, as well as Charles Dickens as a writer and person who experienced the time period and its peculiarities himself. The data for this historical information comes from a variety of different sources, often focusing on the social factors. Although social problems often seem to be the main interest in many papers, this thesis will focus on everything that happened environmentally during the time and its influence on even today's world. In order to provide a clear and precise basis for the analysis section of the thesis, it is of significant importance to examine the developments and changes that occurred during the time period. This will help to read the selected corpus with the relevant background information and will provide the necessary context for reading the novels in their historical context.

The historical examination of the Industrial Revolution time period begins with the analysis of social change. The three main scholars used to summarize the social circumstances are Stephen Mosley, Selina Schuster and Lee Jackson. Mosley (2010) and Schuster (2014) provide the most influential and relevant hard facts of the period, with detailed studies of social change throughout the Industrial Revolution. Jackson (2014) complements the great detail with further information, completing the historical and social context for this thesis. By examining and summarizing their work, the main social constructs and changes of the Industrial Revolution are described. As already mentioned, this thesis focuses on environmental issues as a basis for analysis, however, it is nonetheless important to include the social driving forces, as environment, nature and the human are undeniably interconnected. Particularly the difference in social attitudes towards air pollution of different people from different social classes will play an important role in making the main points of this thesis. Naturally, human beings are the ones who could stop the environmental crisis, therefore looking at the social circumstances and attitudes towards pollution from a social point of view is inevitable for this thesis to make its claim. Regarding the issues that will be addressed in the social part, it can be said that the main factors are the segregation of social classes, the childhood and education of children in different social classes, lifestyle and career paths, as well as the living conditions, especially concerning housing situations and individual health hazards. The examination of these factors that hugely influenced the British society will help to show that the vastly different circumstances in the segregated social classes, led to vastly different attitudes and thought patterns concerning the Industrial Revolution. This argument will help to form the main basis for proving that thinking about the environment is the first step for thinking ecologically.

After having outlined the social conditions during the Industrial Revolution, the theoretical part will then focus on the environmental changes that occurred. The main scholars taken for the outlining of the environmental circumstances are Adrian Tait (2021), Peter Brimblecombe (2004), Peter Thorsheim (2007), as well as the previously mentioned Stephen Mosley and Lee Jackson. Further necessary information is provided by examining the work of Walker W. Hanlon (2024), Christine Corton (2015), Tim Edensor (2005) and Melissa Joyce (2007). The work that has been previously done by these scholars to analyze and summarize the most important changes in environment and nature, will lay the groundwork for the focus of analysis in this thesis. By summarizing the historical development of pollution as well as the environmental crisis, this thesis can link the facts and science to what is written about in the literary pieces that were written during this specific time period. In order to understand and

comprehend what elements in a book might be relevant for environmental analysis, the theory and history have to be clear. Only with the help of history and facts can a successful analysis happen. The main themes of this section on the history of environmental damage are the invention of the steam engine, the development and expansion of the railways as well as the resulting environmental damage such as air pollution, water pollution and waste problems.

After having summarized the most important historical contents and facts, it is now important to mention the objects of analysis for this thesis. The objects of analysis chosen to demonstrate the construction of industrialized Great Britain are three novels by Charles Dickens. The combination of the three novels will provide and create an image of prominent complications evoked by the Industrial Revolution. The analysis of the novels *Bleak House* (1852), *Hard Times* (1854) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) intends to display reoccurring themes in Charles Dickens's novels. While all three novels deal with the topic of social stratification and engage in social criticism, this thesis aims to show that besides social criticism, environmental criticism appears frequently as well. The Industrial Revolution drastically influenced the environmental state in a negative way, as industrialization marked the beginning of modern environmental problems such as air pollution and waste. What is special about writings in the Victorian period such as Charles Dickens's, is that many authors have already begun engaging in quite modern criticism about the industrializing world and its negative effects on our environment (Tait 103).

The following research questions form the basis of this thesis and will help to prove the main claim of this thesis:

- How do the novels *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* describe the influence of the Industrial Revolution on the environment?
- What role does the description of the influence of the Industrial Revolution on the environment play in the selected novels?
- In what ways is dirt in its literal sense displayed in Charles Dickens's novels?
- How can the term "dirt" be expanded to show its importance for ecological thinking?

In order to prove the main claims of this thesis and successfully answer the research questions posed, the analysis of this thesis will adhere to a set methodological framework that will help to guide the analysis. With the help of this framework, there are clear limitations and theoretical concepts that will define the analysis. This will ensure that the thesis statement can be supported by both already existing claims and new findings.

Concerning the methods for analysis, the goal is to examine the novels through textual analysis, interpretation and the application of theory. The main methods of analysis will be close reading and comparative analysis. It is important to note that the novels have been chosen following prior research into the main topics and that the selection generally aims at providing a broad and wide-scope analysis of the themes. What is especially important is that the novels will not be looked at in isolation, but a comparison will be made between all the novels in order to provide a representative picture of environmental issues presented in the literary works. These findings will be interpreted with the help of the theoretical and historical background in order to find supporting arguments for this thesis. The main focus of the thematic analysis will be to discover the influences of the historical background of the Victorian era, as well as to find instances of environmental damage in the novels. As Charles Dickens himself lived through parts of the Victorian age it is very important to find historical influences in the novels in order to link them to environmental changes and problems. At this point it has to be mentioned that not all novels will mention the same environmental problems at the same frequency, however, the direct comparison between the novels enables this thesis to draw conclusions about the general inclusion of environmental topics in the novels.

In addition, the choice of novels was determined by the selection of later novels by Charles Dickens, as it is to be expected that environmental conditions would have worsened and become much more apparent over time, so that environmental issues might be more prominent in later novels. What is more, it can be assumed that his earlier novels focus more on the social aspect of the Industrial Revolution, as this was the most prominent and immediate influential change, with environmental changes only appearing over time, meaning that there might be a higher chance of encountering environmental topics in later released novels. Concerning the selection of relevant passages for the analysis, it has to be noted that while there is a great number of passages to be found that would be relevant and insightful for this thesis, due to the length and limitations of it, only the most important and relevant for proving the thesis statement can be included. That of course means that one clear limitation of this thesis is that a lot of passages that would further substantiate the claims have to be excluded and could be taken up in further research.

What is more, many scholars have naturally already worked with these novels, which is why the most relevant works for this thesis will of course be referred to. Whenever there is a claim that this thesis wants to extend or elaborate on with the current focus, the relevant work will be summarized. The main scholars who have previously worked on similar themes with similar

selected Charles Dickens's novels that will be referred to in this thesis are Nicholas March (2015), Leslie Simon (2011), and Selina Schuster (2015). As these scholars have generated vital insights into selected environmental topics, they will be referenced as this thesis attempts to generate a wide-scope overview and analysis of environmental topics in literary works. Therefore, this thesis does not aim at negating any findings, however it tries to further expand the research done in environmental studies.

In order for the analysis to be successful, after having explained the historical background and referring to the selected works for this thesis, it is important to lay the theoretical groundwork for the analysis, meaning that before the analytical part of this thesis can be conducted, the theoretical framework has to be set. Concerning the theory concepts, this thesis uses conceptions of ecocriticism, Victorian ecocriticism and affective ecocriticism to work on the established issue and show the interconnectedness between human beings and the environment. As an interdisciplinary approach, ecocriticism is a critical practice with the main concern being the state of our environment. Furthermore, it aims at developing an understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature, which will consequently lead to a greater understanding of current environmental problems (Tait 103-04). This thesis wants to contribute to the field of ecocriticism in order to increase awareness about environmental problems. One specifically relevant branch of ecocriticism is affective ecocriticism, which studies the feelings evoked in human beings by environmental changes and their resulting damage. Generally, the term "to affect" refers to emotional responses and personal reactions to something (Berberich, Campbell, and Hudson 1). There are many reactions feelings that can arise from the realization of ongoing environmental damage, including, for example, anxiety, fear, and guilt. These emotions can have a significant impact on human thinking and are therefore important to consider in this context (Bladow, and Ladino 28; 32). In order to talk about ecocritical thinking, this thesis will further include the concept of the ecological thought. Timothy Morton (1) defines the term as a concept that reveals the interconnectedness of the environment and human beings instead of solely focusing on the nonhuman. This is a key idea for this thesis, as it will profoundly consider the connection and interrelation between human beings and the environment.

Moreover, this thesis will draw on existing concepts of dirt in order to further expand the term, which is one of the main goals of this thesis. The analysis of this thesis and the environmental problems in the novels will be defined by analyzing different forms of dirt throughout the novels. Before this can happen, the term dirt needs to be explained by referring to influential

work having been done in the field. One important scholar in this context is Sabine Schülting, who defined the term dirt in the context of Victorian literature and culture. Schülting (5) emphasizes the various facets of the term, which can be understood in both its literal sense, as well as in various metaphorical ways. In her work, Schülting draws on Douglas's dirt theory, who essentially described dirt as something that causes disorder (Douglas 2). Schülting (6) continues to expand the meaning of dirt, often interrelating the term and its meaning with social problems occurring during the Victorian Era. One of her main findings shows that dirt displays a process of middle classes trying to delimit themselves from the working classes, who were often considered as dirty. Therefore, the term dirt functions as a marker of class. In a way it contaminated the living space of the working classes, making them repulsive to the middle classes, which eventually led to social stratification in Great Britain. Further, Heather I. Sullivan (*Dirt Theory* 515-16) specifies dirt as a clear part of the human world; a part which humans are actually dependent on. This is also an incredibly important key finding this thesis will consider. At this point it is important to state that it is not the thesis's goal to discard or refute any of the findings in this context. Instead, the thesis's main objective is contributing to the term's diversity. Due to the term often being related to social problems, the aim of this thesis is to use it in its actual, literal sense and therefore focus on its meaning as an environmental term. The visibility of dirt evokes awareness about environmental problems, which can mainly be seen through two functions of dirt. First, visible dirt makes environmental damage directly evident. Moreover, dirt in one's surroundings directly affects the perception human beings have of their environment. I therefore argue that the analysis of Charles Dickens's novels helps to show that dirt in its literal sense is a key factor in provoking ecological thinking.

Besides the scholars mentioned above, there are further important works to be mentioned in the discussion of dirt. First, the work of Tom Crook (200) will play a key role, as he dealt with the segregating function of dirt similarly to Schülting, claiming that dirt is whatever threatens a specific order and system. What is more, Lee Jackson (3) further accentuates the disordering effect of dirt, highlighting the negative effect on working classes. Lastly, Caleb Kelly (32) highlights the interconnection between human beings and nature, which is an incredibly important thought for this thesis.

As mentioned, this thesis intends to show that the visibility of dirt is what makes people aware of the problems occurring in our world. The term dirt should hence be expanded in order to show its absolute necessity for the development of ecological thinking. Without visible dirt, humankind might still be blind to the damage caused by industrialization. Unfortunately, we

cannot alter with the past, however, we can acknowledge the power of visible dirt which makes environmental damage tangible and raises awareness about the environmental state. Its direct effect on human beings is what encourages ecological thinking and thoughts of necessary change. The scholars Andrew J. Hubbell, and John C. Ryan (169) argue that the origin of the environmental crisis and its continuing hardships are a result of a lack of imagination by humans. This thesis will show that the lack of imagination can be counteracted by visible dirt polluting humans' surroundings. Due to the visibility of environmental suffering, humans do not need to understand and believe in scientific data or purely imagine the consequences of the environmental crisis. Rather, they can see the consequences of industrialization with their own eyes. The British Romantic period (1789-1832) increased appreciation for the pure beauty of nature. This thesis will make use of this concept and show that the destruction of nature evokes empathic feelings in the readers and consequently provokes ecocritical thinking.

Summarizing the structure of this thesis, it will first start by laying down the historical context, starting with a general description of the Industrial Revolution, then moving on to the influences of the Industrial Revolution on the society and ending with the analysis of environmental problems that occurred during this time period. After this, Charles Dickens's life during the Industrial Revolution will be explained. After examining the historical context of the industrialization, the theoretical concepts will be summarized. The relevant theoretical concepts ecocriticism, as well as its subcategories Victorian ecocriticism and affective ecocriticism, are going to be explained. Further, the term ecological thought will be examined and summarized. After having elaborated on the basis for this thesis's analysis, the term dirt that will largely define the analysis of the selected corpus and its relevant prior examinations will be outlined. The term dirt will be looked at through two different lenses, namely one being dirt as disorder and social stratification and the second one being dirt as the interconnectedness between human beings and their environment. After the theoretical concepts have been defined and set for this thesis, the comparative, close reading analysis of this thesis can begin. The analysis will consider the different types of dirt found in the novels. First, the analysis will focus on dirt as smoke, then continuing with the similar but different concept of dirt as fog. Afterwards, dirt as waste and rubbish, dust and ashes, as well as dirt as water pollution matter will be examined. These different manifestations of dirt and the analysis of their presence in the novels will make it possible to provide a large and comprehensive picture of the functions of dirt, consequently helping to prove the main claim of this thesis. The combination of history, theory and literary

analysis will help to prove that the visibility of dirt, as well as its direct effect on human beings, can evoke ecological thinking.

At this point it is important to mention that while the novels that were selected for this paper do not explicitly deal with environmental damage as a named topic, the environmental damage of the Industrial Revolution and its influences on humans and nature are always part of the plot being imbedded in descriptions of landscapes or even conversations in the novels. The concept of environmental pollution and other environmental problems and their thematization in the novels serves to construct a frame and basis for the story. While it is not the main topic in the novels, it is always there, always present and dealt with. Therefore, the frequency of talking about dirt is the main proof for its importance. Even though environmental damage is not the main topic of the novels, it is undeniably important as chapters often start with descriptions of dirt and environmental damage and also, dirt often becomes a metaphor for something else, which can be seen in the analysis. It can therefore be said that the two factors, namely being the high frequency and imbedding dirt in conversations and storylines prove dirt's importance for the novels. The analysis serves to show how prevalent dirt is in the novels and how influential it is for the story and the image created in the reader's head. The description and characterization of dirt offers the readers a great and detailed picture of the environmental circumstances.

Finally, it is important to address the limitations of this thesis. In terms of its main limitations, it can be said that a clear one is that the analysis and the thesis statement are, of course, limited to Charles Dickens's novels. This therefore presents only a small scale of what is actually possible. The thesis statement of this thesis can, in future studies, be used to further analyze and draw conclusions in the environmental analysis field. Future research could focus on using this thesis's main concept to analyze a great scope of corpus, including different authors and different literary works of different time periods in order to prove its stability. This could enable the environmental field to find even more novels that at first glance might deal with different main themes, but at second glance might offer further contribution to the field of ecocriticism. With the help of this thesis's claim, making people more aware of dirt in novels could make a greater impact on the ecocritical field and might evoke some interest in further expanding the term dirt. Furthermore, the focus on later released novels can be seen as another limitation. For future studies, a comparison of the earlier and later novels may give further, interesting insights into Charles Dickens as an ecocritical author.

What is more is that the nonhuman part of the environment has to be excluded to fit to the length of this thesis. However, exploring the nonhuman in Charles Dickens's novels could provide an even greater and wider picture of environmental criticism in his novels. Future studies can take on this limitation to further broaden the insights of ecocriticism and further show how environmental Charles Dickens's novels truly are.

Despite the obvious limitations of this thesis, this thesis has a clear objective. This thesis aims to show that while dirt per se is something bad and something we should do our best to get rid of in order to protect not only the planet but also ourselves, dirt is also the main contributor to environmental thinking. By noticing dirt, one can start to think about it. By being directly affected and even annoyed by dirt, one can start to think about it. Discourse is what we need to make a change. Without thinking about dirt, there will be no change. If dirt and the environmental damage would be invisible, there would be no environmental thinking. If dirt would not directly affect us, nobody would have started to think about it. But the fact that dirt is so persistent and the fact that dirt is so effective gives us the opportunity to create discourse and ultimately to create change. If dirt is visible when reading a novel, imagine how visible it can be in reality. Therefore, the analysis of dirt is not only relevant in the fictional novels, as it can show us that Charles Dickens noticed it and the readers can notice it, but what is more, the awareness of dirt and the annoyance created by it can be two main forces of creating environmental thinking in reality. Making aware of dirt and showing everyone how it can affect us, can help to start, create or increase environmental thinking.

1. The British Industrial Revolution and its effects

In order to provide the analysis about the different types of dirt being found in Charles Dickens's novels, it is important and necessary to first to consider the historical context which the chosen novels were written in, as it can be assumed that this has a vast impact on the writing and themes in the literary works.

The author Charles Dickens, whose novels are chosen for the analysis section of this thesis, is generally regarded as one of the most important and influential writers of the Victorian Era, which mainly affected the 18th, but also 19th-century England. During the reign of Queen Victoria, Great Britain went through drastic economic, social as well as cultural changes (Moore 9). The main driving force of these changes was the Industrial Revolution, which completely transformed the world as people knew it. Roughly starting around the 1700s, the Industrial Revolution marked the beginning of a major focus on industry and economy, drastically

changing the lives of the inhabitants, especially those living in rural areas, which will be discussed at a later time (Housel 4).

As industrialization mainly involved the use of machines rather than human beings working on production items, the huge environmental impact of these changes cannot be ignored here. In particular, the use and burning of raw materials such as coal and iron greatly worsened the air quality and the environmental state of Great Britain at the time. Of course, there were still people working in the factories, especially on the new machines, but the machines were the main labor force and were used to productively consolidate and improve the production phase (Sullivan *Dirty Nature* 111).

In order to provide a broad and general overview of the historical background, the social and economic changes will be discussed in the following chapter. Although this thesis is primarily concerned with environmental issues found in Charles Dickens's novels, it is still important to provide a precise and detailed outline of the most relevant changes brought about by industrialization in the areas of society and economy. Human beings play a crucial role in the environment, therefore, describing what went on in society of the time is inevitable. Having summarized the main social changes, the next chapter will focus on the main area of interest, the environmental changes that occurred during this period. To complete the historical background and conclude the information on the influential historical time period, Charles Dickens's personal experience of living through the Industrial Revolution and his experience of child labor will be briefly summarized and explained. The historical background will provide deep insights into how the Industrial Revolution worked on an individual, societal and environmental level. This will help to place the novels in a time frame and to recognize the influences of the time period, as well as the references to changes and individual issues that occurred at the time. Therefore, this part of the thesis will provide one of the most important guidelines for the analysis.

1.1 The influence of the Industrial Revolution on society and economy

As already mentioned, the main focus of this thesis will not be the social norms and changes during the Industrial Revolution, but rather on the environmental issues of the time. However, for the analysis of the selected novels, it is absolutely necessary to consider the social aspect, as the social attitudes as well as the class system of the time play an important role in thinking about and analyzing the attitudes towards the environmental changes happening at the time. Therefore, an outline of the most relevant issues will be made. It should be noted that there will

be certain overlaps between social and environmental change in this chapter. One of the main assertions of this thesis is that humans and their environment are always interrelated. Therefore, in this chapter, some influences may be read as environmental changes, however this chapter will have to include environmental changes that were strongly related to society and its people, causing major changes in the lives of human beings.

First of all, it is important to note that Britain was the first nation to experience rapid urban and industrial expansion. This, of course, had many effects on British society. From the 1800s, the population grew rapidly, reaching an all-time high of 50 million inhabitants in 1951. In addition, the majority of these people lived in urban areas, close to the factories for work (Mosley 95).

Not only did the population number and their living situation change drastically, society and its characteristics changed as well. In the year 1845, Benjamin Disraeli, a politician who later served as Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1868 to 1880, started addressing the class system in Victorian England, which highlighted the divide between the poor and the rich. Therefore, social classes who were not to interact with each other were slowly but surely thematized and developed. However, it can be assumed that social segregation started happening naturally much earlier in an unofficial, unpolitical way, often having to do with different working positions in the job hierarchy (Schuster 1). Despite the fact that there were multiple different reasons for social segregation, the most profound difference that immediately built a metaphorical wall between human beings was the different lifestyle in different working classes.

While this of course profoundly influenced the adult workers, one group of people were nonetheless affected the same, if not even worse: the children. While many think about the lives and social segregation between the working classes and the middle classes, and mainly think about the adult workers, a great number of workers at the time were actually children. The influences of the Industrial Revolution on the childhood of many was especially visible when comparing the life of the lower and middle or higher classes. Whereas children from the upper classes enjoyed privileges such as loads of free time and a sufficient amount of time to study for their academic education, the life of children from working classes looked very different. This was mainly due to the difference in their mothers' lives. In contrast to higher class women, who were able to live well off of the earned money in the family and thus had enough time to educate their offspring well, mothers from the working classes struggled to live with the little money the family earned, on top of that had to care for the chores around the house while

simultaneously not rarely working full-time jobs themselves. This naturally resulted in a lack of timely resources to provide a stable education for the children in working-class households. Consequently, the sad result of these conditions was an unfortunately much shorter childhood for working-class children, as they soon had to step into the working field themselves to support their families, which further expanded the gap between the two groups of children. It was expected that youngsters from lower classes supported their family's financial situation. Even though the legal age in Victorian Britain at the time was set to twenty-one, many children went to work at seven years old, sometimes even being younger than that (Schuster 13).

The natural consequence of children going to work at such young ages was that their level of education was distinctively lower than those of higher-class children, further expanding the proverbial wall between the social classes. Many children simply stopped going to school altogether, whereas others went, however only very rarely. Moreover, due to the lack of financial resources, there were very little options as to where to send working-class children to school. Thus, Sunday schools or Dame-Schools, which were low-cost schools that only took a limited number of students in, were the only two realistic options for working families. Hence, it can be said that the level of education and the possibility of receiving education were dependent on the financial income of families. Educational equality therefore was a far-off topic at the time (Schuster 14).

Talking of equality, it also has to be mentioned that there also were gender equality issues concerning education during the Victorian Era, as female children often received even less education than their male counterparts. According to the world view then, females were expected to take on the burden of doing household chores, while simultaneously working more hours for less money (Schuster 14).

However, not only females had an additional disadvantage, also the older siblings of working-class families were often assigned a special kind of task. As the oldest sibling in the family, it was expected that they would look after their younger siblings and be the first to go to work, which often resulted in benefits for the younger members of the family, as sending siblings to work was often done in a hierarchical order depending on the age of the siblings. This means that the oldest members of the family faced a considerable shortage of childhood time in comparison to the other siblings who were, at least to a certain extent and often only for a limited time, unburdened by the oldest ones (Schuster 14).

In contrast to the lives of working-class children, the children from the higher classes enjoyed longer childhoods, especially as they were oftentimes not forced to go to work during their childhood at all. The expectations of the offspring of upper-class families were quite different, as the boys of the families were expected to finish their education and only then start to work, while the girls were expected to find a fine man to marry. Of course, this meant that the dependency on the parents was much bigger for upper-class children than it was for working-class ones. Other benefits experienced by these children included more leisure time, fewer responsibilities and generally better chances of a better life due to better education. These circumstances and differences in educational attainment are one of the many factors that divided the upper and lower classes. The class system was therefore strengthened and the division between the classes became even more pronounced (Schuster 15).

Another reason for segregation were the environmental conditions of the time, which created not only environmental but also social problems. The generally dirty air and the visually blackened urban living spaces of the British further led to residential segregation. The rather wealthy population sought homes that were out of the reaches of the obvious smoke pollution, meaning that they moved farther away from the factories and industrial spaces, as those were detrimentally polluted. A prominent example of this changing of living spaces was Manchester, where many upper-class people changed their location to cleaner suburbs such as Wilmslow and Alderley Edge, hoping to escape the damaging effects done to the landscapes happening in the industrial cities. Thus, the working classes who were not able to afford their relocation and were often dependent on living close to their working spaces, were left to deal with the detrimental effects of the industrialization in urban cities. Therefore, the segregation of classes was not just a theoretical concept in the minds of the wealthy, but by actually separating the poor from the rich in terms of living space, there were poor people in the inner circle of the cities, while the rich moved around the circle, creating a spatial separation of two groups of human beings (Mosley 98). Poor people were also often considered to be filthy, as the pollution and dirt was generally negatively connotated, especially when covering the clothes or skin of people (Cohen, and Johnson ix).

While having to live in the polluted inner circle of the cities, the working classes also had to deal with great health risks stemming from the pollution in their living area. Furthermore, social contact between working classes and higher classes was almost non-existent, which created an even bigger feeling of segregation, isolation and exclusion for the members of the working classes. With this feeling of marginalization came issues such as drinking, gambling and

uprising crime rates. Oftentimes this was speculated to be related to the reduced consumption of sunshine, which had both psychological and physical effects on the laborers. It is said that out of all the defining factors of the century, none were just as detrimental as the consequences of air pollution (Mosley 98). Interestingly enough, this shows how interconnected human beings, and their nature are. In this case, it is clear that when nature suffers, so do the people who live in it, whether in terms of anticipated health risks or even social segregation, partly due to environmental conditions.

One of the reasons why it was allowed to produce smoke pollution in the first place was that at the time, the smoke coming from the factories was seen as the reason for the up-flourishing of Great Britain and therefore seen as something valuable and beneficial. It has to be noted that at the time, the economic growth was massive, helping the companies to earn large sums of money. Therefore, the growth and development of the urban cities was seen as inevitable for the wealth of the population as this was what brought the money into the families – whether it be lower-class households or upper-class ones. The air pollution was just seen as a necessary side-effect at first. Growth of industry and smoke were seen as going hand in hand with each other. With smoke came fruitful trading conditions, an increase in job opportunities, and creation and expansion of wealth among the middle and upper classes (Mosley 98-99).

The air pollution, however, was not only caused by the factories that burned the materials, but another big contributor to smoke were the in-house chimneys. They were used for heating and therefore also released gases and smoke into the air. The smoke that came from the households themselves was connected to well-being and comfort, as only the richer people of society were able to afford chimneys in their houses for heating purposes (Mosley 99). What is especially important about these residential chimneys is that they often needed a high amount of maintenance, often done by the housekeepers in richer families and often needed a sweep by a professional, mainly because poorly maintained chimneys often resulted in damaging fires. The sweep industry that roared around that time was simultaneously a big contributor to child labor, as most of the people employed to carry out the sweeps were children (Jackson 213-14).

Concerning economic change, it can be said that during the Victorian Era, the consumption of coal for both industrial and domestic purposes rose to 200 million tons per year, which is twenty times more than it was before. More and more factories were being built, which resulted in a very urban landscape, with a great number of chimneys ranging into the sky altering the whole

appearance of the scenery. In the homes themselves, coal was the main source of heating, which is one of the reasons why it was so common and widely used around Britain (Mosley 96).

1.2 The creation of environmental problems

The Victorian era not only brought about major changes in the economy and society, but also had a major impact on the environment and the nature of English society. What used to be a rather rural and agrarian nation, quickly became a highly industrialized and modern society which led to many environmental problems, bringing about ones we still face today (Tait 103). In general, it can be said that many environmental disasters develop over a long period of time, rather than occurring quickly and suddenly. Similarly, the industrialization of Great Britain has caused damage over many decades, therefore generating problems we still face nowadays. It is now widely accepted that the Industrial Revolution can be seen as a significant starting point of human beings altering and actively changing the climate, mainly due to the excessive consumption of fossil fuels for various purposes such as economic or domestic (Mosley 94-95). Generally, it can be said that the most prevalent changes of environment were seen in its appearance, mainly because green fields and pure nature were replaced by an urban landscape. Furthermore, waste dramatically increased, whether it stemmed from households or from horse traffic, which especially increased the amount of mud on the streets, which made walking or travelling on them significantly more uncomfortable. These issues not only led to diseases and health issues, but also to considerable discomfort. Other forms of filth that frequently covered and worsened the environment's condition were human excrement, as well as dust stemming from the smoke of the various factories (Jackson 3).

While there were various environmental issues that appeared at the time as listed, the most important one for this thesis will be air pollution during the Industrial Revolution period. In 1782, the first steam-powered cotton mill in Manchester was constructed by Richard Arkwright, which naturally revolutionized especially the production of clothing, making it faster and more productive. However, with the economic advantages, there came drastic disadvantages for the environment. By the year 1800, numerous of these mills were built in order to further increase the economic growth. This led to the construction of furnaces and refineries for the mills, which resulted in high levels of air pollution in the surrounding area, as well as the sealing of the soil surface and the natural environment (Brimblecombe 16).

Nowadays many people live in areas where the air is polluted and often harmful to health. However, this is actually not a new problem as around two hundred years ago, air pollution was

already a significant problem in several cities, with London being one of the most affected. In London, large amounts of fossil fuels were burned, resulting in highly polluted air and therefrom resulting health consequences. This did not stop, however, but continued to soar, resulting in Britain becoming the most powerful industrial city the world had ever seen. Naturally, the knowledge about the damaging effects of certain substances was lower than it is nowadays, which is why back then highly serious pollutants such as asbestos, lead and CFCs were considered harmless and greatly used for industrialization in Great Britain. This resulted in large amounts of smoke covering the large cities in the British landscape. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the result of coal combustion was so visible, many people did not know or did not acknowledge the detrimental effects of air pollution. Instead of seeing smoke as a direct result of industrialization and therefore energy use, many people regarded smoke to be stemming from a natural biological process. Diseases that spread at the time were not blamed on smoke, but instead other scapegoats were sought. Some people actually seemed to think that smoke was not pollution, but in fact an antidote to pollution. This, of course, led people to believe that smoke was actually healthy for humans, which was later disproved by scientists in the late nineteenth century (Thorsheim 1-2).

Due to the continuous gas production of these cotton mills, the air pollution remained constant and quickly but effectively changed and damaged the surrounding areas. Naturally, the increased air pollution was linked to increasing death rates during the time. Therefore, it can be said that the increased air pollution had drastic effects on the English population, as the mortality rate increased above the expected norm at the time (Mosley 97).

But not only human beings were affected by the fog, also nature had to face various issues. Oftentimes, the vegetation was severely damaged by the pollution. Not only did the smoke have a devastating effect on vegetation, it also significantly reduced biodiversity in the affected areas. Parks, gardens and especially grass were affected, which had difficulty growing even in highly industrialized cities, mainly due to the high acidity of the soil. This, of course, had a huge impact on the landscape and people's perceptions of it. What also influenced people's impressions of their surroundings was the change in buildings. Buildings no longer looked like they were made of stone or normal building materials, but in fact their appearance drastically changed due to smoke pollution (Mosley 97-98). This obvious change in appearance was mainly due to the constant smoke from the coal burning in the factories. The architecture was often confronted with the smoke that discolored the surrounding buildings more than just superficially. Not only did the gases released by the burning of coal change the visible color of the buildings, but the

constant exposure to acid gases caused limestone buildings in particular to weather and eventually decay much more quickly (Brimblecombe 16). In addition, the soot and grime that often covered buildings and monuments grew faster and more widely, constantly changing the appearance of architecture in affected areas and landscapes. All those influences resulted in strange-looking buildings and houses, permanently changing the landscape and familiar surroundings of human beings (Mosley 98).

Another highly detrimental and life-changing occurrence of the continuous air pollution was the emergence of the famous London fog. Pollution in London mainly came from the use of coal in homes used for heating and cooking. This was able to happen as residential pollution was quite unregulated at the time, only gaining political interest in around 1952, eventually leading to the Clean Air Acts of 1956 (Hanlon 911). Here it has to be mentioned that while, yes, fog is a natural phenomenon that appears all over the world, the fog appearing during the Industrial Revolution, particularly in the London area, has little to do with a natural phenomenon. The occurrence of the London fog described here was a direct result of continuous air pollution and therefore a damaging factor to the environment. Even though London has always been known for a general dampness of the air, specifically due to its closeness to the river Thames, it has to be noted that what appeared in the Victorian Era is far from a normal, natural manifestation (Corton 1). Another important distinctive factor between natural fog and the one that appeared in London at the times of industrialization is that it was to be considered as omnipresent. In contrast to natural mist, the fog during the Victorian era influenced human beings directly: it stung in the eyes, it made it harder for the individuals to breathe, and clothes and skin were stained by the surrounding fog. What is more, the smoke particles that were released into the air reduced the amount of sunshine that was visible, which meant that even during the hot summer months, the inhabitants of large cities rarely experienced bright sunshine. However, despite the direct effects on human health being so obvious, society's awareness was slow to develop at the time, and it was many years before action was taken to tackle air pollution (Mosley 95-96).

Apart from the clearly visible effects of air pollution, such as London fog, there were many additional health hazards that the smoke production brought with it. The pollution of air was directly linked to the development of the children's disease rickets, which included a vitamin D deficiency due to diet and lack of sunshine and resulted in weak and calcium-deficient bones. The most influential fact about this sickness is that it was actually endemic to Britain's most

industrial cities and mining areas, proving how detrimental and influential the smoke production actually was to the human society (Mosley 96).

Interestingly enough, many of the old mills that were built during the Industrial Revolution have now turned into ruins, still marking the spots of change and destruction of the environment. Old mills in the Britain urban areas now have turned into dirt themselves, littering the living spaces by decaying and not attracting any investment to rebuild those areas. Not only the mills, but also old workshops and factories are slowly falling apart and turning into ruins and ashes. What is so interesting about this is that those buildings that caused so much damage and litter to the world, now turn into litter themselves, meaning that even after being inactive and falling apart, they still manage to affect the environment negatively to this day (Edensor 313).

Another change in economy that led to environmental changes was the development and expansion of railroads that primarily occurred during the nineteenth century. While the development of railroads greatly affected the economic growth and also the living situation of the British society, especially in England and Wales, the environmental effects are strikingly interesting. The building of railroad lines depleted large amounts of soil, which negatively affected the environment's condition further. Rural farmers, however, were mostly unaffected by this at first, as the new farming techniques that developed throughout the Industrial Revolution managed to increase profit despite the depletion of soil. It is important to mention that the railroad development actually bettered the life of the humans living in industrialized cities as it gave them a chance to travel and leave the polluted urban areas at least for a short period of time (Joyce 20). The environmental effects were mainly a result of population growth and density, resulting in more factories being built and operated. The railroad mainly created many new opportunities for industry and businesses, therefore resulting in more pollution both by households and factories (Joyce 26).

1.3 Charles Dickens's life during the Industrial Revolution

As an author, Charles Dickens has written many influential and popular novels. However, his childhood background and his upbringing are particularly interesting as this makes his novels so interesting and important for this thesis. Dickens's childhood and early life are representative of the social and economic changes that Victorian Britain underwent during the Industrial Revolution.

Charles's grandparents were servants of an aristocratic household, which brought with it a position of power and authority, as well as a degree of achievement and wealth for the family. His father worked as an office clerk, which was considered to be a quite important job during the nineteenth century. In this way, Dickens's father earned a noble amount of money and secured a safe pension, which he started early due to health problems. However, John Dickens fell into moderate debt, which led to his move to London, where Charles was unable to attend school due to his family's financial circumstances. During his time in London, his father was not successful in paying off his debt, which resulted in him being sent to prison in 1822. Shortly before his father's incarceration, Charles had already started working at his first workplace, Warren's Blacking, at 11 years old, seemingly in order to support his family in times of financial hardships. Thus, it can be said that Charles Dickens's experiences with child labor resemble those of other working-class children. Of course, Dickens grew up in a rather stable and middle-class household and only later went on to lose his security and change social classes at the young age of eleven (Smith 3-4). Dickens was reported to feel easily cast away and felt like he was treated with little to no compassion at the time. Dickens goes on to describe Warren's Blacking factory as a dilapidated and rotting house, infested with rats, and close to a river that runs alongside the factory. His job at the manufactory was to cover the pots of paste-blackening. His experiences at the factory were knowingly included in his novels *Oliver Twist*, being inspired by one of his colleagues, and *David Copperfield* (Forster 25). The scholar Toru Sasaki (401) states that these experiences in his early childhood created a "[...] wound that had a deep and lasting impact upon Dickens's imagination [...]". Here it has to be mentioned that working at such a young age in this period was not uncommon, and naturally every child deals with their experiences differently resulting in different products stemming from the processing of traumatic and life-defining instances (Hutter 7).

What is interesting to mention when looking at his life and Dickens's way of dealing with these experiences during the Industrial Revolution is that most information that came out about him and especially his time at Warren's Blacking, were actually released through John Forster, who was privately given a document by Dickens himself where he talked about his shaping experiences, approximately 20 years after (Bodenheimer 9). It is to be assumed that these partly traumatic experiences shaped his writings that assumably have some autobiographical characteristics. It is therefore only reasonable to look at the novels through a historical and autobiographical lens to see how they deal with or are inspired by certain situations in his novels, especially those for which Dickens himself claimed inspiration.

2. Reading Charles Dickens ecocritically

The theoretical concepts of this thesis aim to link history, theory and the selected literary works. In the first part of this thesis, the main historical foundations were set to give an idea of the background to the selected novels. This part aims to present and summarize the theoretical concepts that will influence and dictate the analysis in this thesis. The theoretical concepts of this thesis will help to support the claims made in this thesis.

The main concept that is relevant for this thesis is the study of ecocriticism and its relevant subcategories, Victorian ecocriticism and affective ecocriticism. The ecocritical approach will be used to analyze the novels through an environmental lens, focusing on the inclusion of environmental issues in the different stories. Furthermore, the ecological thought, a subcategory of ecocriticism, will help to demonstrate the interconnectedness between human beings and their nature. In addition, the theory of dirt will be explained and summarized in order to provide a basis for the work that has already been done in this field. With the help of these existing concepts, this thesis aims to further expand the concept and offer an ecocritical approach to dirt-theory. The inclusion of dirt theory makes it possible to analyze the instances of dirt in the selected writings and to find further evidence for the main claim of this thesis.

2.1 Ecocriticism

In order to lay the groundwork for this thesis, the main theoretical concept with which this thesis and various other pioneering scholars' work, is explained and summarized.

First, however, it is necessary to emphasize why there is a need for a scholarly practice such as ecocriticism in the first place. Examples for the need for ecocriticism can not only be found in the Victorian Age as described in the previous chapters, but especially nowadays we can see why there is still a massive need for an ecocritical lens. The hottest years ever to be recorded occurred in the time span of 2010-2019, with 2024 now being the currently hottest year on record (NASA 2025). Research organized by NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows that the average surface temperature of the Earth in 2019 was the second highest since 1880. Further studies suggest that climate change is a factor in increased human mortality, especially due to extreme heat stress, air pollution and outbreaks of various viruses. Specifically, the coronavirus which hit the world in 2020, further reaffirms the interdependence between nature and human beings, especially their health. Looking at all these factors, it comes naturally that the focus of eco-humanist activism focuses on spreading and raising awareness of nature and its influence on the human race (Ryan 22-23).

Before moving on to the main underlying issue in the environmental crisis, the main source of environmental damage needs to be discussed. Generally, it can be said that one of the most life-threatening forms of environmental damage is pollution. One specifically detrimental form is air pollution, which results from the burning of great amounts of fossil fuels. In fact, about three billion people, or about half the world's population, now live in large cities where the air is unhealthy to breathe in, meaning that many people currently suffer from the negative effects of air pollution (Thorsheim 1).

What also has to be done in order to understand the underlying issue is to define the term nature. While this is highly discussed and oftentimes different definitions are used, this thesis will refer to the definition by Timothy Clark (*Cambridge Introduction* 6): "[...] nature is the sum total of the structures, substances and causal power that are the universe." This definition makes clear that the nature is not only the place we live in and otherwise unnecessary, but instead it is clearly stated that the nature is the power that is the universe. With the help of this definition, it becomes clear that humans are dependent on the power of nature, which becomes even more apparent when we look at the influences that nature has had on the human beings in the past, the present and will have in the future.

One key issue that has led to the climate crisis is that the nature, which was once unaffected and untouched by the hands of humankind, has now been stripped of its natural characteristics and has been transformed into something to be used by the human being for the human being. Instead of recognizing all that belongs to nature and considering its unique qualities, nature has been instrumentalized and deprived of these qualities to become a mere ground and space for humankind and its beneficial development for humanity itself. This can be seen as one of the main issues in the climate crisis, as human beings no longer look at nature as something that has rights on its own, but instead humans think about how to make a benefit out of nature. Here this concept can be connected to the burning of fossil fuels. The high amount of burning coal is beneficial to human beings, mostly economically and socially considering certain living standards, which is why the damage to the nature is often ignored. What is already clear, however, is that the damage is not only affecting nature, but people are also beginning to suffer from negative consequences such as breathing difficulties (Alaimo 2).

This is where the need for greater recognition of the issues at stake comes into play. One way of trying to increase awareness and create discourse about the environmental issues is the practice of ecocriticism. Generally, it can be said that the practice of ecocriticism is relatively

young, having only really emerged during the 1990s due to more widespread recognition of the environmental crisis (Tait 107). While the practice of ecocriticism is still expanding and displays a highly diverse terminology, it can be said that the main shared focus of this method is the concern over the state of the environment (Tait 104). The scholar Scott Slovic (99) describes ecocriticism as an examination of the relationship between human beings and nature as the physical environment through textual analysis, which will also be the method used in this thesis. Buell, Heise, and Thornber (418; 420) describe the aim to explore environmental dimensions of not only literature and written work, but also other creative media with an environmental lens not limited or restricted to any particular method. They further argue that the arts of imagination and the study of those can help contribute to the understanding and awareness of environmental issues. It is further highlighted that the interconnectedness of human beings and their environment, nature and surroundings plays a crucial role in analyzing literature ecocritically. Mazzeno, and Morrison (2) further emphasize the fact that one of the main ideas of ecocriticism is to show that literary texts can have something to contribute to the larger debates and discussions about the future of the environment and ecological systems. Therefore, it is stated that literature can help human beings to understand and comprehend scientific issues such as issues of the environmental state. Literature can thus support the understanding of scientific information that would normally not be understood or not cared about. In brief, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds throughout human cultural history (Garrard 5).

Ecocriticism especially focuses on extending ethical consideration of the nonhuman by insisting on humans' immersion into those worlds. Many ecologists believe that raising one's awareness happens mostly through readjusting or learning new values towards one's environment. On the other hand, social ecologists believe in focusing on the social dimension of environmental depredation to understand that the same structural forces that create inequality and injustice create our detachment from the environment (Tait 110).

Concerning the energy problem in our world, the scholar Alan MacDuffie (*Victorian Literature* 2) states that these problems humanity faces are both material and representational: material in the sense of limited vital resources and irreversible environmental problems, and representational in the way that these problems are usually distorted in our cultural imagery and the use of the world itself. Further, the limits of the way we use the world, and its resources, often become evident when looking at the overpopulated cities, polluted living spaces or overcrowding. These highly evident and visible humanly exploited limits of the earth and its

resources are often used in the novels of many famous and influential writers. These novels offer great insights for ecocritical reading.

A specific question of 21st century ecocriticism is whether or not reading ecocritically can be applied to texts outside of the scope of nature writing (Clark *Value of Ecocriticism* 88). While this has already been done, the aim of this thesis is to further explore ways in which literary works outside the nature writing genre can be analyzed ecocritically, in order to show that the environment is everywhere and affects us at all times. What is also deeply connected to ecocriticism is the concept of ecojustice which defines the right of all human beings to benefit from a healthy environment. As will be seen in the analysis of this thesis, this is unfortunately not the case. Further it is important to mention that this thesis will mainly focus on the subcategory of material ecocriticism. Material ecocriticism is the study of how material forms, in this thesis's case dirt, interact with the human world, creating discourses (Iovino, and Oppermann 1-2). The reason why material ecocriticism is so important is because it shows how interconnected human beings and the material around them are. Material is at all times able to influence and interact with the life of human beings, which will support the claim of visibility and perception this thesis makes (Clark *Value of Ecocriticism* 114).

To end the discussion of this concept it is important to mention that ecocriticism and thinking ecologically is, however, not only a topic in literature or in science, but also in philosophy where philosophers explore the relationship between the planet and the human being. The scholar Stiegler (22-23) works with the concept of the Anthropocene and shows that the human endlessly exploits and abuses its natural environment. The Anthropocene will soon reach its limit that might threaten the end of the world due to the abuse done to the Earth. However, this limitation that humans could recognize could also lead to a recognition of the fact that the Earth and the world's resources are actually finite and reach a new understanding of nature and the environment. This form of recognition that Stiegler mentions is one way of saving the planet and finally changing something in the way human beings treat their living space. This recognition will be picked up in the analysis section of this thesis and will lead to the final thesis statement. The Anthropocene mentioned by Stiegler becomes especially important when we analyze the starting point of this concept, which is set to the Victorian era.

2.2 The subcategories Victorian ecocriticism and affective ecocriticism

An important period that is clearly related and relevant to the discourse of ecocriticism, as well as to this thesis, is of course the Victorian era. The ecocritical treatment and analysis of Victorian

literature can be described as Victorian ecocriticism, which naturally plays an important role in this thesis due to Charles Dickens's novels being written as well as released during the Victorian time period. Victorian novels are generally defined as the literary works produced during the reign of Queen Victoria of Great Britain (Moore 9). The Victorian Age confronted the British society with many changes, both socially as well as economically as already explained in the previous chapters, but what is more important in this context here is that is marked a significant shift in the perception of nature human beings were living in. The rural landscape that was the living space of Britain's population turned into an industrialized, urbanized and modern space with modern environmental problems. The writers of the time therefore lived in often densely populated and heavily industrialized spaces, and experienced world exploration, expansion as well as new scientific findings (Carroll 305). What is so interesting especially about Victorian novels is that the writers of this time have, due to their circumstances, already dealt with and thought about many of the issues we think about today. But not only did Victorian writers think about these issues, they even anticipated many of the environmental problems we are facing today. Victorian Ecocriticism is therefore considered to be a worthwhile field of study that is said to have the potential of spotlighting the origins of the current environmental crisis (Tait 103). Clark (*Ecocriticism on the Edge* 2) mentions the importance of the Victorian era as a time period when dealing with the concept of the Anthropocene mentioning that the beginning was the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the steam engine, putting us in the scope of discussion of this thesis. Further, the Anthropocene defines the time when human beings started to actively change and alter the condition of the environment, which is why Victorian novels are so important to analyze ecocritically. Victorian novels could help to find new ways of dealing with the current relationship with the natural world that is causing so many environmental problems, because Victorian writers were so concerned with writing about the environment and nature. Moreover, Victorian writers experienced one of the great beginnings of environmental degradation, so they are the ones who experienced the change between a rural landscape being transformed into an urban, modernized city that is itself causing environmental degradation. It is because the Victorians know both worlds that their writing becomes so important to the ecocritical field (Gold 214; 216).

Nonetheless, Victorian ecocriticism is a rather new field of study and has been relatively late in developing. Therefore, its principles and ways of study are still being shaped (Mazzeno, and Morrison 1).

Although there will be many future findings and developments in the field of ecocriticism, the analysis of literary works through the environmental lens offers great insights into the interconnectedness between humans and their environment. A specific part of ecocriticism that shows why reading novels and other literary pieces with a focus on environmental issues is the subcategory affective ecocriticism.

In his work, Glenn Albrecht (1) states that the most important aspect of ecocriticism to understand is its fundamental connection to the universe, which he characterizes as both ordered and chaotic. In order to understand the nature of life on earth and its relationship to the forces that create and destroy, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental principles that rule the universe. What is special about the universe is that it is in endless, ceaseless motion, which gives the universe a sense of emotionality. The dynamic movement of the universe can manifest as emotional responses, which are defined as subjective experiences that evoke a particular emotional state or affect in an individual. The universe in which we live is shaped by a variety of powerful forces that have the capacity to both create and destroy. In this light, the universe can be seen as the primary source of all the emotional forces that operate within the human being. In his work, Albrecht shows that emotionality and the universe, and the changes that take place within it, are deeply interconnected. The scholar offers a definition and explanation of the term affective ecocriticism and demonstrates how the natural world and its transformations can profoundly affect human experience and the emotions one feels. It is vital to recognize that this is the most important initial step in the process of developing environmental awareness. It is only when an individual experiences a particular phenomenon or is influenced by a particular idea that the discourse within the human community can begin. This awareness is the basis of ecological thinking. It allows us to consider ways of caring for the environment and shows how the environment and human well-being are connected. Emotions, especially negative emotions, motivate human beings to act.

There is also the concept of Anthropocene anxiety, which encompasses the feelings of anxiety and guilt that people feel when they see environmental damage, such as rising carbon emissions, and realize that they are not doing anything to mitigate this, and consequently feel guilty or anxious. While this is a fairly recent and modern concept, it still works when applied to the Victorian age, though obviously not at the level of knowledge of the problems. While in the Victorian age the only real signs for damaged nature were different forms of pollution, nowadays people have data and stats to see the change in nature (Merola 28). There is also the concept of the land effect, which means that people feel what is happening to the land. Although

this is always present, it is rarely recognized by people. Nevertheless, the concept of feeling with nature and seeing the damage done to nature triggering certain feelings plays an important role in this paper (Arnold 97).

Summarized shortly affective ecocriticism studies the feelings evoked in human beings by environmental changes and their resulting damage. Feelings that can arise when environmental damage is recognized or noticed can include anxiety, fear and guilt. These emotions can have a significant impact on human thinking and are therefore important to consider in this context (Bladow, and Ladino 28; 32). The study of affective ecocriticism, which looks closely at the feelings caused by environmental damage, will help the analysis to link the thoughts and emotions to the need for change and the ecological thought which will be discussed in the next chapter. In the analysis, some selected passages will be analyzed in relation to the feelings evoked to further prove the claims of this thesis.

2.3 The ecological thought and thinking ecologically

In the contemporary era, it has become increasingly evident that the ecological crisis has reached a point where it should be widely recognized and clear that it is directly linked to other global issues, or at the very least, there is a real possibility of achieving this acknowledgement. This possibility establishes the primary foundation of what the scholar Timothy Morton (1) refers to as *the ecological thought*.

The study of the ecological thought shows that thinking ecologically and dealing with ecological issues surpasses thinking about issues such as global warming, recycling or air pollution. Rather than looking only at these problems, ecological thinking allows us to address many of the interrelated problems associated with the environmental crisis, especially those that are directly and effectively caused by human beings. In particular, it places a significant emphasis on the nonhuman world. Instead of being concerned only with the nonhuman realm, ecological thought also embraces the human dimension and the role of humans within it, making the environmental crisis in particular a human issue (Morton 2-4).

It comes to show that modern economic changes such as modernization and industrialization have drastically influenced the environment. In addition to causing environmental damage and destruction, these actions also have a detrimental impact on the very processes of thought and reasoning. It is clear that human beings are only able to perceive and comprehend a small part of the magnitude and depth of the climate crisis. This has a lot to do with the fact that human beings have the wrong image and perception of what nature really is. Oftentimes, nature was

considered something to be out of reach, something one cannot interact or connect with. In this way, nature almost became alienated and perceived as something that is partly hidden from us. Naturally, ecological thinking nowadays shows us that this is not true, as we have evidence suspecting the interconnectedness between human beings and their natural surroundings. Therefore, thinking about the interconnectedness and accepting its truth for oneself is to be called ecological thinking (Morton 4-7).

While the term ecological thought entails the word thinking, it has to be mentioned that the ecological thought does not just occur in the mind of human beings. More than being a simple thought, ecological thinking happens by practicing and processing the connections between human beings and things from the nonhuman world, such as animals. That being said, the ecological thought is oftentimes hard to accept and practice, as it shows and highlights the fact that humans have been oblivious to something that has been in front of everyone's faces the whole time. It is a common human tendency to resist acknowledging the existence of facts that are readily apparent. Integrating the ecological thought into one's life is a challenging, yet crucial step in the process of combating environmental degradation (Morton 7-9).

2.4 Dirt theory

The theory of dirt has been examined thoroughly in the past and will define the analysis of this thesis. Mainly, different forms of dirt will be analyzed in the different novels. First of all, an outline of the past findings of dirt theory will be explained.

Generally, it can be said that the term dirt encompasses a great scope of things and therefore functions as an umbrella term for many different ones. However, something that all forms of dirt have in common is that they are always surrounding human beings. Different types of literal dirt can be soil, earth or for example dust, while this is only naming a few examples (Sullivan *Dirt Theory* 515).

To begin with explaining the concept of dirt-theory, one of the most influential findings on the concept of dirt and its meaning were conducted by the scholar Sabine Schülting, who has written extensively on this theory. Schülting and her work is therefore an absolute necessity to be included in this thesis. It should be noted that Schülting's definition of dirt is concerned with social issues, whereas this thesis will expand the concept of dirt to adapt it as an environmental term. However, the intention is not to overturn the previous work, but to extend it.

When dealing with the scholar's work, one of the main definitions of dirt according to Schülting (5-6) is dirt as disorder. Generally, this expression signifies things being unclean and even

worthless, giving the term highly negative connotations. Dirt is seen as a relational and spatial category, which thus is able to disturb a certain order and consequently pollute what is most important to humans: their space, their surroundings, their bodies or objects. Considering the social circumstances of the Industrial Revolution, dirt functioned as a separator between the clean and the unclean: the unclean being the working classes that are both metaphorically and literally segregated from the clean upper classes. Dirt, therefore, supports the segregation of social classes and gives the upper classes a visible and functional way of doing so. In this way, the term dirt became a distinct marker of social class and race. The slum areas as well as the bodies of the poor were suddenly seen as a danger to the cleanness of the higher social classes. This not only had a disruptive effect, but also led to social issues such as extreme segregation in Britain's society.

The question as to why the lower social classes tended to look dirtier or were covered in dirt more usually is easily explained by the fact that there not only was a social segregation, but also a residential segregation. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the richer upper classes moved away from the center of the city, whereas the poorer inhabitants had no choice but to stay in the inner circle of the city. The inner circle of the city was more often than not the place where the industry found its place, meaning that there were factories and companies settling down, often quite close to the living spaces of the poor. Due to the high air pollution, the smoke and ashes often covered the people walking around in the debris of the factories. Therefore, working class people were often literally covered in dirt, which enabled the upper social classes to find an obvious distinction between the two (Mosley 98).

Similar to Schülting, the scholar Mary Douglas treats the term dirt as having a disordering effect. Douglas (36) describes the existence of dirt being an offence against order. She goes on to mention that the extermination of dirt does not act as negative movement, but rather shows a positive effort of organizing the humans' environment. Dirt should never be seen as a unique and isolated event, as dirt can be seen as the by-product of ordering and classification of matter and therefore displays a system of ordering objects or even human beings. Douglas also mentions that dirt has a moral imperative, which means that dirtiness is directly related to hygiene. In the mind of human beings, dirt often serves as a reason for something: sick people have either done something dirty or are dirty themselves and therefore are contaminated by dirt. Through this relation between dirt and human beings, the ordering and classification becomes evident. Human beings are sorted into a system that is comprehensible for the rest of the population (Douglas 36). This form of social segregation again relates to historical background

facts that actually took place during the Industrial Revolution. Upper classes developed a sense of disgust against dirty people, which only further led to obvious classification and segregation. Dirt as disorder is therefore one of the main driving factors in what happened to the social classes during the Industrial Revolution.

Concerning dirt as disorder and social stratification, it is important to accentuate that according to Schülting (6) dirt became something that spread across the human beings and their living spaces. Dirt therefore has a transformative power of disrupting local streets and houses, making them impassable. In order to not be transformed by the power of dirt, the higher social classes segregated themselves from specific areas as well as working-class human beings, being scared of becoming infected too. Hence, dirt is described as disorder at the level of individual as well as the social level. Dirt as disorder therefore is the main basis of dirt as social stratification. The disordering effect of dirt not only spreads around material things, but also bodies become affected, which conclusively leads to social segregation between dirty people and clean ones.

Another scholar that dealt with and described the segregating function of dirt similarly to Schülting is the scholar, Tom Crook. Crook (200) states that dirt in a society is whatever threatens a specific order and system. In Victorian society, dirt is a well-established, functional part. Thus, dirt has the capacity of eluding neat binary conceptualizations. In Victorian society that meant that dirt was regarded with disgust and repulsion, however it also created a source of fascination for certain people which will be seen in the analysis part of this thesis. This fascination especially reached the upper classes that constructed their own reality concerning dirt and its meaning for the human being.

The author Jackson Lee (3) further accentuates the disordering effect of dirt, especially negatively affecting people from the working classes. The scholar denotes dirt as filth, however, means the same as what the term dirt displays in other works. In his work, Jackson works through the various forms of dirt and filth that strained Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution. One of his main sayings is that filth implies social and domestic disorder. Dirt was connected to a feeling of being uncomfortable, and filthy living spaces and consequently the humans living in them were quickly associated with negative connotations. This especially struck working men, who were then linked to social issues such as alcoholism, further disordering the social classes and also the worth of the individual.

These two forms and dirt play a crucial role when analyzing the processes that were going on during the Industrial Revolution. However, it becomes obvious that these two forms are more

concerned with social issues, whereas this thesis intends to focus on how dirt can work in the environmental sphere, which is why the following form of dirt is the one most relevant for this thesis.

What is especially interesting about dirt is that human beings often keep dirt out of sight and therefore also out of mind. Rarely ever do human beings tend to think about the ground they are walking on, which naturally consists of dirt and gives us our known form of stability. Everything comes from it and eventually everything will return back to dirt. Soil is the root of our existence and is essential to life on earth. Nonetheless, human beings more often than not repeat the same mistakes they have made in the past, again without thinking about the importance of dirt for human life. Historians even suggest that how people treat their living space can impose a life span on civilizations, as the treatment of one's surroundings cannot only have influence on the environmental state, but can further influence social and political discourses as seen in the previous chapter (Montgomery 1-3).

Another important scholar that needs to be mentioned in the discussion of terminology and definition of dirt is Heather Sullivan. Sullivan's elaborations on the expression dirt are highly important for the development of this thesis, as she highlights the fact that dirt is always part of the human world, as we live on earth, are dependent on it and are surrounded by it. What is more, the first existence of dust emerges from the human body itself, which is why a dirty nature is always a part of ourselves. Due to humans' ongoing interactions with dirt and nature, dirt should be seen as a process rather than a distinct place. The scholar further accentuates that there simply is no existing boundary between us and dirty nature. Dirt acts as a mobile aspect of the humans' surroundings, being moved by earthly forces such as wind or water or the human itself. While dirt can also be highly toxic and carry diseases deadly to the human race, without dirt, there would be no terrestrial life, as it is the literal ground of human existence (Sullivan *Dirty Nature* 515-16). Sullivan's findings are highly important due to the way they efficiently show how dirt and the world and its human beings are connected and partly dependent on each other. Sullivan (*Dirt Theory* 111-12) further defines the term dirty nature. She states that dirty nature includes the bodily processes of consumption and reproduction carried out by living beings, but moreover it also shows the interactions of human beings with industrial products that now cover a great amount of the Earth. Further, she notices the fact that scientists have labeled the current era the Anthropocene as it is the era where the human impact on the Earth's surface and systems is most traceable, especially relating back to the effects of the Industrial Revolution. She further accentuates that what particularly defines this era is that human beings

have dramatically increased their extraction rates of energy and earthly resources, even reaching unpredictable levels that have never been reached before. Sullivan states that this has led to the following two things: First, there is an increased and heightened blindness towards the impact of those extractions. Secondly, it leads to the paradoxical claim that human beings have more independence from environmental despite the fact that we exploit earthly resources to a dangerous extent. This shows that humans tend to misjudge the impact they have on nature and furthermore, there seems to be a lack of understanding towards the limits of planet Earth. This is a highly interesting and important fact for the analysis of this thesis, as it will be shown that this blindness is taken up in the novels analyzed. Sullivan (*Dirt Theory* 113-14) also goes on to revisit the idea of dirt as disorder. In her writing she states that dirt has a disturbing nature, which means that wherever dirt is it is out of place. Similarly, pollution, which is a form of dirt, describes a cultural norm describing something out of place. Pollution will be the main form of dirt that will be taken for analysis, therefore being important to be mentioned here as a form of disorder that is clearly interconnected with the human being.

Similarly to Sullivan, the scholar Caleb Kelly deals with different dirt theories in one of his works. He states that dirt is a substance that is brought into the system from outside. Therefore, dirt theory and the examination of dirt connect human beings with nature through the inclusion of dirt into the system (Kelly 32). Considering this, Sullivan (*Dirty Nature* 515) argues that green thinking creates the possibility of dividing living space into clean and dirty spaces, which consequently can lead to social division of humans and their living space. Therefore, dirt is the material that spoils nature due to its contamination of the surroundings of human beings.

3. Dirt in Charles Dickens's novels

The following analysis section will form the main basis for answering the research questions of this thesis. The analysis will focus on three main parts and aspects corresponding to the thesis questions. Generally, it can be said that the main sources of information that are consulted for this analysis are the descriptions, as well as the thoughts and dialogues of different characters in the novels. Considering the aspects that will be analyzed, it can be said that first of all, it will be analyzed how the three selected novels generally deal with the influence of the Industrial Revolution, meaning whether or not any references or direct mentions of it can be found in the literary works. Secondly, the depictions of dirt in its different, literal forms will be analyzed. Finally, an attempt is made to expand the concept of dirt in an ecocritical way. The expansion will entail dirt in its literal sense. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that dirt is not only easily

visible, but also has the ability to change one's perceptions of the world, while furthermore being able to directly affect the human being's emotions and life. Consequently, this thesis will argue that these two factors of dirt can create ecological thinking.

Considering the topic of this thesis, the question arises as to why Charles Dickens's novels were chosen for the analysis. While Charles Dickens is generally widely known for his social criticism of the Industrial Revolution, his environmental lens surely cannot be disregarded. The scholar Troy Boone (97) states that if Dickens's novels, especially his early works, are read in an ecocritical way, such as done in this thesis, they reveal and portray a non-anthropocentric understanding of the human's place in the world. This means that nature and the world in which humans live are not centered on humans, but on nature and the living space in which humans live. Naturally, Dickens often uses this concept and the question about the centrality of humans to analyze social theories and the classes that often result through this centrality. However, despite the fact that Dickens is often considered a social and urban writer, it is nonetheless important to highlight his thematic exploration of nonhuman nature. The ecocritical value plays an important role and cannot be neglected while reading a novel by Dickens. Especially the novel *Hard Times*, which is often considered to be a novel focused on social criticism, thematizes many environmental topics throughout the novel, but also *Our Mutual Friend* and *Bleak House*, which both deal with Britain's society and its problems, entail many references to the environment. What is so interesting about Charles Dickens's early novels is that many of them profoundly recognize the existence of animals and the environment that we share with them. What is particularly striking about his treatment of the nonhuman is that Dickens presents human and nonhuman characters as equal inhabitants of the shared natural habitat. However, while Dickens also mentions the nonhuman as animals repeatedly, this thesis focuses on the depiction of dirt in Charles Dickens's novels. It has to be said that while the nonhuman is certainly interesting for research and analysis, also analyzing this aspect would go beyond the scope of manageable discussion.

With regard to the analytical part of this thesis, it should be noted that it is a literary analysis of passages taken from the novels in question. This is not intended to be a statement of fact; rather, it is an interpretation of scenes and descriptions presented in the literary works. The aim of the analysis and interpretation of the passages that relate to the theoretical framework is to provide support and evidence for this work's thesis statement.

The selected passages originate from two distinct sources: firstly, from the descriptive passages written by the different narrators in the novels, and secondly, from the thoughts and perspectives of the characters themselves. In general, the novels *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend* are narrated by a third-person, omniscient narrator, which offers the readers insights into the characters through both the narrator's perspective and the characters' own thoughts and actions.

In contrast to these two novels and their narrative form, the novel *Bleak House* has a two-fold narration, being split between a first-person narration by Esther Summerson, as well as a third-person narration of a faceless and nameless narrator. As it can be assumed that these narrative forms were chosen intentionally to convey certain information, assumptions about the choice of narration style will be made in the analysis section. The chosen narrative style is expected to provide strong support for the main claim made in this thesis.

Moving on to the main aspect of analysis, which is the depiction of different types of dirt, it can be said that all three novels in unison should offer a great variety in types of dirt. The different forms of dirt that have been found in the selected novels and will be included in the analysis of this thesis are dirt as fog, smoke, dust and ashes, rubbish and waste as well as water pollution. While there may be other forms, these ones are the most prevalent and important for this analysis. In the analysis, evidence for these forms will be presented by including relevant scenes and passages from the novels. Furthermore, the importance and effect of these forms of dirt will be described, analyzed and interpreted by embedding them into the relevant theoretical framework and historical background. It is important to say that the analysis of this thesis will not be of individual novels, but rather passages of all novels will be analyzed and compared to each other. This method of analysis has been chosen due to various reasons. First of all, the comparison allows to observe the changes throughout the novels and their different ways to work with different dirt forms over time. All of the novels are considered to be part of his later published works, with *Our Mutual Friend* even being the second to last published novel by Charles Dickens. There is a period of 10 years between the three novels, representing the changes in the inclusion of dirt in the novels. It also helps to show how dirt is used in the different novels, especially whether there are differences or similarities in which forms of dirt are mentioned frequently. It is to be expected that the dirt forms will differ in the novels and the comparison will allow a thorough and representative picture of the utilization of dirt.

Naturally, the analysis should form the main basis for proving this thesis's statement. With the help of the theoretical framework and the historic background, this thesis aims to prove that the

visibility of dirt is what this thesis aims to prove that the visibility of dirt is what can make people aware of environmental problems. Dirt in this case serves two functions. First of all, dirt makes environmental damage visible, therefore altering the perception that human beings have of their surroundings. Secondly, dirt has direct effects on the human being, such as evoking feelings or influencing their course of action. I therefore argue that the analysis of Charles Dickens's novels helps to show that dirt in its literal sense is a key factor in provoking ecological thinking.

Before starting the analysis of this thesis, it has to be mentioned that many scholars have already worked with the selected novels and also have analyzed forms of dirt such as smoke, fog or even dust. However, a lot of these scholars work with the passages on an inferential level, often relating them back to social issues. In this thesis, a lot of work is done on the literal level and no connections to society will be made. It is not this thesis's intention to overthrow any of the existing findings, but instead I aim at showing how texts can be worked with on an environmental level and expand dirt-theory further. Scholars that have already done important work on the novels in this thesis are Nicholas March (2015), Ayşe Çelikkol (2016), Leslie Simon (2011) and many more.

3.1 Dirt as smoke

The analysis begins with the most prominent form of dirt found in the selected corpus of novels, dirt as smoke. In this section, the most relevant and insightful passages that deal with the concept of dirt as smoke will be presented, analyzed and interpreted. The utilization of dirt as smoke has the ability to evoke environmental awareness by making the negative impact on both the aesthetic quality of landscapes as well as the health of human beings during the Industrial Revolution directly visible. In this part of the analysis, it will be shown how smoke functions as a tool for raising environmental awareness.

Generally it can be said that one of the most prevalent forms of including the Industrial Revolution and its effects in the form of environmental pollution happens by describing different forms of dirt and giving it detailed characteristics. One of the first and most important characteristics of smoke mentioned is that it is human-made and unnatural. The ecocritical analysis of the selected novels clearly shows that Dickens depicts the changes generated by the industrializing world as unnatural and having direct and visible impact on human's living space and their perception of it. In his writing, Dickens formulates detailed descriptions of the evident negative consequences on the environmental state caused by industrialization to evoke vivid

images in the reader's mind, as can be seen in the following passage taken from the novel *Hard Times*: "It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of savage." (Dickens *Hard Times* 15). First, what is interesting about the descriptions and characterization of smoke is that they start quite early into the novel, beginning right after the introductory chapter. In this selected passage, Dickens manages to create not only a conceivable image of air pollution, but also represents the disruptive effect dirt can have on human beings and their perception of the environment and space around them. Dickens uses colors as well as the strong descriptive adjective "unnatural" to offer a clear impression of the character's perception, while simultaneously conveying an important point. Douglas (36) discusses that dirt is usually seen as disorder and is rather negatively connotated. In this selected passage from *Hard Times*, Dickens utilizes this concept of dirt and describes the disorder caused by dirt, smoke and ashes. The disorder that is done here is mainly through the apparent alteration of the perceived nature around oneself. Brimblecombe (22) highlights the fact that acidic gases released during coal combustion can not only lead to polluted air, but also have the ability to disfigure buildings and promote more rapid weathering of buildings in general. This disordering effect caused by air pollution can be observed in the chosen passage. Where normally a red building would be, dirt and air pollution altered with and disturbed the building's natural appearance, as well as the human's perception of it. By choosing and making use of the word "unnatural" to describe the scene, Dickens emphasizes the fact that the air pollution caused by the Industrial Revolution is non-natural and anthropogenic. Consequently, the author manages to display industrialization and its environmental changes as a disruption of the natural world that is caused by the ongoing human interference with the environment.

This ongoing human interference with the environment can be also seen in the following sentence of the novel: "It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled." (Dickens *Hard Times* 15). Despite being only a short sentence, this passage offers a great display of the human-made issue. While Dickens does not directly describe the machinery and chimneys being built by humans, it is clear that the mass of industrial instruments is not a natural occurrence. However, by stating "interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled", the author highlights the fact that the smoke could have been actually stopped by humans, but simply was not as they were "never uncoiled". This is important as it not only depicts an image of dirt as smoke, but also shows that humans were directly responsible

for the ongoing air pollution, as they built the chimneys, and would have had the power to stop it if they wanted to. This is also described by Kelly (32) who described dirt and its place in the world as a system: dirt is brought in the system by human beings directly, which can be seen in the quote above.

At a later point in the novel, Dickens uses an interestingly similar way to describe the smoke in Coketown, the main setting in the novel: “The Fairy palaces burst into illumination, before pale morning slowed the monstrous serpents of smoke trailing themselves over Coketown.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 40). These two passages have two important things in common, which makes them hugely important for this analysis. First of all, both passages appear at the very beginning of a new chapter; the first one being in the second paragraph, while the second one even forms the first sentence of chapter eleven. Many of Dickens’s chapters seem to start with a description of the close surroundings, even though the descriptions oftentimes seem to be rather similar. This repetition suggests that there is an intention that this is the first thing readers should read and therefore it could be assumed that they have great importance to the author. In the field of psychology, the so-called primacy effect shows that what people perceive first, whether it be in a person or somewhere else, is often what is remembered best (Webster, Richter, and Kruglanski 182). Secondly, as already mentioned, the descriptions of the smoke in the landscape are eerily similar. Dickens uses the phrase “serpents of smoke trailing themselves” in both of these passages. While this could be a coincidence, it seems unlikely that it should be reduced to this. One might assume that this choice of words is deliberate, to visualize the image one perceives when looking at the landscape. Dickens however uses a different word coming before the identical phrases. First, he uses “interminable” while he uses “monstrous” in the next passage. While these words are different in meaning, they still share many similarities on a literal level. First of all, both words are strong adjectives used to bring across a certain vivid image and atmosphere. This also manages to create a sublime and negative feeling. It almost feels eerie reading those passages, due to the wisely used vocabulary to describe the smoke. The eerie feeling is mainly created by the fact that both adjectives attribute a certain sense of power to the smoke. Both adjectives relate to being strong, limitless or even acting like a monster; all of those things are connected with having power and strength. Dickens therefore visualizes the negativity, but also the magnitude of smoke. Instead of simply stating that there was smoke in the air coming from the chimneys of the factories, Dickens chooses strong adjectives that highlight the severity of smoke and give these passages an almost intimidating feeling, evoking feelings of fear or more precisely, reverence. This makes sense as Dickens

seemed to be aware of the fact that the ongoing air pollution must be something damaging, even though he did not necessarily have the necessary information to prove it. It can therefore be assumed that Dickens wanted to show the world what he thought about these smoke trails by providing vivid descriptions of the smoke's nature. Concerning the smoke trails, it is also interesting that Dickens used the phrase "trail themselves" twice, almost giving the smoke trails their own lives and action ability. By saying that they trailed themselves, Dickens uses a personification and gives the trails their own power of doing something actively, even if it is only trailing themselves. Technically, Dickens could have opted for writing that smoke trails around the air or something similar, but the choice of words he made here twice appears to be deliberate and significant to the analysis.

What is further interesting about the word "serpent" is that Dickens continuously uses the word serpents in the novel *Hard Times* for describing the smoke coming from the factories: "The bell was ringing, and the Serpent was a Serpent of many coils, and the Elephant was getting ready." (Dickens *Hard Times* 45). This is particularly interesting as until now, Dickens mentions the smoke by name and now temporarily turns to only naming it serpent, making the term serpent a symbolism or even synonym for smoke. Here it becomes important to look at the meaning of serpent both on a literal as well as a metaphorical level. Referencing the Oxford Dictionary, a serpent is: "a large snake; a dragon or other mythical snake-like reptile". What is more important however, is what the serpent is typically associated with: "In proverbial and allusive reference, a serpent is taken as the type of cunning, treachery, and malignancy." Furthermore, the serpent is used in the Bible as a special indication of Satan (Oxford Reference 2025). Overall, it becomes clear that the word serpent is frequently associated with evil as well as creepiness, given the fact that serpents are usually creeping on the ground. Therefore, it seems intentional that smoke was described as something bringing malice and danger, similarly to the associations of the serpent. This further shows that Dickens seemed to have a feeling about the danger of the smoke trails. Throughout his narrative, he describes the smoke as something dangerous and something to be afraid of, which shows its environmental significance for ecocritical analysis.

From this point on, however, Dickens does not refer exclusively to the smoke as a snake, but continues to describe it in great descriptive detail, adding many characteristics to the concept: "A window looked towards Coketown, and when she sat down near her father's table, she saw the high chimneys and the long tracts of smoke looming in the heavy distance gloomily." (Dickens *Hard Times* 56). In this passage, the female character Louisa Grandgrid is looking

outside the window, and via third-person narration her perception of her surroundings is described. While most instances of describing the smoky landscape of the city are done through descriptions through the omniscient narrator, the character Louisa seems to play an important role as well, as she repeatedly talks and thinks about the smoke in Coketown. Throughout the novel, Louisa tends to be a rather cold and quiet character, which may be why her perception is chosen for the descriptions, as she might turn to her thoughts due to the fact that she seems to be rather introverted. By using the similar words “looming” and “gloomingly”, Dickens creates great imagery of the atmosphere Louisa perceives. Naturally, the word “gloomingly” creates a dark and pessimistic atmosphere that further displays the overall theme of the representation of smoke, showing the negative sides and characteristics of the all-surrounding air pollution. Louisa’s uniqueness in comparison to the other female characters in the novel, who are great examples of the Victorian ideal of a woman who is heavily involved in social occasions, seems to have been deliberately chosen for these descriptions. Given her social attitudes and general nature, it is reasonable that her thoughts often revolve around the perception of smoke. Although there is no clear judgement of the environmental situation on her part in this case, the choice of vocabulary seems to indicate her wariness towards smoke.

This specific scene further describes a conversation between Louisa and her father Mr. Grandgrid, who is the school superintendent and therefore part of the middle class. The two characters are arguing about a planned marriage between Louisa and Mr. Bounderby, which is intended to increase the chances of Tom, Louisa’s brother, climbing the career ladder. Interestingly, during the argument, the smoke of Coketown is addressed: “Silence between them. The deadly statistical clock very hollow. The distant smoke very black and heavy.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 57). The importance of the theme of air pollution becomes obvious when looking at the frequency and timing of including the topic in the novel. In this case, two main characters are fighting and still, the description of smoke finds its place. Considering the significance of the two characters, Mr. Grandgrid as a middle-class man who does not seem to care about the smoke, and Louisa, who often seems to engage in an internal or conversational discourse about the circumstances, it seems as if the smoke is something that functions almost as a barrier between them. Similarly to the instances of silence that divide the two individuals from each other in this scene, the smoke further reinforces the darkness and the uneasiness in this scene. By using the adjective “heavy” to describe the current feeling of the two characters, it can be seen that this is used to further create and amplify the gloomy nature of the circumstances. Interestingly enough, it is not about the smoke itself being dangerous here, but

rather the smoke is used to signify something bad. Therefore, one can observe a shift from describing the smoke as something bad, to the smoke being used to further exemplify the negativity of something else. Smoke therefore becomes a symbol of danger and something negative. The author successfully created an atmosphere around the term smoke, so that it can be used to evoke those feelings without describing and mentioning them again. Smoke is utilized and defined to display feelings and concepts such as danger, wariness and heaviness.

The smoke further plays an important role in a later passage of the novel in the same scene:

Removing her eyes from him, she sat so long looking silently towards the town, that he said, at length: 'Are you consulting the chimneys of the Coketown works, Louisa?' 'There seems to be nothing there but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire bursts out, father!' she answered, turning quickly. 'Of course I know that, Louisa. I do not see the application of the remark.' To do him justice he did not, at all. (Dickens *Hard Times* 58)

At a point of resignation during the argument, Louisa turns to look out of the window and at the landscape of Coketown. There she apparently stares at the smoke so intensely that even her father asks her about it. Louisa continues to describe the monotonous nature of the smoke, and further mentions how at night it turns into great fire. Given the fact that the factories were operating around the clock, this description hints at something hidden during the day, only bursting out during the night. Therefore, while this may seem to be a simple description of the surrounding landscape, it actually further exemplifies the use of smoke to portray unhappiness and darkness. Louisa even seems to describe her own emotions by using the smoke as a metaphor for her feelings and interior. She tries to keep her sentiments about this situation hidden, but cannot stop them from coming out at night. Thus, as the storyline deepens, the meaning of smoke deepens as well. Although Louisa does not think about the environmental damage caused by the smoke, she still perceives the smoke as something dark, scary and gloomy, all of which are traits that have rather negative connotations. Dickens therefore does not thematize the environmental state in this case, however he utilizes the feelings that smoke can evoke as a symbol for danger to elicit the same feelings while reading about it. The extremely high frequency of appearance and mentions of smoke further proves that while this is a highly socially critical novel, the environmental criticism is just as persistent. Smoke becomes a symbol for darkness, danger and wariness. On the one hand, this is connected to social and individual issues, but on the other hand it cannot be neglected that smoke is something stemming from the industrial factories and resulting in air pollution. Therefore,

attributing smoke with negative characteristics and using it as a symbol for something negative, can become the first step in making human beings aware of the detrimental sides of smoke.

While smoke has now become a relevant symbol in many passages throughout the novel, it is nonetheless still repeatedly mentioned and described as a thing on its own: “[...] Coketown lay shrouded in a haze of its own, which appeared impervious to the sun’s rays. You only knew the town was there, because you knew there could have been no such sulky botch upon the prospect without a town.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 64). This scene is particularly interesting due to its dual nature. As mentioned above, the descriptions of the smoky Coketown scenery are usually found at the very beginning of a new chapter, as is the case here. However, what is striking about this specific part is that the first sentence of this chapter actually seems rather positive and seems to highlight something favorable about Coketown. The first sentence portrays a sunny midsummer day, which generally conjures a positive and beautiful image of a landscape scenery, given the fact that the sun is mostly positively connotated. However, although the chapter starts off with a description of a sunny day, the illusion of beauty is quickly erased again by adding the passage quoted above. This part of the novel nicely shows that while there are sunny midsummer days that might have been beautiful in the countryside, the sunny day cannot unfold its beautiful potential due to the smoke that hinders the sun from coming through. Dickens here describes the smoke as a haze, which is almost indifferent to the sunshine. Due to the smoke, the sun rays cannot fully reach the city as well as they normally would. Hazy smoke functions as a barrier between the sun and the city. Dickens continues to describe the scenery by saying that people would only know about the town behind the haze, as this haze could only have been created by a town. He therefore directly links the air pollution to a city, meaning that only cities are able to produce this barrier between nature and the living space. Concerning the topic of covering the sun, it can be seen that the sun directly functions as a part of nature that is shut out from the city, due to the air pollution produced by the various factories and companies in the city. This is a highly important finding, as it shows that there was awareness about the origins of smoke, which can in turn enable further discourse about the topic. What is more, Dickens uses the words “sulky botch” to describe the town being hidden, which further accentuates the negative feelings and atmosphere created by the smoke. The adjective “sulky” could either function as portraying the anger by people that are aware of the smoke’s feature of keeping the sun away from the city, or it could mean that the town is sulky and therefore hiding from the sun. Either way, this passage proves a high visibility of dirt and its characteristic to alter someone’s perception. Due to the haze created by smoke in the city, the city’s inhabitants are no longer

exposed to real, healthy sunshine. Instead, they are hidden from the sun within a hazy barrier. This refers back to the lack of sunshine Britain's population experienced during the Industrial Revolution, which naturally had both psychological and physical negative effects on Britain's inhabitants (Mosley 98). It is generally understood that the lack of sunshine can have significant consequences for human beings, including a shift in their perception of the aesthetic beauty of nature and potential impacts on their health and quality of life.

The link between the city and air pollution is once again mentioned in this passage: "A blur of soot and smoke, [...] a dense formless jumble with sheets of cross light in it, that showed nothing but masses of darkness: - Coketown in the distance was suggestive of itself, though not a brick of it could be seen." (Dickens *Hard Times* 64). The smoke is further characterized by adding descriptive adjectives such as "dense" and "formless", highlighting the fact that the smoke seemed to cover masses of landscape, despite being formless, which is of course attributed to the chemical characteristics of smoke. What is more, the smoke is again connected to darkness. While there are indeed certain spots of light visible through the thick haze, smoke mostly results in darkness. Generally darkness is often connected to something dangerous, mysterious and unknown, as there is little to no visibility of one's surroundings. When one cannot see and perceive one's surroundings, it becomes a mystery, and the haze and its darkness function to create uncertainty and ignorance about what lies behind all the smoke and darkness. In the following sentence, however, it is stated that Coketown, even though one cannot see a single feature of it from a distance, is rather suggestive on its own, as the visible smoke gives enough information about it away. Thus, while smoke creates mystery and darkness, it is quite clear what can be found behind it. While natural occurrences of fog might create these feelings, this particular passage highlights that there is no mystery as to why the smoke is there and what lies behind it: smoke is created by humans, is created by the factories and is released through the chimneys of the city. Naturally what lies behind this unnatural occurrence of smoke has to be a city, a highly industrialized city with working factories, which is why it is already suggestive enough on its own. The smoke is again directly related to cities and their industrial machinery, giving the air pollution a direct perpetrator.

Having established the link between the city and the smoke, the ability of smoke to cover the sun is mentioned repeatedly in later passages of the novels. Another reference to the lack of sunshine and the change of perception when seeing the sun is described here: "[...] which showed the Coketown people a sun eternally in eclipse, through a medium of smoked glass." (Dickens *Hard Times* 94). Here the sun is described as being permanently in an eclipse, meaning

that its visibility is highly darkened and reduced. The medium through which one has to perceive the sun is the smoke, as smoke is the reason for the lack of visibility. This passage greatly shows that looking at the sun is possible, however, its appearance has changed and the reason for this is the all surrounding smoke.

Interestingly enough, the novel *Bleak House* deals with smoke in a quite similar way to *Hard Times*. The first mention of smoke happens in the very first chapter of the novel. It is similar to *Hard Times* in the sense that this novel also often starts its chapters with the topic of dirt. What is also similar is the way this passage deals with the sun and its lacking visibility due to the smoke. What is different, however, is the vocabulary used for describing the smoke: “Smoke* lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black-drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full grown snow-flakes – gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun.” (Dickens *Bleak House* 11). The word “drizzle” is used for the first time in the novels to describe the smoke and its descent from the chimneys. The smoke creates ashes, which are compared to snowflakes. At the end of this quote, it is mentioned that the snowflakes seem to be sad, mourning the death of the sun. Concerning the interpretation of this passage, a few things can be seen. First of all, it is important to mention that although snowflakes are generally considered to be a beautiful and natural phenomenon in winter, here they still have a negative connotation. The reason for this is that the flakes are made of soot and not snow, as is usually the case. Soot is naturally darker in color and symbolizes the residue of smoke that can cover the ground and surrounding nature in a grey-blackish color. In this case, it is highlighted that the smoke is covering the sun, therefore the snowflakes seem to mourn the death of the sun. Due to the high coverage of smoke and its descending ashes, the sun is once again not clearly visible as dirt has again altered the scenery and the perception of it. The smoke is so clearly visible that while looking at the scenery it is obvious that the sun is covered once again. Considering the historical background, people often faced deficiencies due to the fact that the sun was covered, resulting in a lack of exposure to sunlight. (Mosley 98). Comparing this passage to the one in *Hard Times*, it becomes clear that both novels deal with the lack of sunshine in a very similar way. However, the vocabulary chosen is quite different. While the novel *Hard Times* talks about the sun being in eternal eclipse, the novel *Bleak House* is even talking about the death of the sun, giving it a much bigger impact. In terms of release dates, the two were released fairly close to each other. *Bleak House* was published first, approximately one year before *Hard Times*, therefore one can perceive a process of the sun’s state. First the sun dies. The death of the sun could symbolize the permanent transformation of the sun as humanity has known it. The death

serves to show that the sun will not be experienced the way humans have experienced it in the past, therefore stating that it has died, meaning the old image of the sun. Air pollution has permanently altered the appearance of the sun and the ability to be exposed to sunshine. In the later novel, Dickens talks about the new state of the sun being in eternal eclipse. In this state, the sun has died and the old image has changed into the image perceived in *Hard Times*. What both descriptions clearly have in common is that they both define the changes as being permanent, using words such as “death” and “eternal”, which both indicate irreversible circumstances.

Up to this point, the analysis shows that especially the novel *Hard Times* has contributed to the environmental definition of dirt by, first of all, giving it various attributes and detailed characteristics that evoke rather negative feelings. Moreover, dirt is utilized in the novel as a symbol for danger and negativity. Dirt is further portrayed as human-made and unique to a city. While a great number of findings of mentioning dirt can be found in the descriptions by the third-person narrator, especially in the novel *Hard Times*, there are some interesting instances where the visible smoke becomes a direct topic in conversations between the characters. Those scenes show specifically how different characters from different backgrounds think of and deal with the concept of smoke.

One of the scenes that illustrates the different attitudes towards smoke is a conversation between two men, Mr. James Harthouse and Mr. Josiah Bounderby. Mr. Bounderby, who grew up in childhood poverty, is a well-known figure in Coketown, as he is both a banker as well as a factory owner. Mr. Harthouse works for Grandgrid’s political party. Both characters portray the upper class, which plays an important role in the analysis of the following passage: “[...] First of all, you see our smoke. That’s meat and drink to us.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 72). In this short sentence, the character Mr. Bounderby portrays the general attitude of the upper and middle classes towards smoke. Bounderby describes the smoke as their meat and drink. While the smoke is visibly perceived by the character, the impression of it and the attitude towards it differs greatly from the descriptions of the third-person narrator and other characters such as Louisa. Interestingly, smoke is visible for this character, however instead of thinking about the negative consequences it might have, it is thought of as something inevitable, something that the upper classes need in order to live. By mentioning meat and drink, Bounderby refers to basic necessities human beings need to survive. Here it is not talked about smoke as something that contributes to wealth and luxury, but rather something that is absolutely necessary for human life. In this way, Bounderby portrays the smoke produced by the factories as essential

for survival and justifies its existence for his personal benefit in the capitalistic field. Thus, further discussions as to whether smoke can also have damaging effects or not, are directly undermined as Bounderby uses a rhetorical method called a thought-terminating cliché. The other party cannot disagree with this statement as it is formulated as finite and does not permit any further discussion. This is presented as a true statement, which does not enable any further discourse and discussion (Lifton 429). Building and working in the factories and thus being directly and indirectly responsible for the smoke, is described as a guarantee of survival. This may be considered a misjudgment of the situation, as well as an inaccurate interpretation of the limits of the planet. This phenomenon has been described by Sullivan as a common occurrence among human beings (*Dirt Theory* 111-12). Dickens represents the willingness of the upper classes to ignore information and long-term consequences in order to gain personal and capitalistic benefits, such as wealth and prestige.

The conversation continues as follows: “It’s the healthiest thing in the world in all respects, and particularly for the lungs.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 72). In this particular passage, Bounderby continues to add highly positive attributes to smoke, in this case adding health benefits, specifically for the lungs. Firstly, Bounderby asserts that smoke is necessary for survival and secondly, Bounderby highlights the positive impact of smoke on human health. After the thought-terminating cliché, another positive benefit of smoke results in the portrayal of smoke as something truly valuable for human life. Mr. Bounderby therefore displays an attitude that many upper-class and middle-class members most likely had at the time. Smoke is seen from a capitalistic standpoint, being the warranty for survival and a wealthy and comfortable life. While it is not clear from the passages whether the mentioning of smoke being healthy results from lack of knowledge or is talked into believing in order to justify it, it still becomes obvious that the portrayal and perception of smoke has little to do with what we know nowadays.

Interestingly enough, in certain cases it seems as though the third-person narrator actively disagrees with and refutes certain arguments of characters as can be seen in the following passage. In this part, the healthy nature of smoke mentioned by Bounderby is negated in one of the landscape descriptions, effectively portraying two contradictory attitudes in the novel: “In the hardest working part of Coketown, [...] where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in [...]” (Dickens *Hard Times* 37). In contrast to the depiction of Bounderby, who portrays smoke as being healthy, the third-person narration uses the word “killing” to describe the smoke stemming from the chimneys of the factories spreading around Coketown. While both passages completely disagree on the health factor of smoke, they do

have in common that they both use strong adjectives: “the healthiest thing in the world” versus “killing”. While both are contrary in meaning, the intensity of both adjectives is similar. The use of the adjective “killing” serves to underscore the assumption that smoke is not merely unpleasant or a bit unhealthy, but rather, it is detrimental to one’s health. Whether this is referring to killing nature or killing humans is of course unclear. However, as humans are a part of nature and are in fact dependent on it, it does not matter what it refers to. If it kills nature, it is going to have an effect on humans. Killing nature completely and inevitably entails killing human beings, which relates back to the interconnectedness of human beings with nature (Sullivan *Dirty Nature* 515-16).

Another important passage that further clarifies the third person-narration disagreeing with the alleged health benefits of smoke can be seen in the following passage describing the output of the chimneys of Coketown: “Puffing out their poisonous volumes, they would not be long hiding it [...]” (Dickens *Hard Times* 94). In this sentence it becomes clear once again that while specific characters in the novel want to believe in various health benefits of smoke for their own personal, capitalistic benefits, the third-person narration again represents a different view on air pollution. The third-person narrator actively disagrees with the character’s perception, making it almost seem like a conversation between the narrator and the novel’s characters. It appears as if the novel allows characters to articulate their perspectives; nevertheless, their remarks are not left unaddressed. Instead, the third-person narrator adds further information, not directly referring to the characters’ thoughts, but giving the correct information in their descriptions. In this case, the smoke being released into the air, being breathed in by all humans in the surrounding areas, is described with a strong adjective, namely “poisonous”, adding another negatively connotated word to its characteristics. The word “poisonous” implies that the health benefits certain characters presume actually do not seem to exist and rather, smoke has various negative side-effects such as being killing, as seen above, or poisonous. The word poisonous not only adds another negative connotation to the word, but moreover it shows the ability to directly influence human beings and their course of life. By being poisonous, smoke can have various health-hazarding effects on humans. Therefore, this shows the interconnectivity between human beings and dirt. In reference to the primary assertion of this thesis, it is necessary to explain how the visibility of dirt may influence human perception of the environmental situation. The third person-narrator works in favor of proving the devastating effects of air pollution by adding negative characteristics to its descriptions. By adding those thoughts, it first of all becomes clear that smoke is something negative. Furthermore, it is

evident that both the reader and the characters are more likely to perceive dirt, as the passages explicitly demonstrate its existence. The fact that dirt is mentioned repeatedly at a high frequency makes it impossible to ignore. Through the detailed descriptions of the narrator that often disagrees with what the characters assume, a clear image of the qualities and consequences of smoke and air pollution is created. By first perceiving the smoke and then combining it with the information found in the novels, ecological thinking can start to happen. The obvious visibility of dirt enables humans to think about it, as it is much harder to think about or believe in something if one cannot see it. This concludes that dirt needs to be visible in order for human beings to perceive it and start thinking about it. Ecological thinking is mainly increased through the descriptive scenes, showing that dirt clearly alters our perceptions. Especially seeing a city that is polluted in contrast to one that is not can result in thinking about the existence and effects of dirt. Further, the descriptions have already included detrimental effects on human health, therefore it becomes clear that nature and human beings are interconnected. The smoke does not only affect the city and its appearance, but instead the human being also is affected, whether it is by lack of visibility or resulting health hazards.

Following a thorough analysis of smoke in the selected novels, it was found that the novel *Hard Times* had the highest number of passages thematizing dirt as smoke. However, a comparison with a passage from *Bleak House* revealed a significant similarity in the way smoke was dealt with and characterized in both texts. As previously noted, *Hard Times* engages with the theme of smoke most extensively, utilizing the fictional city Coketown as a highly industrialized and therefore highly polluted hotspot. Nonetheless, the novel *Bleak House*, while taking place outside of polluted London for a great part of the novel, displays similar characteristics to smoke. Both novels especially deal with the death of the sun, which is nicely presented by the sun first dying in *Bleak House* and afterwards the sun being described as gone and in eclipse permanently in *Hard Times*. While this is a small comparison, it nonetheless shows that there is a connection between the novels, actually even portraying a chronology of events across the novels.

The analysis thus offers a number of key findings, which can be summarized as follows. First of all, Dickens describes and adds various characteristics to the term smoke to finally utilize the term as a symbol to portray something bad and dangerous. While the term smoke is first only described in great detail, it is ultimately used as a symbol for danger and eeriness, as the first-person narration adds various characteristics to the term. This addition of characteristics is carried out so thoroughly that consequently, the mere mention of the term smoke on its own,

without repeating any of the emotions and feelings associated with it, is sufficient to evoke these very feelings and their concomitant atmosphere. Secondly, the analysis shows that the presence of dirt as smoke significantly impacts visibility and alters perception. Furthermore, the descriptions in the novels demonstrate that dirt has the capacity to directly impact human beings by altering their perception, and by suggesting that it is killing and poisonous, causing discomfort in the throat and eyes. Therefore, it fulfills the two main criteria for creating ecological thinking that are analyzed in this thesis. Lastly, dirt as smoke successfully represents the different social attitudes of the human beings having lived during the Industrial Revolution.

Dirt as smoke is often utilized in Charles Dickens's novels to display a clear, visible form of environmental pollution. Smoke often comes from the chimneys of the various factories during the time of the Industrial Revolution. The appearance of smoke mainly presents its negative effect on the beauty of the landscape as it physically worsens or even blocks one's view, for example of the sun. Furthermore, its negative effect on the health of human beings needs to be taken into consideration, which is why dirt as smoke effectively represents the utilization of dirt in the selected novels to evoke environmental awareness. By directly affecting human beings, smoke becomes a powerful instrument to evoke the ecological thought.

In summary it can be said that the utilization of dirt as smoke in Charles Dickens's novels effectively evokes environmental awareness by highlighting its negative impact on both the aesthetic quality of landscapes as well as the health of human beings during the Industrial Revolution.

3.2 Dirt as fog

The analysis continues with the second most prevalent form of dirt identified in the selected corpus of novels, dirt as fog. To begin with, it should be noted and clarified that while smoke and fog are used similarly in the novels, fog is to be seen as an unnatural phenomenon resulting from continuous air pollution, and thus acting as a direct consequence of smoke, dust and ashes. While the term fog generally used to refer to a natural occurrence, the fog in Charles Dickens's novels, bears little resemblance to these occurrences, but instead has many similarities to what nowadays is labeled smog. As with smoke, dirt as fog can cause visibility and perception issues, as well as directly affecting the health of those exposed to it.

It is important to mention that the phenomenon of the London fog was a common occurrence during the industrialization of Great Britain. It was an omnipresent part of the London area

(Corton 1). As such, it is not surprising that fog is mentioned repeatedly and frequently throughout the novels. Its ever-lasting persistence and obvious visibility is already described in the first chapter of the novel *Bleak House*:

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping [...]. Fog on the Essex marches, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog dropping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners*, wheezing by the firesides of their guards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. (Dickens *Bleak House* 11)

This passage successfully displays the persistence and all-surrounding nature of fog by mentioning multiple examples of where to find fog and literally stating the fact that fog is everywhere in the first sentence. Scholar Marsh Nicholas (20), who has analyzed the novels *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* in great detail, also dealt with this passage in his work. He stated that there was an obvious use of multiple anaphora here, as fog is mentioned repeatedly. Further, the scholar states that the repetition of fog creates a rhythm, where one can visualize the fog first, then see it become active and finally attack at the end. While I agree with this visualization and utilization of the term fog and the theory of rhythm, I intend to further analyze this quote from an ecocritical perspective. For this thesis, there are two main things to be noted: first of all, fog is visible and perceptible and second of all, the attack is directed at human beings. The section discussing the "fog in the eyes and throat of" makes it clear that this phenomenon is associated with the human body, as the fog directly impacts vision and breathability. As outlined in the thesis statement, the visibility of fog, and its direct impact on human beings, are both clearly evident in this passage. This serves to illustrate that environmental damage can be easily observed in two distinct ways: through visibility and the direct effects on human beings.

Next to the visibility and the direct effect on human beings that can be seen in the passage above, it is now important to analyze instances where these factors can create discussion and consequently, ecological thinking. One of the many instances of discussion about dirt as fog can be observed in this conversation between a law clerk working at the company Kenge and Carboy, called Mr. Guppy and Esther in the novel *Bleak House*: "I asked him whether there was a great fire anywhere? For the streets were so full of dense brown smoke that scarcely anything was to be seen. 'O dear no, miss,' he said. 'This is a London particular.' I had never heard of such a thing. 'A fog miss,' said the young gentleman." (Dickens *Bleak House* 37). This passage displays two things very well. First, the decision to have Esther, who does not usually reside in

London, perceiving the fog almost immediately upon arrival, accentuates and highlights the clear visibility and influence of the London fog on one's perception of the city. It is interesting that her first thought when seeing the fog is not that it has to be mere fog, but instead she believes that there must be a fire somewhere. This exemplifies the unnatural appearance of the London fog, which does not even resemble natural fog but rather smoke stemming from a fire. Furthermore, Esther mentions that she has never seen fog appearing in this way, which further displays the uniqueness of the London fog that especially portrays the devastating effects of industrialization hitting the big cities of Great Britain. The unique nature of the fog is also mentioned when Mr. Guppy describes the fog as "London particular", meaning that the London inhabitants are accustomed to it and even perceive it as something that is unique to their living space. Generally, it can be said that it is very interesting that a Londoner describes this phenomenon as fog, whereas it is clearly shown that it seemed to be smoke that was covering the air in the eye of strangers. It can be assumed that this is a form of trivialization which would further justify the damage done to the environment. Dirt could once again be seen as a necessary evil of the industrialization that had various great advantages for the successful and satisfied middle and upper classes. This process of justifying pollution could already be seen in the novel *Hard Times* by characters such as Mr. Bounderby and seems to repeat itself again in *Bleak House*. As the scholar Marsh (144) accentuates, while there were and are still natural occurrences of fog, the London fog was definitely not this and clearly distinct in nature. Instead of being natural, it was produced by excessive coal combustion and pollution, thus being a direct result and consequence of human activity.

As the scene continues, Esther further describes the landscape and her perception of it: "We drove slowly through the dirtiest and darkest streets that were ever seen in the world (I thought), and in such a distracting state of confusion that I wondered how people kept their senses." (Dickens *Bleak House* 37). In this case it is not entirely clear whether dirt is displayed as fog or rubbish here. It could be assumed that she is still talking about the fog, which is actually smoke, which has painted the streets dirty and dark by covering the sun once again. However, she could also be talking about the pollution of streets with waste and rubbish. Either way, it is clear how Esther thinks rather negatively and appears almost shocked about the circumstances she encounters. Wondering about how people living here kept their senses shows the perspective of an outsider not being used to the pollution all around the landscape, in contrast to Mr. Guppy who is accustomed to it and even describes it as something normal.

Giving Esther the voice to speak about her perceptions as the first-person narrator offers valuable insight into the use of dirt in the novels. Continuing the story, it is very clear that Esther cannot let go of the unusualness of the fog she perceives at all times. In this passage, Esther further talks about her impressions: “‘The fog is very dense indeed!’ said I. ‘Not that it affects you, I am sure,’ said Mr. Guppy [...] ‘On the contrary, it seems to do you good, miss, judging from your appearance.’” (Dickens *Bleak House* 45). In this scene, Esther is again having a conversation with Mr. Guppy. While Esther repeats her perception of the fog by stating the visible thickness and density of it, Mr. Guppy talks about the fog as something beneficial. Stating that it seems to do Esther good instead of reacting and being responsive to Esther’s statement further shows the belittlement of the fog in London. It is important to note that the terms trivialization and belittlement are employed from the perspective of an individual residing in the 21st century, with a clear awareness of the environmental consequences of industrialization. It should be emphasized that these terms are not intended to shame or condemn, but rather to highlight the impact of simple unawareness and lack of awareness, which can be considered a form of ignorance. Mr. Guppy, as a part of the middle class, effectively represents the thought pattern of the richer parts of the British society at the time. This form of dealing with the fog can be related back to the novel *Hard Times*, where Mr. Bounderby refers to smoke as the food and drink of the British inhabitants and also being healthy for them. Therefore, it can be said that the novels successfully represent different social attitudes towards the ongoing air pollution. This happens quite similarly, as in both instances air pollution is not only accepted, but also attributed with positive consequences such as being healthy or inevitable for survival.

Contrasting the positive attitudes towards smoke, at a later point in the story, the main character Esther deals with her curiosity about fog in an inner monologue: “The purblind day was feebly struggling with the fog, when I opened my eyes to encounter those of a dirty-faced little spectre fixed upon me.” (Dickens *Bleak House* 57). This short passage shows an important illustration of the characteristics of the ongoing fog. The mentioning of the day being “purblind” and “feebly struggling” with the fog that covered her surroundings, shows that first of all, the fog is greatly impacting her vision and perception of the surrounding nature and second of all, the fog is so adamant that clear air and pure vision were almost impossible due to the liability of fog. These thoughts further continue Esther’s inner discourse on the unfamiliarity of the all-surrounding fog. The day struggling with the fog visualizes again that her perception of the fog is something that she is not used to, and she perceives as something abnormal, which is why it

frequently occupies her thoughts. In her mind, the natural air and the natural landscape are struggling with appearing in their natural form, due to the high air pollution resulting in the thick fog she perceives. While Esther may not understand the origins of the fog, today's knowledge helps to recognize the described fog as a result of continuous air pollution. The use of the word "purblind" further visualizes that the nature cannot appear as it is to the human beings' eyes, as it is covered and altered with by the fog. In this sense, it could also be said that actually the perception of the world itself is purblind, as one cannot see beyond the fog and is unable to perceive the natural world.

Presumably on the next day, the first thought that Esther shares is about her encounter with the London fog again: "Although the morning was raw, and although the fog still seemed heavy – I say seemed, for the windows were so encrusted with dirt, that they would have made Midsummer sunshine dim – I was sufficiently forewarned of the discomfort within doors at that early hour, and sufficiently curious about London [...]" (Dickens *Bleak House* 58). In this passage it can be seen that Esther wakes up again and the first thing she notices is the raw morning with the still heavy-lingering fog. This further enunciates that the London fog was extremely visible and affected human perceptions considerably. Esther continues by sharing that the windows in the room she was sleeping in were remarkably covered in dirt, which is why she used the word "seemed" to describe the appearance of the fog outside her room, meaning that she cannot be sure due to the restricted visibility caused by dirt as fog. The dirt covering Esther's windows most likely consists of dust and ashes, which were often direct results of the coal combustion and by-products of the smoke released into the air. As mentioned before, the smoke produced during the Industrial Revolution had the unique ability to cover buildings and change their color, which is why it can be assumed that they also frequently covered windows. Interestingly, while the dirt here is not perceived as such, it still shares the abilities and characteristics of smoke and fog: reducing visibility and therefore affecting the perception of the surrounding nature. This use of these two characteristics of dirt in one passage shows both the uniqueness and sameness of dirt: sameness in the sense of having similar consequences and uniqueness in the sense of different forms of dirt.

Before continuing the analysis of fog in the selected novels, a short interim conclusion will be made. Generally, Simon (220) describes the character Esther as orderly and precise, while Harvey (91) labels her as matter-of-fact. This makes Esther a character of great importance for the analysis, as she seldom includes any overexaggerations or emotional responses due to her factual nature. The character Esther from the novel *Bleak House* effectively represents the

claims of this thesis. First of all, the first-person narration about her perceptions proves two main characteristics of dirt: visibility and impact on humans. However, this is of course only one part of what this thesis aims at showing. These two characteristics of dirt form the main basis for what can lead to ecological thinking. Esther successfully shows that these two main characteristics of dirt can lead to thinking about dirt, which can consequently lead to discussions about it. It is not important here that Esther realizes the London fog is actually air pollution stemming from the factories, however it is absolutely vital that fog can be seen and has direct effects on human beings in order to be acknowledged and discussed. The main goal of the ecological thought, which is realizing the interconnectedness of human beings and nature, is therefore already completed (Morton 1). Esther's realization of the interconnectedness is evident in her personal experience of the fog and her ongoing reflection on its effects, including its ability to darken the day and cover windows. Mr. Guppy's observation that the fog appears to be beneficial for Esther further supports the argument that the characters recognize this interconnectedness, albeit in different ways. Both characters clearly recognize the connection between the nature and the human, even if it is perceived differently. Therefore, while the characters do not engage in a discussion about the causes of pollution yet, the visibility and the impact, whether it be good or bad, on humans have already sparked discussion about the environment and its dirt. Therefore, the first few analyzed passages show how the author displays the visibility and the impact on the human, while simultaneously evoking the ecological thought by clearly stating that human beings are affected by nature.

Another important point for this analysis is that the depiction of fog in the novel is oftentimes not only related to the London fog, but is also often recognized as something specific and unique to industrialized cities. One instance of this depiction can be found in the novel *Hard Times*. During a walk, the two characters Sissy and Rachel leave Coketown and travel to another town by train. In this passage, Coketown is directly compared to another, less-polluted city: "Though the green landscape was blotted here and there with heaps of coal, it was green elsewhere, and there were trees to see, and there were larks singing (though it was Sunday), and there were pleasant scents in the air, and all was over-arched by a bright blue sky." (Dickens *Hard Times* 148). After the comparison with the appearance of another town, Coketown is once again described and clearly contrasted to the scenery of the other town: "[...] Coketown showed as a black mist [...]" (Dickens *Hard Times* 148). Whereas the other town is described as green with visible trees, Coketown is referred to by using the color black and highlighting the word "mist". What is particularly interesting about this passage is that the mist is not described as being

around Coketown or happening there, but rather Coketown is described as being equivalent to the mist. By saying that Coketown actually is the mist, and not only stating that there is mist around it, the clear connectedness between Coketown and the mist is clearly shown. The color black further accentuates the fact that it is very visible and easily perceivable. Thus, the mist changes the sensation of the city Coketown. While the other town is described with different, rather positive features, Coketown once again is reduced to the fact that it has become mist throughout the years of industrialization. This passage also refers back to one of the most important sayings of affective ecocriticism: only when individuals experience or are directly influenced by something, a discourse can start, which is exactly what happens here (Albrecht 1). While we cannot observe any discourse, we can expect that the foundation for a discourse is laid.

Another trait of fog that is similar to one of the characteristics of smoke, is the reduction of sunshine. In this scene in the novel *Bleak House*, the character Esther wakes up and goes for a walk in the city of London with Ms. Jellyby. During the walk, the scenery is described as follows: “As it was still foggy and dark [...]” (Dickens *Bleak House* 62). In this short passage of Esther’s walk through London, she mentions via first-person narration that the world still appeared foggy and dark. This particular scene takes place sometime after Esther has woken up and first notices the fog of the day. Given the fact that she had been awake for a considerable time before this description, one could assume that this scene takes place at a later time during the morning or even close to midday. The question arises as to how it could still be dark at a late hour in the morning. Provided that it is actually not still dark because it is so early in the morning, it is more probable that it is still dark because of the fog covering the sunshine that would normally reach the surrounding area of Esther and her company. Esther describes the day still being foggy and dark, which could either refer to her wondering about how it could still be this way this late into the day, or it could refer to her already being a bit more accustomed to the fog but wondering how it could still be there after all this time, further realizing that the fog seems to be a permanent occurrence. Although Esther does not continue to think about the darkness in the rest of the passage, this part still shows that fog can alter one’s perception and familiar surroundings in such a way that even a nice midsummer day appears to be dark. Fog, similarly to smoke, reduces visibility, blocking one’s view and perception of the world. Especially when one is not used to permanent fog, this dirt form becomes highly obvious, and people can perceive changes in fog distribution of frequency quite easily. Observing changes in

the intensity and persistence of fog can make people more aware of environmental changes, consequently encouraging ecological thinking.

Adding more characteristics to fog, similarly to *Hard Times*, this passage from the novel *Our Mutual Friend* talks about the visibility of the sun again: “[...] while the sun itself, when it was for a few moments dimly indicated through circling eddies of fog, showed as if it had gone out, and were collapsing flat and cold.” (Dickens *Our Mutual Friend* 595). In this passage it is once again described how the fog changes the appearance of the sun through its persistency and durability. In this passage, it is said that the sun only shows itself a few times, whenever, the swirls of fog open so that it can peak through. What is more, it is said that while the sun glistens out of the fog occasionally, it appears as if it has gone out and is even described as collapsing and being cold, which is the exact opposite of the natural characteristics of the sun. The alteration of the sun is one of the most, if not the most visible and influential forms of dirt affecting human life. Given the fact that the natural prosperities of the sun are influenced and changed so extremely, it is safe to say that almost anybody would notice the drastic difference between the natural form of the sun and the one that is affected by air pollution.

What is particularly interesting about the London fog’s appearance is that it appeared very different from the natural phenomenon of fog: “Even in the surrounding country it was a foggy day, but there the fog was grey, whereas in London it was, at about the boundary line, dark yellow, and a little within it brown, and then browner, and then browner, until at the heart of the City [...] it was rusty-black.” (Dickens *Our Mutual Friend* 595). While fog is a natural phenomenon that most people have already experienced countless times during their life, the fog that covered London was very distinct in its nature. In this passage, the uniqueness of the London fog is described in great and visual detail. It is described that in the surrounding area of London, the fog appeared to be grey, whereas in the city London itself, it looked quite different. At the outlines of the fog, it appeared dark yellow, afterwards getting browner and browner and when reaching the center of the city, it appeared to be rusty-black. Not only does this passage offer an interesting insight into the appearance of the London fog, but also it draws a contrast between London fog and naturally occurring fog. The natural phenomenon of fog outside the city of London was grey, as people were used to, but a stark contrast is drawn when it is said that the fog inside the city was dark yellow, brown or even rusty black. While people were used to the appearance of the London fog and often ignored the fact that it looked different than natural fog, as can be seen in other parts of the analysis, there are characters that start thinking about the appearance of the fog, especially Esther. While most of the inhabitants

ignored this fact and even started to make up health benefits of the fog in order to justify its existence and its continuous production, this feature of the London fog is extremely visible and everyone who has seen natural fog before, is doomed to notice that there is something wrong. Whether or not these people start to think ecologically or not, the visibility and altering characteristics are given and can be proven with the help of this description. As mentioned before, it does not matter whether or not each and every single human being starts thinking ecologically. What does matter is that we have all the tools to do so. Would the environment not show its damage and counterinfluence on human beings, ecological thinking might not exist. The extreme visibility and the influence on humanity are the main contributing factors to increasing ecological thinking and discussing the strange occurrences and changes in the natural world. Only when one starts thinking about something such as the unnatural color of the fog, or the dust and ashes on one's expensive clothes, only then do we have a chance at people starting to think ecologically. Only then change can happen and only then dirt can prevent a great and unnecessary downfall. Writing a thesis of this nature and dedicating great amounts of time on stating how badly dirt and its various forms on the environment can significantly alter one's perception of dirt. Naturally, a feeling of wanting to get rid of dirt and wanting to change the environmental state arises, but what is actually the case is that dirt, at this point, is absolutely and vitally necessary for the human being. Without dirt, we may never start to think ecologically. Without dirt, we might never notice that something is wrong, that something is different from the nature we know. I think that while dirt has its rightful negative and extremely damaging factors, dirt is one of the main contributors and enablers of critical thinking. As absurd as this sounds, this thesis wants to show that the existence of dirt is inevitable for ecological thinking.

After having summarized the arguments that show that the visibility of dirt can be seen in the novels, the second part of this thesis's argument is that dirt directly influences the human being. In this passage of *Our Mutual Friend* this trait of dirt is described: "It was a foggy day in London, and the fog was heavy and dark. Animate London, with smarting eyes and irritated lungs, was blinking, wheezing, and choking; inanimate London was a sooty spectre, divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither." (Dickens *Our Mutual Friend* 595). In this passage, the fog in London is described further and very similarly to the descriptions in *Bleak House*. However, there are more characteristics added here. First of all, it is mentioned that the fog is heavy and dark, which adds color and feelings to the image of fog. Further, it is described that eyes were smarting, and lungs were irritated due to the fog.

This obviously refers to the fact that breathing in dirty air irritates and hurts one's eyes and lungs, which ties back in with the description of smoke as poisonous and killing fumes in *Hard Times*. Both one's eyes and lungs are hurt by the fog, meaning that the air has a direct effect on the physical feelings and experiences of human beings. In the next sentence, inanimate London is described as "sooty" and being both visible and invisible, but at the same time, not being anything of the two fully. This passage offers an interesting contrast between animate and inanimate London that is highly important for the depiction of dirt in this novel. First, by using the phrasing animate London, it becomes clear that here it is talked about the effects of fog on the human being and other living species, the effects being pain both in the eyes and the lungs of the humans and other living beings experiencing the fog. Secondly, it is talked about inanimate London that could refer to everything that is not alive, namely buildings, factories or benches. Here it is stated that fog can either make the city visible or invisible by covering it. However, it is never only just one of the two. This comparison shows the two-fold and unique nature of fog. Not only does the fog change the appearance of the surrounding nature, but also it has direct, damaging effects on humans and other living beings. This simile shows the spacious and extensive nature of the fog. Fog literally is everywhere, and its effects can be seen and felt everywhere. What is more, this passage especially shows the interconnectedness between fog, human beings and the nature. None of those things work without influencing each other. Human beings are the ones creating the fog, whereas the fog influences human health, as well as the nature's condition. This wonderfully represents that whatever you put out into the world comes back to you in the same way. Fog, the way we see it in the novels, cannot appear without the human's interference by industrializing the world. Despite the fact that so many people believe that this is a necessary evil, the fog shows exactly how it affects humans and that human beings are not actually the center of the world, but nature with its ability to affect everything around it is (Boone 97). Living in these dangerous conditions over an extended period of time will have effects on humans, whether we like it or not. The pure visibility and the damaging effects on humans and the nature can create annoyance and unhappiness, consequently creating a discourse about it and thus, start ecological thinking.

The analysis of fog in Dickens's novels reveals two key aspects. First of all, fog is described and given characteristics by various descriptions of its nature. The repeated mention of fog emphasizes its persistence. Further, fog is described as unnatural, persistent and unusual. The adding of characteristics and their corresponding descriptions offer a great picture of its nature and simultaneously proves that fog fulfills this thesis's main analyzed characteristics, mainly

being lack of visibility as well as altering perception. Similarly to smoke, fog also enables the discourse of different social attitudes about it seen through the conversation of Esther and the London inhabitants. What is more, the direct effect on human beings, namely hurting their eyes and throats is described, also proving that dirt is directly affecting human beings.

As far as the frequency of naming fog between the three novels, it can be said that while all three novels address fog, *Bleak House* features it most prominently, particularly in its London setting, making it a recurring theme. Especially the character Esther shows her perception of fog via first-person narration, making it a great topic of discussion in the first parts of the novel. The novel *Our Mutual Friend* then further supports the characteristics of fog that are described in *Bleak House*, showing that both novels bring across the same image of dirt as fog.

In Charles Dickens's novels, the depiction of dirt as fog displays another direct consequence of continuous air pollution. In the depictions it is shown that while the London fog is resembling a natural phenomenon, it is closer to the modern concept of smog and has the ability to reduce visibility and increase physical reactions such as irritation and pain. Thus, the existence and perception of dirt as fog encourages reflection on the impacts of pollution, thereby encouraging the ecological thought to avoid or even eradicate the negative effects of fog.

3.3 Dirt as rubbish and waste

Another form of dirt identified in the novels that is not air pollution, but rather a dirt form of a solid nature, is dirt as rubbish and waste. Due to its nature, waste is not only very easily visible, but it also has the trait of interfering with humans and affecting their course of action. More often than not, a human being aims to avoid waste and therefore either steps over it or walks around it. Thus, dirt as waste directly influences the human's perception of their nature by decreasing the aesthetic beauty of their surroundings, and secondly dirt as waste can impact humans in the sense of literally being in their way.

Continuing with the representation of dirt in his novels, Dickens goes on to describe waste and rubbish as something negative in the following passage, further adding to the argument that his novels are inherently ecocritical: "A space of stunted grass and dry rubbish being between him and the young rabble, he took his eyeglass out of his waistcoat to look for any child he knew by name, and might order off." (Dickens *Hard Times* 10). In this case of mentioning rubbish, Dickens utilizes the word to display not only the obvious visibility of dirt, but moreover he uses the phrase "being between him and", visualizing the quality of dirt being in one's way. Not only

does Dickens mention rubbish by name in this passage, but the author also makes sure to state that rubbish was actually blocking the character's way which can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. On the literal level this could mean actually having to step over or even having to take a different way to reach one's destination due to the rubbish. Metaphorically it could be interpreted as being in the way of someone's health, given the fact that waste and rubbish obviously decreased hygiene standards. Further, it could also affect a human's contentment and comfortability, especially considering the living conditions of the working classes living in the extremely polluted areas and the obvious degradation of natural beauty that accompanies this pollution. Considering that the living area of the working classes during the British Industrial Revolution was littered highly, this could be one instance of visualizing the living situation of the poor living close to the cities and their factories. In this case however, this does not show a working-class person walking through their living space. Here, the character Thomas Gradgrind, who is the superintendent of the school board, therefore a middle-class character, is walking around the city. While there is no account of the character actually acknowledging the waste by mentioning his thoughts about it, the omniscient third-person narrator still highlights the fact that the dirt is in his way, standing between him and his goal. Thus, while the character himself does not create any discourse about it, it can still be assumed that he noticed it at least and had to slightly change his path. Therefore, this passage shows again that dirt is not only visible but also directly interacts with human beings.

Another instance of litter being visible by the human eye can be found in the novel *Our Mutual Friend*: "Such breakfast as he had, he took at the comfortless public-house where he had parted from Riderhood on the occasion of their night-walk. He took it, standing at the littered bar, and looked loweringly at a man who stood where Riderhood had stood that early morning." (Dickens *Our Mutual Friend* 1127). In this passage, the character is standing near a "littered bar", which is explained by the third-person narrator setting the scene. The narrator again creates an image of the surrounding area, showing that there was obvious and perceivable waste and rubbish thrown around the bar. This relates back to Schülting (6) describing that dirt transformed streets and spaces. Considering the historical background of the Industrial Revolution, it can be expected that the bar would be placed in the inner circle of the city where there was a lot of activity, and many people were walking around. Especially the lower classes were associated with heavy drinking and gambling (Mosley 98). Therefore, it is likely that this is a bar in the inner circle of the city, which would be littered and polluted, as dirt habitually clustered in this area.

Considering the inclusion of the topic dirt as rubbish and waste, it can be seen that this type is less included than air pollution. While especially the novel *Our Mutual Friend* deals with waste on a societal level, specifically considering its worth and significance for the different social classes, the actual passages including and thematizing waste have less importance for the environmental discussion. Nonetheless, the passages identified further add to the image painted of dirty Great Britain.

Dirt as rubbish and waste in the inner circle of Great Britain's polluted cities is especially presented as waste coming from factories, especially non-biodegradable waste such as leftovers of iron and other materials that were not burned in the factories (Sullivan *Dirty Nature* 111). In the selected novels, however, waste seems to be a more every-day form of waste, being thrown to the ground or even dumped into the streets by companies and other smaller businesses. When individuals encounter rubbish littered in public spaces such as streets, it serves as a visible reminder of environmental degradation. Seeing rubbish in natural environments enables individuals to consider the impact of human activities on the environment. Furthermore, waste is typically associated with a feeling of uncleanness, which often wants to be avoided by human beings, therefore they will try to either not come across waste at all or at least stay out of its way as best as possible, again relating back to Schülting (6) describing dirt making streets and spaces unpassable. What is more, rubbish detracts from the aesthetic beauty of natural landscapes. When people notice rubbish in their direct surroundings, it diminishes their enjoyment of these spaces, enabling the room for ecological thinking to try to avoid this. Therefore, exposure to visible instances of non-biodegradable waste, particularly in natural environments and public spaces, increases individuals' awareness of environmental degradation and possible negative consequences for human beings, as humans that perceive the dirt, might have feelings such as disgust or uncomfortableness. The affective nature of dirt, therefore, has the ability to evoke ecological thinking, in order to avoid these uncomfortable issues.

3.4 Dirt as dust and ashes

Dust and ashes display a form of residue from smoke, meaning that dust and ashes are a direct result of smoke. Smoke, dust and ashes are therefore closely related, with dust and ashes being the end product of coal burning in factories. Dust and ashes have the ability to cover ground, windows and clothes, therefore changing humans' perception of their surroundings. Furthermore, as dust and ashes often covered clothes and human skin, making them visibly dirty, whether by walking through polluted air or stepping on dust patches, people may become aware of this and feel the need to change it, as it may cause feelings such as annoyance.

Therefore, dust and ashes also fulfill the two requirements of this thesis, namely clear visibility and a direct effect on human beings. Simon (217) argues that dust in the novels *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* represents a central image of the Victorian fragmentation of body and mind. While I agree with this, dust and ashes will be interpreted differently in order to fit the ecocritical scope of this thesis.

In one scene in the novel *Hard Times* the character Stephen Blackpool who is a Hand in one of Bounderby's factories and therefore part of the working class, walks around Coketown: "[...] where the besmoked evergreens were sprinkled with a dirty powder, like untidy snuff-takers; by coal-dust paths and many varieties of ugliness; [...]" (Dickens *Hard Times* 94). In this passage, the character is walking up a hill and through the third-person narration, the scenery of the surrounding area is described. The evergreens of the area are described as "besmoked" and covered in a dirty powder. This picture is compared to the image of untidy snuff-takers, which functions as a reference to drug abusers of the British population (Jackson 3). What is more, the paths that Stephen walks on are dusted by coal which is linked to ugliness in the next part. This detailed but short description offers a lot of impressions and visualizations of the scenery. With the help of descriptive adjectives, the imagery is created very vividly. Walking paths that would normally be imagined with green grass around and an earthy and stony path, are here described as dusty and covered in the remains of the factory smoke. It is evident that the simple act of walking up a hill confronts the character with numerous influences of ongoing air pollution. While the inclusion of the noun "ugliness" is not directly related to the dusty paths here, it becomes clear that the image that should be conveyed is rather unpleasant and horrible to look at. This description of nature derives highly from the picture that comes to mind when thinking about a hill in a landscape. To describe it in these terms is only to illustrate the problems that the Industrial Revolution posed for nature and, consequently, for the perceptions of the people who live in it. The reference to the untidy drug abusers is highly interesting for the analysis of social classes, however not important for the environmental analysis of this thesis. However, the mention of untidy could refer to dirty clothes and skin that could once again be a product of air pollution and dust and ashes covering the lower classes that were more affected by factory smoke.

Concerning the coal-pits mentioned in the previous passage, the character Louisa in *Hard Times* has a similar encounter with them in this scene: "Louisa rumbled to Coketown, over the coal-pits past and present, and was whirled into its smoky jaws." (Dickens *Hard Times* 112). In this passage, Louisa is walking around the scenery, and for better or for worse, has to walk around

the polluted scenery. This short passage further exemplifies that it was nearly impossible not to come across any form of pollution. In this case, Louisa is walking over the coal pits that Stephan also came across on his walk in one of the prior scenes. This scene shows that walking over the coal pits resulted in ashes being thrown into the air again, using the description of whirling around its “smoky jaws”. Naturally, coal pits often still contain a great amount of ashes and while stepping on them, the ashes are released into the air once again. This naturally shows another great way of visible dirt that is impossible to overlook. Human beings that step over or on coal pits are naturally going to encounter another visible form of dirt. It can be expected that this not only alters one’s perception, but moreover changes the look of the human beings themselves. By stepping on an ashy patch of coal, human beings might be covered by the ashes, which could result in dirty clothes, dirty skin or hair, which goes hand in hand with Schülting’s (5-6) description of dirt as disorder, polluting the human and Mosley’s (98) description of dirty workers. This form of dirt is persistent and altering, which means that human beings have to consider the reason for its existence if the aim is the elimination of dirt. This naturally does not imply that individuals must necessarily adopt an ecological perspective, however, this discourse on the coal pits, whether it stems from feelings such as anger, concern or dissatisfaction, can serve as a preliminary step towards ecological thinking. In order to think ecological thoughts, one has to start thinking about something in the first place. The high visibility and altering characteristics of dirt enable the thinking process to happen easily and naturally. Would the dirt be invisible and would have no visible or noticeable effect on the human being, there would be nothing to base one’s thoughts on. Therefore, the high visibility and changing abilities of dirt can be the starting point for the ecological thought. This goes hand in hand with the claim made by Stiegler (85-86), namely that the recognition of a thing is the foundation for discourse about this thing. Only when something is recognized can it become a topic to think about.

The third-person narration in *Hard Times* moreover reveals that dust and ashes have the ability to spread widely across the landscape, which results in neighboring cities being affected by Coketown’s air pollution as well: “As Coketown cast ashes not only on its own head but on the neighbourhood’s too [...] it was customary for those who now and then thirsted for a drought of pure air, which is not absolutely the most wicked among the vanities of life, to get a few miles away by the railroad [...]” (Dickens *Hard Times* 148). This particular scene describes how the ashes of Coketown not only reach the buildings and nature of the city in which they were produced in itself but also reach the city or town close by and thus affect surrounding areas. In the same passage, the third-person narrator describes the feeling of wanting to get

away from Coketown occasionally. Inhabitants who by way of a change want to get fresh and pure air, would have to leave Coketown and travel by train to reach a cleaner environment with a better air quality. This passage implies that the characters in the novel were feeling the impact of air pollution and had the desire to escape the polluted air every once in a while. While there is no mentioning of those characters thinking about the air pollution or why it is there, it still offers the main point of the thesis, namely that human beings are able to perceive the dirt around them and moreover, it changes their perception of the nature, as they know that elsewhere they can get fresh air. That means that the characters in the novel are well aware that the bad and dirty air is Coketown-specific and they know that in order to escape it, they have to escape Coketown. Although the characters do not particularly complain about the polluted air, they are still affected by it enough to want to leave the town for a trip to fresher, purer air. Considering that the polluted air was ongoing and rather permanent, this feeling of wanting to escape polluted air and getting some fresh air instead, is the first step for thinking about the nature of ashes and how to avoid them after all. Therefore, this negative characteristic of dirt as dust and ashes that visibly annoys and disrupts the inhabitants' experience in the city, can be the first step for generating ecological thinking. Marsh (147) also deals with this particular passage in his writings, however, using smoke as a symbol for everything that is wrong with the industry and the smoke being the industry spreading around the surrounding area. This could either be interpreted socially or environmentally. As an environmental statement, this is absolutely relevant. The dust and ashes stemming from the factory smoke spread around the town and represent the British industry at the time spreading around Great Britain. Dust and ashes are just another symbol of environmental damage done by the industry.

Later in the quoted scene above, the third-person narrator also directly mentions the Coketown inhabitants' need of getting away from the smoke from time to time, which is further exemplified in this passage: "Sissy and Rachel helped themselves out of the smoke by the usual means [...]" (Dickens *Hard Times* 148). While this scene describes all the elements mentioned above, it also states that the inhabitants were clearly aware of how to escape Coketown, which suggests that this is not the first time they have wanted to leave Coketown to go to another place that can offer fresher and cleaner air. The phrase "helped themselves out" further shows that they are in a state of need that they have to escape, the sense of need being the need to breathe fresh air. It is not simply leaving the town for a trip every once in a while, but rather it is an intentional escape from the polluted circumstances of the industrialized city. It shows intentional acting by the inhabitants. The phrasing by the usual means further accentuates a

repeated action of escaping and leaving the city, meaning that it is not unusual for the human beings of Coketown to escape and get fresh air in less polluted cities or villages. While this scene in particular includes the dirt from smoke, it still has to be included in this section, as it helps to form the arguments for this thesis. Furthermore, dust and ashes as an end-result of smoke are closely related to it, making it meaningful to see a certain crossing over of dirt forms here.

After having shown that characters like to leave the polluted air once in a while, the description once again offers an insight into the easy and wide spreading of dust and ashes. The characters Sissy and Rachel make their way to another train station between Coketown and Mr Bounderby's retreat: "Though the green landscape was blotted here and there with heaps of coal, it was green elsewhere, and there were trees to see, and there were larks singing (though it was Sunday), and there were pleasant scents in the air, and all was over-arched by a bright blue sky." (Dickens *Hard Times* 148). This scene is really important and expressive considering the impact of dust and ashes. As already mentioned before, the dust and ashes that stem from the smoke pollution not only affected Coketown, the producer itself, but rather it spread to surrounding areas as well, which can be seen again in the first part of this passage, where it is described that the otherwise green landscape was covered in ashes in certain places. However, what is striking here is the description of this other city that the characters escaped to in contrast to Coketown. In this new location, the healthy countryside is described as very visible and pleasant. Contrary to Coketown, where there are little to no mentions of green and pure nature, this town is described as a green landscape, where people can see trees and hear birds chirping. Furthermore, the smell of the air is described as pleasant, which is a stark contrast to the hurtful air in Coketown. Lastly, the blue and clear sky is described in this passage. All of these descriptions function as a tool to differentiate Coketown from other, non-polluted cities. While the reader is at this point used to descriptions of darkness, foulness and dirty air and ground, for the first time pleasant and natural nature is described. The journey away from Coketown enables the characters of the novel to experience what they otherwise would not when staying in Coketown: fresh air and a green, natural landscape, nearly unaffected by the smoke pollution of the city. This is a highly relevant scene as it shows that the characters can definitely notice the difference between Coketown and other cities that are not as highly affected by air pollution. The feeling of wanting to escape leads the characters to a clean, beautiful nature that helps the characters to perceive nature in a common way. These obvious differences between the two cities could lead to thinking about the fact that Coketown is so very different. Upon further

thinking about this fact, one could ask themselves why this happened. The natural way of thinking would lead one to think about the industrialization that is not happening quite as intensely in the other towns. Therefore, it is vital to be able to see and understand the drastic natural differences between the two cities, as this can lead to ecological thinking.

Concerning dirt as dust, *Hard Times* thematizes dust to represent the overall dirtiness of the city Coketown: “The streets were hot and dusty; the sun was so bright that it even shone through the heavy vapour drooping over Coketown.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 64). In this short passage, dust is not attributed any characteristics or other features, however, it is utilized to create a certain feeling of uncomfortableness, due to the hotness and dirtiness of the streets and scenery in this scene. Dust is used to further expand the image of dirty, industrialized Britain, being hot and dusty in the summer. The dust in this scene can only be assumed to stem from the dirtiness of the Industrial Revolution, especially concerning by-products of air pollution, but even though there are no traits attributed to it, the word dust on its own in context of this scene can further substantiate the impression of dirty Britain.

Finally it can be said that as a direct result of air pollution, the representation of dirt in the form of ashes and dust can be found especially in the novel *Hard Times*. This is reasonable because, as the previous chapters have shown, air pollution is a major theme in this novel. As a direct by-product of smoke, dust and ashes naturally are heavily interrelated with this. While the novel *Our Mutual Friend* deals with dirt as dust in great detail, dust is often related to decay and social issues appearing during the Industrial Revolution, which is why the passages dealing with dust do not fit the focus area of this thesis.

Nonetheless, dirt as dust and ashes further exemplifies dirt’s ability to enable ecocritical thinking. This is mainly done in two ways. First, the depiction of dirt as ashes and dust in Charles Dickens’s novels change the appearance and color of landscapes, buildings and people, thereby affecting people’s perceptions of their surroundings as a direct result of smoke pollution. In addition, dust and ashes can cause annoyance by covering people’s clothes, skin and hair, which may lead them to think about how to get rid of this form of pollution. Consequently, the fact that dust and ashes are firstly highly visible and secondly have the ability to affect people directly, the appearance of this form of dirt can lead to ecological thinking.

3.5 Dirt as water pollution

The last dirt form that will be analyzed is dirt as water pollution, which especially affects important waterways such as rivers close to industrial factories. Dirt as water pollution decreases the aesthetic beauty of the surrounding nature while also being a direct health hazard for people that consume polluted water. Dickens repeatedly uses this form of dirt in his novels, to further display dirt being all around us and affecting us directly.

One instance of dirt as water pollution can be found in the novel *Hard Times*. In this passage, the third-person narration describes the appearance of a river running alongside a factory in Coketown: “It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye [...]” (Dickens *Hard Times* 27). Dickens first uses the color black to describe the waterway running alongside the factory complex in order to display its lack of naturalness. The narrator also describes the appearance of the water as being purple, which is the result of dye contamination. Looking at this historically, it becomes clear that this passage was likely inspired by factories that were producing clothes spilling their waste, namely the unnecessary dye, into the nearby river during industrialization. It could also be assumed that this is a direct reference to the river Thames, which was highly affected by pollution during the Industrial Revolution. However, it is more likely that this is a reference, or an inspiration taken from the river that ran by the factory that Charles Dickens himself worked at. Given the fact that it was a shoe-polishing factory, it is likely that the river next to it was also similarly polluted to the one described here (Forster 25). What is more, Dickens describes the river as ill-smelling, which is an obvious characteristic that people crossing the river or walking alongside it would notice almost immediately. With that being said, it can also be assumed that this evokes certain feelings in people such as disgust, mainly because water is one of the basic human needs. The perception of polluted water, whether through an unnatural color or an unpleasant odor, can evoke feelings and emotions in people who want to consume clear and clean water. Furthermore, the disruption of the aesthetic appeal a beautiful river would normally offer to one’s surroundings has to be mentioned. By altering the color and appearance of the river and making it highly visible, the aesthetic appeal of the waterways is also diminished, which could have detrimental effects on the perceived quality of life of the human beings living in this area. Oftentimes, rivers are something that people enjoy looking at, however, given the fact that this river is so visibly different from natural and clean rivers, it can be assumed that humans would much rather stand clear of this polluted area.

The aesthetic appeal is not only altered by its change of color, but also by the change of smell that a river undergoes in such circumstances: “Down upon the river that was black and thick with dye, some Coketown boys [...] rowed a crazy boat, which made a spumous track upon the water as it jogged along, while every dip of an oar stirred up vile smells.” (Dickens *Hard Times* 65). In this passage, the third-person narration adds further features to the appearance and characteristics of the river in Coketown. First, the river is described as purple. What is more the ill-smelling nature due to the dye is restated and highlighted again. This time however, the color of the river is described as black. Via third-person narration the characteristic “spumous” is added to the river’s description, which further shows its pollution with dye from the factories altering with the natural properties of water. Due to the repetition of the ill-smelling nature of the river, it seems that this is rather a prominent characteristic that should be accentuated again. What is more, the smell is described as vile, which is a highly negatively connotated adjective, creating a feeling of how terrible and obtrusive the smell is. Adding such adjectives helps the reader not only to imagine visual impressions, but also activates the senses of the reader.

In the novel *Our Mutual Friend*, the topic of water pollution is described similarly: “And as the great black river with its dreary shores was soon lost to her view in the gloom [...]” (Dickens *Our Mutual Friend* 100). While the river in *Hard Times* was first described as purple and only later is described as black, the river in *Our Mutual Friend* is described as being black from the beginning. The most interesting thing about the evolution of the river from purple to black here is the publication date and the time of writing of the two novels. Although this cannot be proven, it is reasonable to assume that as this novel was published later, and was in fact Dickens’s second to last published novel, the reader is presented with a development of perception. It is clear that over the years during the Industrial Revolution, the pollution worsened consistently. Therefore, this display of the rivers could show the detrimental worsening of the city’s environmental condition. While *Hard Times* was published in 1854, *Our Mutual Friend* was released in 1865, which is over ten years later. It could be the case that Dickens displays his perception of the situation becoming worse over time here, whether that happened intentionally or unintentionally can only be speculated on. Nonetheless, when comparing the two novels these two descriptions function as a great way of showing that the situation was terrible in the first place, by the river being an unnatural purple color, but still there was room for it to become even more tremendous by the river becoming black in the later novel. Naturally, the second chosen scene from *Hard Times* also describes the river as black, meaning that even here a worsening could already be described. First, the river ran purple but after some time, it was

already black, later on being only described as black in the later novel. This crossing over between the novels and seeing a form of progress between them has also been noticed previously in observing the evolution of the sun through air pollution in *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the main goal of this thesis was to exemplify its claims by analyzing the three selected novels *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* with the help of the necessary historical background as well as the related theoretical concepts. The main claim of this thesis is that because dirt is directly visible and perceptible, as well as directly affecting and interacting with human beings, the existence of dirt can have the power to generate ecological thinking.

Before starting the analysis part of this thesis, which was mainly driven by the thesis questions, the main historical background was summarized. The main purpose of this was to present a clear outline of the time's peculiarities that were expected to greatly influence the writing and topics introduced throughout the novels. By knowing the relevant history, the analysis could draw conclusions on the influences of the Industrial Revolution that were described in the novels. A highly important factor was the history of Charles Dickens himself, as his experiences during the Industrial Revolution are often included in his novels. Knowing about his experiences and life during the time period helps to find connections between his life and his literary work. After having summarized the historical background and Charles Dickens's experiences, the theoretical concepts that further dictate the analysis were introduced. The main concepts are ecocriticism, with its subcategories Victorian and affective ecocriticism, as well as the ecological thought. What is more, the existing concepts of dirt were summarized to form the main basis and to ensure the possibility to further expand the term as an environmental term. With the help of these factors, the analysis can be supported by necessary background knowledge as well as already existing concepts that help the thesis to produce its claims.

Now summarizing the main findings of this thesis, the first main conclusion drawn is that all three selected novels describe the influence of the Industrial Revolution in great detail. All three novels include descriptions of the environmental landscape in their general creation of scenery and imagery, showing the great number of factories as well as the environmental damage they cause including different forms of dirt. The depictions of the urban environment are evident in the omniscient third-person narrative, as well as in the limited first-person perspective, and

furthermore, are present in the discourse between characters in the novels. With the help of imagery and detailed descriptions of the scenery, the author offers a highly detailed image of the landscapes and nature that play an important role in the novels. Whether it is the depiction of Coketown in the novel *Hard Times* or the depiction of foggy London in *Bleak House*, all descriptions share the characteristic of being extremely rich in detail, giving the reader impressions of colors, smell and evoking feelings of the landscapes.

In terms of the role that these descriptions of nature and landscape play in the novels, it can be said that although the environment is not the main theme of the novels, as they are generally considered to be works about British society at the time, the analysis has shown that it is undeniable that nature and the damage it has suffered as a result of the Industrial Revolution is a key element in the novels. What seems to be very important is that particularly the novel *Hard Times* often sets the scene by describing the smoky landscape of its main town, Coketown. Coketown is described in great detail, and its smoky and ashen landscape is mentioned in many chapters throughout the novel. The main argument for the importance of nature and natural scenery in the novels is the frequency with which they are described and mentioned. While direct conversations about dirt are less frequent, the depictions of natural imagery and the description of the state of the environment are constant companions throughout the literary works. The fact that a large number of chapters describe details of Coketown suggests that the descriptions were deliberate and important, mostly because of their frequency, but also because of their length, best seen in *Bleak House*, where descriptions of foggy London often exceed a single paragraph. In the case of *Our Mutual Friend*, there are also many different and short descriptions that occur quite frequently, further supporting the argument that the environment and its state play a major role throughout all the selected novels.

In these descriptions and depictions of dirty Britain, the most common types of dirt were dirt as smoke, fog, dust and ashes, water pollution and waste. In terms of the ways in which the different forms of dirt were dealt with in the novels, it can be said that although they depicted and discussed the same theme, each of the pieces of writing worked in its own way to support the main claim of this thesis. Generally, although all three novels contained different forms of dirt, the novel *Hard Times* seemed to be the one that dealt with dirt the most. The majority of the chapters of this novel started with descriptions and depictions of dirt, the most prominent one being dirt as smoke. Despite the fact that the novel *Hard Times* mentions dirt as smoke most frequently, dust and ashes, which are a direct result of the smoke pollution, as well as dirt as water pollution, which is greatly interconnected with the factories being close to a river, were

also continuously included. Considering the novel *Bleak House*, the main form of dirt found in the novel is dirt as fog, being a highly discussed topic throughout the first part of the novel. Concerning the novel *Our Mutual Friend*, it dealt with various different forms of dirt, however with none in great, noticeable frequency. Dirt as water pollution as well as dirt as waste were mentioned repeatedly with some occurrences of dirt as fog. In comparison to its companions, the novel *Our Mutual Friend* thematized dirt the least, however, while the other two novels provided more descriptions and more discourse about dirt, this particular novel added further important characteristics to different types of dirt and furthermore manages to mention most forms of dirt that this thesis focuses on. In unison these three novels effectively represent depictions of dirt. Together, they paint a thorough and detailed picture of different forms of dirt. This ties back in with the first two paragraphs of this conclusion, stating that there is first, a highly detailed depiction of the characteristics of dirt and second, a great frequency of those, making the topic of dirt one of the main ones. Looking at these three novels in comparison and contrast enabled an extremely useful and valuable image of the term dirt and its different manifestations. Summing up the depictions of dirt in the novels, it can be said that all three novels show key descriptions of dirt that are necessary to create an image about dirt. Dirt is omnipresent in the novels, proving its significance for the novels.

Moving on to the expansion of the term dirt, it can be said that there has been great research and work done in the field of dirt theory. Dirt is often linked to social issues, whereas this thesis uses the term dirt as a purely environmental term, basically using it in its literal form. The notion of dirt in this thesis is considered in isolation from social problems. The analysis focuses on finding different manifestations of dirt, meaning different environmental problems appearing. The expansion of the term dirt as an environmental term, helps to generate conclusions about the importance of environmental problems in Charles Dickens's novels as well as prove the main claims of this thesis.

Asking how dirt can create ecological thinking now, the omnipresence of dirt in the novels is the first step to answering this question. According to this thesis, one of the main claims is that the visibility of dirt is necessary for ecological thinking. For this to happen, dirt has to be visible first. This is excellently displayed by the novels, as they all paint a clear picture of different forms of dirt, giving them characteristics and creating vivid images by describing them in great detail. Therefore, the first step to generating environmental thinking is completed. While this sounds mundane at first, the importance of the visibility of dirt is taken up repeatedly in the novels and it can be easily assumed that if dirt were invisible, the chance of starting to think

ecologically would be significantly lower. Considering how the novels display the visibility of dirt, it can be said that, first, all the novels mention and describe dirt in great detail during their descriptions of the different landscapes. Another key factor is the character Esther in *Bleak House*. In Esther's life throughout the novels, it is clear that what makes her think about dirt is its clear visibility. Esther comes to London for the first time in her life and one of the first questions she asks is about the London fog, proving its extreme visibility and persistence. Her descriptions and conversations about the London fog provide great insights into dirt as fog. The character Esther is hugely important for the analysis of this thesis, as she not only provides vivid descriptions of the appearance of fog, but also represents someone not living in London, someone not being used to the London fog and accepting it as a London-unique phenomenon. Her perspective represents the main claim of this thesis, which is why she is so important for the analysis. Esther first of all perceives the fog and its unusual characteristics, she acknowledges that it can alter the appearance of nature or other inanimate objects such as windows. Most importantly, Esther starts to think about the existence of fog and the reasons for it. She does not simply accept its existence, but instead she starts to ask questions about it, therefore starts with the main basis for ecological thinking. In order to start thinking ecologically, one has to think first. Only when one thinks, one's thoughts can lead to one thinking ecologically. The first step is to think about dirt. Next, one has to think about its effects on oneself or on the surrounding area and nature. Then, one can start to think about the offspring of dirt. It is only when there is recognition of a source of dirt, and a desire to eliminate or avoid the negative consequences of dirt, that ecological thinking can develop. In this novel, Esther represents the start and beginning point of reaching ecological thinking, which makes her unique and vital for this thesis. Therefore, it can be said that noticing and seeing the dirt is the first step to think about the environment, which Esther continues to do throughout the novel *Bleak House*.

The second claim of this paper is that what further generates ecological thinking is the fact that dirt directly impacts the human being. This can be seen in various instances, for example in the novel *Hard Times* when the two characters Sissy and Rachel travel away from Coketown and see the new nature in a not so polluted area. While Sissy and Rachel do not themselves talk about the smoke, the omniscient third-person narrator clearly states that they want to get out of the smoky town, stating that people did indeed notice the smoke and once in a while wanted to get away from it. The second and more clear proof for this claim is that the author states on multiple occasions that the dirt stung in the eyes and hurt one's throat. This clearly shows the

impact that dirt has on human beings. Furthermore, Dickens describes characters being covered by dust and ashes throughout the novels, exemplifying the fact that during the Industrial Revolution, people and their clothes were often covered in dirt due to the high smoke pollution. These things undeniably show that dirt has great power to interact with and directly affect the human being. Given the fact that all these things mentioned are rather unpleasant feelings and situations, it is clear that some people might start to think about how to remove this dirt that hurts or annoys them. Naturally, some people might take the easy way out and leave the town the way Sissy and Rachel do in *Hard Times* but that is not the point here. The point is that dirt, by being visibly and interactive, has the potential to start and evoke ecological thinking. Generally it can be said that ecological thinking reveals the interconnectedness of the environment and human beings. Through its characteristics, the existence of dirt has the ability to do just that. The first step is visibility, so that people know and can assume where it comes from. The second step is directly affecting human beings, which then helps them to see that human beings and nature are interconnected. Dirt affects humans, therefore humans and nature are connected. Human beings do something to nature by building endless factories and burning massive amounts of fossil fuels and nature strikes back by hurting their eyes and throats and giving them dirty clothes. The fact that nature also has the possibility to spread diseases is clear, however, that is not directly visible.

By creating clear and detailed imagery of dirt, the novels ensure that the readers have a clear understanding of dirt. By showing the reader that dirt directly affects the characters, the reader might start to think about it, the same way the characters did. Naturally, the characters in the novels did not figure out the real problem, however, one has to consider the time the novels have been written in. With today's knowledge, the reading of these novels becomes even clearer, and they show us once again what we have closed our eyes to. Environmental damage is there, it is visible and has been for a long time. The effects happen quickly and given the fact that we caused the effects, we are also the ones who have to change it.

The main goal of this thesis was to contribute to the field of ecocriticism and to further expand the term dirt in order to give it a clear relation to the environment. Given the fact that nowadays we are facing extreme consequences of climate change, it is important to create discourse and spread awareness on the topic of environmental damage. This thesis aims at generating further discussion about this topic, while also creating a tool to analyze novels on their thematization of environmental topics. The expansion of the term dirt helps in order to not only analyze dirt in a social way, but also in an environmental one.

As far as the limitations of this thesis are concerned, first of all, this thesis focuses only on the author Charles Dickens. In order to further prove the usefulness of the expansion of dirt used in this thesis, the process needs to be applied in different contexts and for different authors. For future research, it would also be interesting to analyze Charles Dickens's earlier novels to see if there are other instances of dirt that can be compared to those found in the later novels. Regarding Charles Dickens's novels again, the inclusion of the nonhuman had to be left out of this thesis but could further provide interesting insights for ecocriticism. Including both the analysis of dirt, as well as the inclusion of the nonhuman would provide a very clear and detailed image of the environmental nature of Charles Dickens's novels, which is why it would be interesting to expand on this in future research.

Finally, one thing that is left to say is that this thesis shows how easily visible environmental damage really is. There are countless references to dirt in the analyzed novels, showing that really, dirt is all around us and has been for over 200 years. Be it air pollution, water pollution or literal waste that blocks our way or destroys our landscapes, dirt is here, and dirt is clearly noticeable. If an author 200 years ago managed to create ecocritical thinking and describe dirt in its greatest details, how are we still so blind to the damages done to the world? Learning from one's mistakes is a vital human trait, so maybe reading novels that have already figured out the problem can help us to finally realize what has been right in front of us the whole time. Even if this does not happen, which is unfortunately likely, this thesis has still tried to raise awareness and show how easy it is to see environmental damage. All we have to do is to open our eyes and observe our nature and our surroundings instead of focusing on the wrong things.

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