

<b>Makale Bilgisi:</b> Biderci Dinç, D. (2024). Richard Powers'ın <i>Kazanç</i> Ve Latife Tekin'in <i>Berji Kristin: Çöp Tepelerinden Masallar</i> Eserlerinde Ekohastalık . DEÜ Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Cilt:11, Sayı:1, ss. 316- 343.	<b>Article Info:</b> Biderci Dinç, D. (2024). Ecosickness in <i>Gain</i> by Richard Powers and Berji Kristin: <i>The Tales from the Garbage Hills</i> by Latife Tekin. DEU Journal of Humanities, Volume:11 Issue: 1 pp. 316-343.
<b>Kategori:</b> Araştırma Makalesi	<b>Category:</b> Research Article
<b>Gönderildiği Tarih:</b> 16.08.2023	<b>Date Submitted:</b> 16.08.2023
<b>Kabul Edildiği Tarih:</b> 06.04.2024	<b>Date Accepted:</b> 06.04.2024

## ECOSICKNESS IN GAIN BY RICHARD POWERS AND BERJI KRISTIN: THE TALES FROM THE GARBAGE HILLS BY LATİFE TEKİN

Derya Biderci Dinç\*

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate “ecosickness” in *Gain* (1998) by Richard Powers and *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* (1984) by Latife Tekin in the light of *Ecosickness: In Contemporary U.S. Fiction* (2014) by Heather Houser. The analysis of the novels is remarkable, especially in terms of their underlining the mutuality of environment and health. Concerning the concept of trans-corporeality by Stacy Alaimo in conjunction with Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence and Buell's interpretation of toxicity, this article traces ecosickness in these novels. It mainly discusses the significance of toxic materials and their interference with the environment and human bodies, and their increasingly harmful effects on them. The writers unveil the ecological consequences of human ignorance of the interdependencies of the living and non-living and the responsibility for perpetuating toxic scenes. Their writings identify environmental issues like toxic contamination, environmental pollution, contaminated private and public spheres, and the impact of technological or industrial toxic risks on humans and non-humans. The main focus in their novels is on how the bodies and minds of the characters in their novels are enmeshed in their environments. By deploying close readings, it explores how Powers and Tekin underline the link between capitalism's intention to expand profit and environmental degradation and reflect environmental issues in the form of ecosickness. It reveals how they consider the correlation between human bodies and their physical world, explain the loss of human health and environmental health due to ecological crises, especially in the form of pollution, contamination and toxicity, and engage with issues on environmental degradation through ethics of responsibility.

**Keywords:** Ecosickness, Health, Slow Violence, Toxicity, Trans-corporeality.

\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, İstanbul Topkapı Üniversitesi, İktisadi, İdari ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı. [deryabidercidinc@topkapi.edu.tr](mailto:deryabidercidinc@topkapi.edu.tr), ORCID:0000-0002-9443-7136

**RİCHARD POWERS'IN KAZANÇ VE LATİFE TEKİN'İN  
BERJİ KRİSTİN: ÇÖP TEPELERİNDEN MASALLAR  
ESERLERİNDE EKOHAŞTALIK**

**ÖZ**

Bu makale, Richard Powers'ın *Kazanç* (1998) ve Latife Tekin'in *Berji Kristin: Çöp Tepelerinden Masallar* (1984) adlı eserlerindeki "ekohastalığı" Heather Houser'ın *Ecosickness: In Contemporary U.S. Fiction* (2014) kitabının ışığında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Romanların analizi, çevre ve sağlığın karşılıklı etkileşimini vurgulaması açısından dikkat çekicidir. Bu makale, romanlarda ekohastalığın izini Stacy Alaimo'nun transbedenlilik kavramı ile Rob Nixon'un yavaş şiddet kavramı ve Buell'in toksisite yorumuyla birlikte sürmektedir. Esas olarak toksik maddelerin önemini, çevre ve insan vücuduyla olan etkileşimlerini ve onlar üzerinde giderek artan zararlı etkilerini tartışmaktadır. Yazarlar, insanoğlunun canlı ve cansızların karşılıklı bağımlılığı konusundaki bilgisizliğinin ekolojik sonuçlarını ve zehirli sahneleri sürdürmenin sorumluluğunu açığa çıkarırlar. Yazıları, toksik kirlenme, çevre kirliliği, kirlenmiş özel ve kamusal alanlar ve teknolojik veya endüstriyel toksik risklerin insanlar ve insan olmayanlar üzerindeki etkisi gibi çevresel sorunları tanımlamaktadır. Romanlarında ana odak noktası, karakterlerin bedenlerinin ve zihinlerinin çevrelerine nasıl hapsediğidir. Bu makale, yakın okumalar yaparak, Powers ve Tekin'in insan vücudu ve fiziksel dünya arasındaki ilişkiyi nasıl ele aldıklarını, özellikle toksisite, kirlilik ve kontaminasyon şeklindeki ekolojik krizler nedeniyle insan ve çevre sağlığı kaybını nasıl açıkladıklarını ve sorumluluk etiği yoluyla çevresel bozulmaya ilişkin sorun ve endişelerle nasıl ilgilendiklerini açığa çıkarmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Ekohastalık, Sağlık, Yavaş Şiddet, Toksisite, Bedenler Arası Geçişkenlik.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This article overviews how literature expresses and reflects human beings' relation to their environment by referring to *Gain* (1998) by Richard Powers and *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* (1984) by Latife Tekin. It argues for the centrality of sickness to environmental issues in these novels. Powers and Tekin portray how the rise of capitalism and industrial activities have threatened the survival of human life and the environment on Earth and conditioned ecosickness. In their fictional works, ecosickness emerges as an interconnected theme, interweaving industrialization, capitalism, corporate culture, environmental degradation, and health ailments. Ecosickness functions as an allegory for ecological dilemmas that infect the modern world. This article explores the vulnerability of the environment and human bodies to contaminants or toxins released into the environment through industrial activities.

The introduction part of this article engages with the concepts of toxicity, trans-corporeality, and slow violence while providing the key concept of ecosickness. The next two subsections of the article analyze Powers and Tekin's portrayal of the fragility of the human body and environment. The health of the human body is related to the environmental

process in their narratives. Therefore, *Gain* and *Berji Kristin* are profound examples of ecosickness fiction that explore the intricate interplay of toxicity, environmental pollution, and sickness. To raise environmental consciousness, the effects of environmental degradation are implemented in their narratives of sick bodies.

The article draws upon the concept of ecosickness that was introduced by Heather Houser in *Ecosickness: In Contemporary U.S. Fiction* (2014). By tracing a wide range of contemporary U.S. fiction that addresses environmental issues and concentrates on the ill effects of the usage of chemicals on human beings and the human beings' emotional and somatic responses to them, she provides the concept of ecosickness along with a detailed exploration of the literary tradition of ecosickness fiction. Her concept of ecosickness describes the feeling of unease, distress, or illness that individuals and societies experience in the face of environmental degradation.

Ecosickness interweaves the human material existence and the material environment. Houser argues that by “[u]niting earth and soma through the sickness trope[...]ecosickness fiction attests that an array of stories and narrative affects is necessary for apprehending the material and conceptual relays between the embodied individual and large-scale environmental forces”(2014, p.3-4). She directs the boundaries of material ecocriticism innovatively. She states, “humans and the more-than-human world do not interact but, more importantly, are co-constitutive. Ecosickness shows the conceptual and material dissolutions of the body-environment boundary through sickness and that alters environmental perception and politics” (Houser, 2014, p.23). It dissolves the boundaries between the environment and the human body and signifies a palpable link between ecological changes, degradations, declines, and physical and psychological disturbances in individuals. Following the devastating ecological decline, ecosickness has become a concerning issue in the industrializing world. It “make[s] visible the intimacy between human bodies and the more-than-human world, especially as these are caught up in capitalistic, technological, and geopolitical projects” (Houser, 2014, p.21). Houser calls ecosickness a way to express fear, anxiety and concerns about the state of the environment such as climate change, species extinction, pervasive toxicity, pollution, population growth, and other environmental degradations and capitalist expansion, and technoscientific innovation. (2014,p.8). The anxiety of being exposed to industrial toxins makes people trace the bond between the human body and the environment, ecological degradation, and sickness.

Toxicity caused by industrial activities or toxic pollutants is responsible for creating possible threats to the environment and putting human beings and society at risk because human beings co-constitute with diverse non-human beings, along with the complex linkages between them. In the study of ecosickness, toxins that are the sources of many sicknesses have a profound place. In his book *Writing for an Endangered World*, Lawrence

Buell conceptualizes “toxic discourse” (2001, p.30) by defining the forms, origins, and uses of toxins. He states the indispensability of the physical environment in shaping human health and sickness in environmental writing. His discourse refers to Rachael Carson’s “*Silent Spring*’s indictment of the toxic effects of DDT and other chemical pesticides” (Buell, 2001, p. 200) on human beings and the environment. Following *Silent Spring*, environmentally conscious writers have begun examining the relationships between the environment and the body in contaminated industrialized areas, and the issues of human health and welfare are considered part of environmental history and the socio-political context. Buell explains this as follows,

the pre-Carson history of the public health and welfare strand is not—within literary studies anyhow—normally thought of as part of “environmental” history, and in the field of history, where it is, public hygiene and preservationism do not often get dealt with in the same projects or by the same scholars. (Buell, 2001, p. 8)

Furthermore, this article explores the development of ecosickness by using the key concept of the trans-corporeality of material ecocriticism. The concept of “trans-corporeality” is coined by Stacy Alaimo to describe “interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and non-human natures. By attending to the material interconnections between the human and the more-than-human world” (Alaimo,2010,p.2). Trans-corporality explores the interconnections between human bodies and non-human creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors described as ‘bodily natures’. The trans-corporal relationship between the human body and the material world brings the interdependence and inseparability of agencies. It underlines how bodily natures pass through the permeable border of a human being’s body and create unforeseen changes, in other words, human encounters trans-corporeality, and other chemical agents lead to various sicknesses. Alaimo states:

The traffic in toxins may render it nearly impossible for humans to imagine that our own well-being is disconnected from that of the rest of the planet or to imagine that it is possible to protect “nature” by merely creating separate, distinct areas in which it is “preserved.” In other words, the ethical space of trans-corporeality is never an elsewhere but is always already here, in whatever compromised, ever-catalyzing form. (2010,p.18)

Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality imagines an alterable human body in connection with non-human materials. Instead of the image of a bounded and impenetrable human body, Alaimo presents a transcorporeal perception of the substance of the body. She argues that the boundaries between human beings and non-humans are not fixed but are constantly negotiated through interactions (2010, p.2). She emphasizes that the human body, which is inextricably linked to its environment, exists in ways that are coextensive with

other bodies in the environment. It is porous and vulnerable and constantly exchanges matter and energy with the material environment, therefore, it is physically altered by the material environment, it can “be composed, recomposed and decomposed by other bodies” (Alaimo, 2010, p. 13). The permeable borders of the human body allow the non-human world of matter to pass through, in this mutual exchange, non-human and human shape and affect one other.

Alaimo’s trans-corporeality creates a shift in human beings’ perception of their subjectivity. It emphasizes that the human subject is a material self in which cultural, economic, political, and biological forces are interconnected and intersected. Alaimo states that “Individuals are bounded, coherent entities—become profoundly altered by the recognition that human bodies, human health, and human rights are interconnected with the material, often toxic, flows of particular places” (2010, p.23). She focuses on the idea of the boundary of the human body through the lens of toxicity. The human body interacts with the environment, as a result of the transference of matter between them, in other words, transcorporeal transits of toxins, begin to reflect one another. The chemicals, toxins, contaminants, and pollutants of anthropogenic activities in the environment gradually and invisibly damage human health and stimulate sickness. Thus, toxicity is indispensable for a broader understanding of the concept of ecosickness.

The toxins that industrial activities discharge into the air, water, and soil are absorbed into the human body through the process that Alaimo described as trans-corporality which is “an understanding of the material interchanges between bodies (both human and nonhuman)” (Alaimo, 2010,p.16). This process of the flow of toxic materials through bodies is imperceptible and slow as Rob Nixon put it. According to Nixon, slow violence is “a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (2011, p. 2). Slow violence unfolds and evolves gradually in an invisible way, expanding in time and space. It is one of the defining causes of suffering that come from everlasting environmental catastrophes. In *Gain* and *Berji Kristin*, there are examples of slow violence that occurs and progresses imperceptibly, the health consequences of toxicity that develop too slowly to be noticed can be called as slow violence.

In addition, Nixon deals with toxicity alongside social, economic, and political issues, he brings race, class, gender, and other marginalizing and discriminating characteristics into the discussion of the environment by unveiling the ways in which environmental changes influence the disadvantaged and marginalized communities (2011, pp .226-7). He argues that the axes of discrimination and inequalities pertaining to race, class, and gender are inseparable from environmental inequalities (2011,p.4). The capitalist ideology that is the prime mover of anthropogenic activities creates place-based inequalities by locating industries in minorities and low-income

neighborhoods. The disadvantaged and marginalized people who live in the epicentre of industrialization are surrounded by toxic landscapes. As a result they are exposed to gradual and invisible toxins over time. He states that slow violence is socialized violence as class, gender, and racial identities are constative factors of the disproportionate distribution of toxins (2011, p.16).

Similarly, Powers and Tekin are fundamentally concerned with exploring and exposing the entanglement of social and environmental exploitation and injustices. In *Gain* and *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*, dwelling within toxic places involves the process of unveiling the hidden costs of social ills through Nix's concept of slow violence. The negative health effects of industrialization are the consequence of socioeconomic processes including structural disparities, inequalities, and discrimination. Powers deals with the instances of slow violence of toxicity in *Lacewood*. The long-lasting environmental degradation by the Clare Company and illnesses and deaths, particularly Laura Bodey's cancer exemplify slow violence in *Gain*. Similarly, Tekin reveals the slow violence of toxic reality in *Garbage Hills*. Industrialization and capitalist practices pollute the environment with chemicals and destroy the lives of people through sickness. The hot blue water becomes the source of various sicknesses in *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*, people's skins begin to peel, turn blue, and their hairs turn white. All these sicknesses reveal the slow violence of toxicity in the environment and make *Berji Kristin* an exemplary novel of ecosickness discourse.

To sum up, this article explores ecosickness in *Gain* by Richard Powers and *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* by Latife Tekin by alluding to the concepts of trans-corporeality, toxicity, and slow violence. These novels disclose the experiences of sickness of the people who live in industrial areas and toxic landscapes. Powers and Tekin's narrations are organized around anxieties about the physical effects of toxicity and understanding of the meaning of life in the capitalist world. They follow the relationships between economic productivity and the risks of toxins or pollutants which exert detrimental effects on the environment and ensure ecosickness by entering the interconnected web of life. The personal experience of the characters' sickness coupled with the larger environmental, political, social, and cultural problems.

## 2. Ecosickness in *Gain* by Richard Powers

In *Gain* (1998), Richard Powers explores several themes including industrialization, corporate culture, capitalism, slow violence, environmental degradation, injustice, and health. Powers, known for his intricate storytelling, deals with the intricate relations between industrialization, corporate culture, environmental degradation, and the ensuing ecosickness that afflicts communities and individuals. By telling the stories of the Clare Company and Laura Bodey, he delivers an account of the growth of industrialization and

capitalism, its impact on the environment, and the subsequent health problems at global and local levels.

*Gain* belongs to American environmental discourse which predominantly reflects one of the dominant features of American culture, its anxiety about environmental risks, slow expansion of chemical toxins, and sickness. It is one of the significant novels in American environmental literature that portrays how the toxicity of industrialization has shaped the environment and the bodies. In the introduction part of *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001,p.2), Lawrence Buell explores ecological concern in the American history of environmental writing and refers to the role of authors in shaping the environmental writing tradition in American literature. He draws on canonical American writers such as Henry Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, William Faulkner, Herman Melville, and Mary Austin, as well as contemporary authors including Richard Powers. By ranging across the literary works that consider environments and environmental imaginations since the beginnings of industrialization, to introduce the threat of chemical poisoning as the modern world's insidious threat, he outlines toxic consciousness in American literature. Particularly, he underlines the role of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson as a significant text of American environmental discourse that "explicitly played on such anxieties by branding the pesticides industry "a child of the Second World War" and representing pesticides' consequences with imagery of carnage: weaponry, killing, victimage, extermination, corpses, massacre, conquest"(2001,p.39). Namely, she criticizes the pesticide industry and the use of chemicals pesticides. Following the publication of *Silent Spring*, scholars, writers, and activists began to apprehend and express growing anxieties about toxic materials routinely released into the environment. The discourse on toxicity appears as an example of a "cultural construction regulated by engagement, whether experimental or vicarious, with actual environments" (Buell, 2001, p. 31). Buell underlines human being's deeper and more complex engagement with the built and natural environment.

In the same way, in *Gain*, Powers deals with the relationship between the growth of industrialization and the physical environment in America, precisely, he focuses on the impact of the toxified environment on human health. Clare Company began as a small, family-owned business with the advent of the Industrial Revolution but grew into a worldwide corporation over a century and a half. It produces a wide range of products such as soap, fertilizers, floor wax, pharmaceuticals, etc. The company owners decided to have a corporate structure and increase profit through a profit-sharing scheme. "[William] strengthened his profit sharing through several overhauls. He implemented a guaranteed-work plan. He found ways to finance the greatest period of expansion the company would ever enjoy"(Powers,1998, p.339). Its development is parallel to the enduring impacts of industrialization in America. Powers writes,

In a land where a third of everything ownable lay in the hands of a mere one percent, the very ruinous price of import produced a premium that domestic shopmakers couldn't duplicate. Freedom of choice meant freedom to choose economic irrationality. Available in the United States of America by exclusive arrangement with Jephthah Clare and Sons, Long Wharf, Boston. (Powers,1998, p. 21)

In *Gain*, Powers traces the historical influences of industrial and capitalist development on ecosickness. His narration covers a long period, almost two centuries in which Clare Soap company from its beginning in the seventeenth century as a family company gradually expanded to a global corporation during the twentieth century. During this time frame, ecosickness caused by slow violence of toxicity has been recognized and become visible. He employs a non-linear narrative structure that shifts between historical and contemporary storylines to underline the gradual recognition of environmental and human health repercussions of toxic exposure. The historical narrative revolves around the striking growth of the fictional Clare Company, which is a soap and household products manufacturer. The narrative about the history of the company and its rise to prominence runs parallel to industrial development, the rise of capitalist enterprises, and the onset of mass production in America in the 19th and 20th centuries. He chooses Lacewood, Illinois as the setting of his novel as in Illinois, "the dramatic transformation of its industrial and agricultural practices followed World War II had unintended environmental consequences" (Steingraber, 1997, p.15). Lacewood, Illinois appears as a microcosm of America which has the industrial revolution and rise of capitalism.

Powers provides a detailed history of the Clare Soap and Chemical Company, Incorporated which was established by Jephthah Clare's three sons; Samuel, Benjamin, and Resolve. Throughout the novel, he interweaves the history of the Clare Company and the history of the Clare family. The sons established the factory out of their father's shipping business in the mid-1800s. Jephthah Clare, the patriarch and the founder of the Clare family left Liverpool with his wife and three small children and sailed to Boston, America in 1802. He owned ships and engaged in a range of marketing. During the war between France and Britain who closed up each other's colonial trade, Jephthah Clare sent his ships to Jamaica with a cargo of coffee and molasses; he delivered them to America and London. He traded American rum to Le Havre. To avoid embargo, he paid bribes and ransom for his ships. In addition, he sent New England goods to Oregon country and traded his stock for furs and bought tea by sending furs to the Pacific and Canton. As a result of this trade, Jephthah Clare bought ten ships of cheap New England goods. While trading whale oil, wine, Egyptian stoneware, white silk hats, cotton, indigo, and potash, he cheated a trade partner and smuggled. Jephthah Clare's entrepreneurial spirit, vision, wit, dishonesty, and ambition form the base of the company's development.



Jephthah's sons have different trading attitudes because "the age of all-purpose merchant was ending. Trade had lost its status as a favored child" (Powers, 1998, p.19). They trade raw materials and fabricated goods, "the personal goods plants in Boston, Ohio, and Chicago claimed to wrap, crate, ship and sell more than thirty million units of tonic, salve, shortening, lard, candles, whiskey and soap" (Powers, 1998, p.266). Due to tariffs on abominations, there has been a tidal wave of cheap imports in America; their opponents imitate the soap that is brought from England so they have a financial loss. The only solution to make up for this loss and to compete with their opponents is to produce low-quality mass-produced soap. The Sons produce soap without undertaking any research into the product. The company's chemists learn to make the same old things out of cheaper ones. Over time, the local company starts mass production by using cheaper and toxic ingredients, it produces toxic products.

Douglas Clare, the president of an eastern firm, heads to the west to find an ideal place to build the latest plant. He considers Illinois, the new world, as a new market so he chooses the town of Lacewood in Illinois to establish Clare's factory site. Lacewood is chosen in terms of its location, its cheap land, and human labour. It sits "on train lines connecting St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Louisville. It [lays] a reasonable freight haul away from Chicago, the west's lone metropolis. And land in this vacancy [is] still dirt cheap" (Powers, 1998, p. 2). Despite its being inland, far from both coasts of America, its railroad, connecting the surrounding cities, makes trade with them possible. In addition, Lacewood is populated by backward and poor people. Douglas Clare thinks that the inhabitants who need employment can work for him so he purposefully chooses this backward place to create a factory town that supplies all the needs of the employees and employers. According to Rob Nixon, in general, companies choose the impoverished areas of the countries to exploit the land and its inhabitants easily, he says: "Just as in Western nations toxic waste sites tend to be placed near poor or minority communities, so too unexploded ordnance pollution is concentrated in the world's most impoverished societies" (Nixon, 2011, p.226). As a result, Lacewood, the silent and calm town is transformed into a sacrifice zone which "includes a broader array of fenceline communities or hot spots of chemical pollution where residents live immediately adjacent to heavily polluting industries" (Lerner, 2010, p. 3). The inhabitants are victimized and confined within this area.

The historical aspect of the novel provides insights into the transformation of the small town of Lacewood, Illinois, and its inhabitants over time. The inhabitants of the town are the early American settlers who struggled to establish a community in Illinois. They are eager to enjoy the development that the company presents. They were glad to be part of Clare which is described as an empire of three dozen production facilities in ten countries. The signboard by the entrance of the town proclaims the inhabitants' praise of industrial growth in the town and their indebtedness

towards the Clare Company. The name of the Clare family is associated with the town's establishment. "Welcome to Lacewood. Population 92.4000. Rotary. Elks. Lions. boyhood home of Cale Tufts, Olympic legend...North American agricultural products division headquarters, Clare International" (Powers, 1998, p.4). Clare is transformed from a regional factory to a divisional headquarters in Lacewood, and it moves its North American agricultural operation to Lacewood. The inhabitants believe that if the company had not arrived, it "would have stayed a backwoods wasteland" (Powers, 1998, p. 4). However, they are not the ones who benefited from the industrial growth in Lacewood, they are unaware that they are negatively affected by it. During the first half of the nineteenth century, they are satisfied with their poor living and heavy working conditions, and low wages. They believe that they are going to be awarded with heaven for their overworking which is part of their religious duty.

The inhabitants' praise of the growth in the nineteenth century provides a contrast to the contemporary worldwide corporation. Over time, the company changes the landscape, and damages the health of the population. Powers explores contemporary issues and the impact of corporate culture on the environment and health. The growth of the company is portrayed in conjunction with environment-related health issues, particularly Laura's struggle with ovarian cancer. This is related to the concept of ecosickness.

The concept of ecosickness depicts various forms of psychological, moral, and physical distress or sickness caused by the deterioration of the environment by human activities in unexpected ways. Within the context of the novel, ecosickness signifies the destructive, poisonous, and infectious repercussions of environmental degradation charged by Clare Corporate Company. The novel portrays how the profit-driven corporate culture of Clare International leads to environmental degradation and health issues, including, physical psychological, and moral distress and crises. Powers delivers an account of the growth of industrialization and capitalism, their impacts on the environment, and the subsequent health problems at global and local levels, the community and individual levels.

The company's expansion in pursuit of profit results in the destruction of natural landscapes and loss of habitat in the world, the depletion of natural resources and raw materials. Julia states that "commerce aimed at manipulating nature on a truly grand scale" (Powers, 1998, p. 188). This reveals the negative impacts of the family's activities on nature at the global level. J. Clare is an ecological imperialist who exploits nature and people. He "serv[es] up muddy tortoise sweetmeats to France" and takes "African termites to Canada to clear the northern forests" (Powers, 1998, p.18). Also "cutting the trees was triggering some local extinction event...an owl" (Powers, 1998, p.171). There is a reference to a report on insects in Massachusetts by Thaddeus W. Harris (Powers, 1998, p. 86). This report depicts the land, inhabitants, flora, and fauna of America as savage to be

controlled. The insects destroy the plants and crop fields and lead to economic failure. Therefore, he suggests fighting against insects through biological control methods, and chemical pesticides. The production and use of pesticides are fatal for people as well as nature. He does not see them as part of the ecological system. The presence of chemicals in the environment inevitably harms people because of the trans-corporeal conception of humans “in that the human body is never a rigidly enclosed, protected entity, but is vulnerable to the substances and flows of its environments, which may include industrial environments and their social/economic forces”(Alaimo, 2020, p. 28). Human and non-human beings participate in mutual flows and interchanges so any harm to non-human beings slowly is followed by the prolonged and invisible suffering of the human beings. Rather than instantly, the violence of toxicity in the novel appears gradually and invisibly from the 1830s to the 1990s. Therefore, the inhabitants dependent upon the corporate company to make a living are unaware of being killed by toxicity slowly.

Powers contracts the local life before and after chemical contamination. The company is profit-centred so it ignores the environment, the inhabitants, and the customers of Lacewood. Before the Clare Company came to the town, it was a very silent and calm “farming hamlet” (Powers, 1998, p. 250). In the 19th century, the company accelerated the industrialization process in the town by ignoring the environment and the inhabitants’ health. The railroads are the symbols of the industrial revolution. The steam engines of the trains that operate with coal thermal energy and emit carbon monoxide pollute the air and bring health problems such as asthma, and “asthmatic lungs inhaled dust-filled air” (Powers, 1998, p. 225). Ironically, the Clare Company that is responsible for asthma also produces an asthma medicine called Respulín and profits from the sales of this medicine. The company gains a fortune from the diseases that it has caused. Powers writes with recognition that capitalism and industrial development that transformed nature and life during the 19th century continue to change the structure of the natural environment and shape lives in unpredictable ways in the town.

Furthermore, the factories have produced toxic and hazardous products and discharged the chemicals used in their manufacturing process into the environment. Lacewood is a remote and neglected place; therefore, the detection of dumping is harder. The toxic waste of the factory has been dumped without any objection. This causes long-term environmental degradation such as contamination of water sources, and the soil, and a decrease in air quality. Chemicals discharged from factories stay in the surrounding environment for a long time. The soil, air, and water are poisoned with chemicals, the chemicals that evaporate are carried in the air, and the ones that dissolve in water flow into surface waters of creeks and streams even filtered in the groundwater, and fall in rain. By the way, toxic substances emerge through the company’s exploitative practices that distribute them to human and non-human beings. Consequently, “Clare’s fertilizer factory had

changed the very nature of the town's existence" (Power, 1998, p.283). The transformation of the town which is an "alchemical transformation" (Powers, 1998, p. 2) is so dramatic, "human wizardry" (Powers, 1998, p. 2). No one in the town provides any significant information about the transformation of the town,

There must have been a time when Lacewood did not mean Clare, incorporated. But no one remembered it. No one alive was old enough to recall. The two names always came joined in the same breath. All the grace ever shed on Lacewood flowed through that company's broad conduit. The big black boxes on the edge of town sieved diamonds from out of the mud. And Lacewood became the riches that it made. (Powers, 1998, p. 1)

Even though the company owners claim that they are eco-friendly, they do not stimulate their being eco-friendly. In an advertisement of the company, they claim to produce environmentally friendly products on which it is written that "how would you like to run your lawn mower...on garbage? To power up your computer...with light? To light your whole house...with bacteria? To take a little joyride...on hydrogen?" (Powers, 1998, p. 26) They haven't hesitated to produce toxic products and pollute nature.

Environmental degradation that manifests itself through deforestation, resource depletion, toxic pollution, and habitat destruction causes imbalances in ecosystems and ecosickness at the community and individual levels. After the history of Clare Company and Lacewood, this narrative shifts to the characters from different walks of society who suffer from environment-related illnesses as a result of their direct exposure to toxic chemicals that are used in the production process and discharged into the environment. Powers underlines the detrimental impact of industrial activities on individual well-being. Chemical substances poison the workers of the factories who produce them, they have respiratory problems, skin rashes, and serious health problems. Neeland, who works for the company is exposed to toxic materials such as coal tar, sulfur, and phenol used in the production process of Clare's soap while developing a fast-dissolving soap, as a result, he dies of toxic poisoning. Industrialization's long-term damages manifest themselves not only in workers who are the expected victims but also in housewives and kids, whose domains aren't the factories. The inhabitants who live in the environs of the company or use its products experience health problems. Powers writes that Nan who is a young girl dies of cancer at an early age. Her symptoms are horrible as her muscles withered, "frozen, small...preserved, a tiny museum mummy, shrinking each year by inches until she –vanishes" (Powers, 1998, p. 18). Industrialization in the town, the environmental degradation led to premature deaths in the novel, Laura loses her relatives at an early age including her uncle Robert.

Powers juxtaposes and interweaves the past and present, diverse narratives and stories to demonstrate that the health of the inhabitants and

workers deteriorates due to industrialization, industrial toxins, and environmental factors. The concept of trans-corporeality allows for rethinking the interrelations between the human body and non-human body and explains the reason for the deterioration of human health, he states that “transcorporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures” (Powers, 2010, p. 2). Transcorporeality is a beneficial concept that proves the interchange and interactions between humans and the wider world. Non-human agencies, toxic substances, and chemical pesticides in the environment, in which the human body exists, penetrate the boundary of human skin and inevitably transform and poison the human body and put it at risk.

The constant interchanges and interactions with the entity’s surroundings cause ecosickness. However, no one in the neighbourhood in which the toxic substances are produced is aware that the toxic agents of Clare are responsible for these deaths, cancer risks, reproductive difficulties, and chronic illness. Powers reveals the invisible “flows of substances and forces between people, places, and economic/political systems”(Alaimo, 2020, p. 9). These invisible connections between industrial activities, the environment and the inhabitants take the form of slow violence, toxins slowly damage human and non-human lives. The company changes the town gradually so slow violence dispersed over time invisibly, escaping from public attention. Slow violence is one of the components of creating a collective awareness that comes out of long-lasting environmental degradation. Clare has degraded the environment for more than a century; its long-lasting damage set a good example of slow violence by Rob Nixon.

Powers offers a glimpse into the life of the female protagonist Laura Rowen Bodey and her struggle with cancer. He explores the relationship between the company’s poisoning of the environment and Laura’s cancer. Her experience of sickness is coupled with the degradation of social and ecological lives in the small town of Lacewood. Before cancer, Laura had a family and other relationships, work, and priorities in her life. She is a divorced mother of a girl and a boy. and works as a real estate agent at Next Millennium Realty’s Million Dollar Movers Club in Lacewood. Her life is changed forever by Clare Company, and her life has not been the same since she was diagnosed with cancer.

To investigate the impact of industrial toxicity on the environment and Laura's cancer, the author focuses on exposures Laura has had early in her life. Her illness may be rooted in the toxic emissions of the company because she lives near Clare International’s headquarters in Lacewood which is surrounded by industrial zones. This “dispel[s] the idea that geography is only about maps” (Williams, 1999, p. 1). The landscape is related to one’s life, lifestyle, everyday experience, and health. Powers reflects that Laura and the other characters’ lives depend on the landscape that they inhabit. The Clare Company raises health concerns and risks as toxic discharge from the

company's factories has contaminated "Lacewood, Sawgak, Vermillion, Champaign, Iroquois. Areas top carcinogenic chemical emissions, benzene, formaldehyde, dichlorodifluoromethane, epichlorohydrin" (Powers, 1998, p. 157). Gradually and invisibly, the toxic discharge has haunted the inhabitants and created cancer victims. Laura's cancer is perhaps due to exposure to diverse chemical pollutants in the town: "Total toxic emissions from local plants...probably move. If she knew the facility put out cancer-causing chemicals" (Powers, 1998, p. 157). "Dr. Jerkins said they don't know what causes ovarian" (Powers, 1998, p. 157). Even though the medical specialists do not clearly define the chemicals as the source of her cancer, the narration revolves around the continuous tracing of the clues that connect environmental toxification to human illness which can better be explained by ecosickness. Ecosickness highlights the relationship between human health and the environment; environmental toxification, pollution, and degradation echo somatic disturbances. Powers reveals the environmental background of illnesses, Laura's cancer is caused by industrial pollution and the toxic release of the company as she inhabits Lacewood which is the headquarters of the company, all the same, the company disguises its poisonous pollutants by presenting the community responsibility and charitable activities to the inhabitants.

Until it becomes evident that the carcinogenic goods are the main cause of her ovarian cancer, Laura, like the other residents, believes in the company's community responsibility and charitable works. She is depicted as "a woman who has never thought twice about Clare" (Powers, 1998, p. 4). Like the other inhabitants of the town, she believes that the Clare company has transformed the town and made the inhabitants' lives easier by producing a "life-changing category of substances" (Powers, 1998, p. 5) such as soap, fertilizers, cosmetics, and comestibles and also providing foods such as corn, rice, etc., from its agricultural division.

The jugs under the -avoid contact with eyes- that never quite work as advertised. Shampoo, antacid, low-chips. The weather stripping, the grout between the quarry tiles, the nonstick in the non-stick pan, the light coat of deterrent she spreads on her garden. These and other incarnations play about her house, all but invisible. (Powers, 1998, p. 6).

This excerpt describes how she consumes Clare's foods and uses everyday household items and products of the consumer culture such as shampoo, antacids, low-fat chips, weather stripping, a non-stick pans in her daily life. Like the other inhabitants, she is made to be dependent on Clare's products. Even though there are two minor companies, Grace and Dow, Clare has monopolized the whole market of the town; it has a wide spectrum of products that dominate the inhabitants' lives. Therefore, it is a compulsory choice rather than a free choice for the inhabitants to use Clare products. The inhabitants and workers are surrounded by plenty of carcinogenic objects such

as chemicals, metals gases or substances that are disposed of in the environment and come into contact with the body through eating, drinking or smoking in their daily lives, but they are unaware of the carcinogens. Laura is one of those who live or work near the Clare industry and face increased risks of cancer. “Laura’s diagnosis of ovarian cancer is more perilous but correlates to constant chemical exposure from household consumer goods” (Houser, 2014, p. 20).

At the beginning of the novel, it is spring and Laura works in her garden on the north riverside in Lacewood. Laura spends most of her free time on gardening and she uses pesticides or chemicals that are produced by Clare in her garden. Therefore, exposure to pesticides produced by the company has affected the course of Laura’s ovarian cancer. Throughout the novel, Powers narrates the process of her diagnosis of cancer and the treatment process and its impact on her family and social environment. The trauma of being cancer has affected Laura’s daily life, “Laura sobers first. Why now? I’m sure I didn’t know anyone with cancer until I turned thirty” (Powers, 1998, p. 244). She has been worried about her life and she has anxiety about the future and the possibility of not seeing her children grow. She has mental challenges and physical struggles, which can be seen in the following excerpt:

Before the visiting nurse comes by, she tries the stairs. A third of the way up, she crumples. She has to rest twice, but last makes it to the top. The second floor of her house is like another country. She has forgotten even the colour of the walls. (Powers, 1998, p. 332)

This quotation illustrates the impact of health problems on her daily life. Due to having difficulty in moving into her home, she is estranged from her house and feels isolated. When Don, her ex-husband, asks how she feels, she states that she doesn’t have to do those last two chemos because her health gets worse instead of getting better. She was diagnosed “with a fibroid mass on her right ovary. No Biggie” (Powers, 1998, p. 44). This is seen as insignificant by doctors, however, they treat her with chemotherapy, during chemotherapies, she receives some chemicals such as “thiopental sodium, fentanyl, tubocurarine, halothane” (Powers, 1998, p. 78). Even though she decides to go through chemotherapy, which inflicts unbearable pain on her, it does not result in effective healing.

Laura learns that she is not the only victim of Clare International when she takes a letter sent by a law firm of the advocacy group. The letter states that:

If you are suffering from any ailment that you or your physicians believe might have an environmental basis. If you have an interest in the current class action suit being lodged against the area’s largest manufacturer. If you would like to be considered for inclusion in this suit. Please respond to the following post office box no later than March 21. (Powers, 1998, p. 323)

This letter proves that environmental factors have impacts on the inhabitants' health. It encourages Laura and the others who suspect that their ailments are related to the environment to seek justice against the local manufacturer, Clare by taking part in a class-action suit against it. However, Laura is reluctant to join the people who start a lawsuit against the company until she awakens to the reality.

Laura's belief and attitude to the company changes during her illness. After undergoing the shock phase and internalizing what has happened to her body, she searches for some sources such as newspaper clippings archives, vertical files titled Industrial By-products and Health, Lacewood and Sawgak counties about cancer, toxicity, chemicals, and environment in the library. As a result of visiting libraries and doing some research regarding her condition and symptoms, she gains consciousness to get the cause of her cancer. "She'd have had to start ten years before getting sick, just to know what hit her" (Powers, 1998, p. 333). Laura becomes aware of the dangers of unforeseen harms that surround her and her body's constant interchange with the environment. For example, while shopping, she finds herself in a dilemma as she has to choose between natural and toxic, "paper or plastic that is a carcinogenic substance that causes cancer. She refuses to buy Clare products that cause cancer. "Laura vows a customer boycott." (Powers, 1998, p. 345). But it is nearly impossible to boycott the company, as inhabitants are made reliant on its products and this underpins the possibility that Laura's cancer is related to the use and consumption of Clare products such as termite pesticides, detergent, and aerosol sprays. The invisible toxic substances cause cancer by stimulating the mutation of genes, increasing the number of cells in the human body. Don says:

The theory is that ring-shaped molecules...ones with chlorine in them, get taken up into the tissue of women. The body turns them into something called xenoestrogen. Very longlasting. These fake estrogens show how to trick the body, signal the reproductive system to start massive cell division". (Powers, 1998, p. 363)

This chemical in pesticides that are produced by the Clare Company, making female bodies produce xenoestrogen, increases the risks for ovarian cancer.

The notions of toxicity and ecosickness go together and share a sensibility in the novel. The products of Clare toxify the environment and cause Laura's cancer; it is the revelation of "slow violence". Her chemical exposure anticipates the concept of slow violence by Rob Nixon, briefly, she becomes another agent of slow violence, which occurs gradually and invisibly. It describes "violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). According to the concept of slow violence, the victims of slow violence "are the casualties most likely not to be seen, not to be counted" (Nixon, 2011, p. 13). However, the past has resurfaced in the present and left marks on the future, through indirect and



repetitive patterns of effect. The people and systems in power are responsible for creating the tenacity of industrialization, reinforcing the spread of environmental contaminants, and damaging the health of the local community. Powers intends to underline the past injustice created by the company in the form of the structural and invisible slow violence perpetuated in the present. This change occurs more slowly than people's ability to perceive it. The environmental toxification by the company goes unnoticed.

After it becomes clear that Laura is stricken with cancer due to Clare's products and the toxification of the environment, she decides to join in the lawsuit. Even though the narration revolves around Laura, there are many victims of toxicity including workers who suffer from cancer in the novel. "A civil action by a handful of workers at the Clare plant, each suffering from some cancer. A class action, some kind of people of Lacewood v. Clare, seeking redress for those toxic discharges in the EPA report" (Powers, 1998, p. 256). In her struggle against Clare Company, many people and organizations cooperate with her, underlining the cruciality of the alliance and awareness of environmental degradation that has gone unnoticed for years which is called the environmentalism of the poor by Nixon (2011, p. 4). Even though she dies of ovarian cancer, she fights against the company and wins the lawsuit.

To sum up, in the age of industrialization and corporate ambition, the impacts of environmental degradation are no longer confined to the world of science fiction. They have penetrated our reality. *Gain* by Richard Powers functions as a literary testament to this reality. Mark Taylor says: "Powers immerses himself in scientific literature and keeps himself informed about the current state of technology: he is the rare novelist who understands the science and technology about which he writes" (2013, p. 7). He organizes *Gain* around specific ideas; industrial pollution, scientific and technological innovation and corporate actions and practices. The narrative runs parallel to actual historical events in America, Clare Company's growth in the novel reflects the kaleidoscopic history of America. This foregrounds the relevance of ecosickness beyond the fictional world of the novel, which is interconnected with broader historical and societal forces.

Within its many-fold narrative, Powers masterfully crafts a story of exploitation and toxification of the environment and the deterioration of human health. He reveals the complex texture of ecosickness which refers to a state of physical and moral afflictions resulting from the degradation of the environment because of corporate actions and practices. Powers uncovers a profound narrative that not only questions the detrimental consequences of uncontrolled corporate practices but also anticipates toxic consciousness and health risks.

### 3. Ecosickness in *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* by Latife Tekin

There was a lack of consideration assigned to factors like urbanization, industrialization, and environmental exploitation in Türkiye until the beginning of the 1970s. Since then, a range of historical, cultural, and political factors has shaped environmental discourse in Turkish literature over the years and Türkiye has experienced profound political and social changes that have influenced environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, urbanization, increase in population, biodiversity loss, climate change, water scarcity and such. These issues have become the subjects of literary works. A survey of Turkish literature presents that Turkish environmental discourse is diverse and raises questions about the relationship between human and non-human (Tan, 2022). Latife Tekin is one of the significant environmentally conscious Turkish writers who offers insights into the relationship between the environment and humans and addresses environmental neglect, degradation, and contamination in her works. She captures a wide range of images that reflect degradation, pollution, urbanization, and industrialization. Her response to Turkish society's destruction of the environment with pollution and contamination is notable in her novel *Berji Kristin*. This novel is known for its unusual narrative style and observation of the lives of marginalized individuals living in the slums of Istanbul. It has already been discussed in diverse "contexts extending from urbanization and migration to eco-poetics and magical realism" (Atay & Atay, 2022, p.154). This article deals with Tekin's handling of ecosickness, and how the characters' exposure to the toxified environment causes various health problems. She elaborates on the issue of ecosickness in a place where the environment is polluted by toxic waste by the rise of industrial activities. She considers human health as a major issue combined with the desire for social and environmental justice and human rights.

Tekin is one of the writers who writes on topics, which have significant places in environmentally motivated literary works, such as environmental degradation, industrial pollution, garbage dumps, dystopic and toxic sites and toxic experiences within industrial society in *Berji Kristin*. Moreover, she presents Türkiye's urbanisation process and life in the slums of metropolitan cities in Turkey. In her interview with Pelin Özer, Tekin states that she has visited the shanty towns of Istanbul such as Gultepe and Zeytinburnu (2005,p.64) therefore, she reflects on her observation of the inhabitants' living conditions in the novel and the city in the novel probably represents Istanbul. Through the stories of the families who migrate to the city with the promise of economic opportunity, she explores the meaning of life in a world replete with capitalistic greed. Revealing the economic and social situation of the country, Tekin narrates the daily struggles of the slum dwellers in the urban of Türkiye and reimagines the city from the perspective of its poor population.

*Berji Kristin* is a novel about people and places which are on the margins of urban, economic and social spaces. Tekin tries to uncover life on the social and environmental margins. The setting of the novel is an imaginary slum, called Flower Hill, Tekin's narration is full of detailed descriptions of Flower Hill and its diverse residents who are marginalized as garbage. The setting provides a significant background for exploring the themes of urbanization, poverty, industrialization, industrial pollution, toxicity, garbage, survival, and ecosickness. Tekin offers a social commentary on these issues by placing the plot in Flower Hill. Flower Hill is portrayed as a site of poverty thereby the broad economic and socio-cultural effects of garbage are made visible. As the title of the novel suggests, *Berji Kristin* is a collection of tales which tells the life of each resident of Flower Hill. An unnamed collective "we" which is regarded as the voices of the inhabitants of the Flower Hill narrate their experiences of misery, poverty, and unhealthiness. The readers only hear the voices of the poor people who testify about their living conditions. In brief, it is a collective narrative of the place and the people in that place.

At the beginning of the novel, Tekin imagines the circumstances that lead to the formation, legalization and extension of the slum on the outskirts of an industrialized city. The first inhabitants of the slum are the families who illegally invade garbage dumps and organize their lives around them. At first, garbage provides construction materials to build their squatter houses, they reuse the junk objects in the garbage as their resources. From the scraps of wood, plastic, tin, or other materials found in the dump, they build them "on a hill where the huge refuse bins came daily and dumped the city's waste, eight shelters were set up by lantern-light near the garbage heaps"(Tekin,1993, p. 15). For instance, one of the characters, Sirma, builds her tiny hut "out of broken bits of glass, the old nylon comb with two teeth, the buttons and the bottle tops" (Tekin, 1993, p. 24). Within a few days later, many families arrive there to build their tiny shacks. Tekin describes it in the following excerpt.

When the garbage trucks had come and gone, the simit-sellers on the way to the garbage heard that eight huts had been built on the slopes and spread the news through the neighbouring warehouses, workshops and coffee houses. By noon people had begun to descend on the hillside like snow. Janitors, pedlars and simit-sellers all arrived with pickaxes, closely followed by people who had left their villages to move in with their families in the city, and by others roaming the hills behind the city in the hope of building a hut. Men and women, young and old, spread in all directions. Kneeling and rising they measured with feet and outstretched arms. Then with their spades, they scratched crooked plans in the earth. By evening Rubbish Road had become a road of bricks and blocks and pitchpaper. That night in snowfall and lantern-light a hundred more huts were erected in the snow. (Tekin,1993, p. 16)

However, the local government, supported by the owner of the dump, has bulldozed their shacks, this is repeated many times as the dwellers struggle to rebuild their shacks again and again. “The destruction went on for exactly thirty-seven endless days, and after each raid, the huts became a little smaller and gradually lost all resemblance to houses”(Tekin,1993, p. 22). After a cycle of demolition and rebuilding, the families renamed their neighbourhood “Battle Hill” (Tekin,1993, p. 24) to symbolize their struggle against the local government over the control of the garbage dumps. At last, they succeed in imposing the existence of a neighbourhood on the local government. “This wooden nameplate was removed by two official-looking men and replaced by a blue metal plaque inscribed FLOWER HILL” (Tekin,1993, p. 24). The officials formalize the neighbourhood by naming it when they realize that they cannot prevent the establishment of the shanty town around garbage dumps.

After overcoming the state-run demolition and bureaucratic obstacles, the residents of Flower Hill gradually encounter diverse troubles in their new lives. For the inhabitants, Flower Hill is always a place of struggle. They face disruptive forces such as the groups who try to inhabit the garbage hills and the owners of the garbage. Although the henchmen of the owner drive away them from the garbage hills, they struggle to continue sorting garbage. “As soon as the trucks left they disperse[d] again among the refuse heaps”(Tekin,1993, p. 31), they scavenge for food and objects, they gather the bits of plastics, iron, bottles and papers to use and sell to the workshops. Garbage hills function as the source of their livelihood and an area of informal employment for these disempowered urban residents of the makeshift settlements in the peripheries of the city. They probably represent the street garbage collectors in Istanbul who are reduced to the status of garbage. Because of their residential and physical proximity to garbage dumps, the residents become worthy of disposal, they are socially, economically and morally ‘thrown out,’ discarded, ignored, overlooked and marginalized as a result they are confined in a sacrifice zone. Within this confined area, the residents develop unusual relationships with garbage dumps near which they settle and call them their homes. Tekin presents garbage in a way that uses the residents’ perception of it.

Moreover, the residents struggle against extreme weather events. The heavy snow demolishes their squatter houses and the powerful wind blows the roofs of their squatters and sweeps their houses frequently. However, each destruction is followed by the reconstruction of new ones. In addition, the wind causes a disease that is called wind sickness.

No tears could wash away the dust swirled about by the wind. Heads were racked with pain, and over their floral headscarves, the women tied thick bands of cloth called ‘Windbreakers’ round their aching heads. The men went about pressing their hands to their ringing ears. The trees on Flower Hill grew sideways instead of upwards, and the birds came and went, swooping over the hill. (Tekin, 1993, p.33)

It also leaves people bent double, and they fall into bed fevered and sweating. However, they get used to this over time and develop their survival strategies, they recover from ecosickness and psychological troubles initiated by unhealthy living conditions through folk medicine and spiritual treatments. For example, they eat bowls of yoghurt to avoid being poisoned as the wind blows the poisonous air into their noses. They lose their healthier and harmonious relationships with the environment, They are disconnected from a more natural and sustainable way of life, therefore, they are compelled to scavenge in human-made landscapes of filth and waste. In a polluted environment, the natural environment in its true spirit which is the symbol of sustenance and spiritual healing is absent in Tekin's portrayal of Flower Hill.

With time, this new neighbourhood becomes a legal zone of the city and its boundaries expand, the population increases, the neighbourhood is equipped with a town hall and a school, it uses the distribution of urban goods and municipal services, pipes are installed and electricity restored and new factories are established there. Furthermore, the neighbourhood and its inhabitants try to integrate into the social, economic and political life of the city. After their struggle that is carried out in urban and economic space against local government and the owners of the capital, they gradually become an integral part of the city which is followed by their physical, economic and social transformation such as replacing the use value of the district by the exchange value, depositing money in the bank and buying things, the election of the headman.

Every day that passed the number of women racing to the cinema they were increased. They shed many tears on the roads until they discovered that the film stars had not died, but once the tears were dried the young girls started to go about with bare arms and legs like film stars and the women cast off their headscarves. Fired with the desire for pleasure after Tirintaz Fidan's night lessons, women now clung to their husbands' hands and feet begging for love. (Tekin,1993, p.146).

As a result of its social integration, Flower Hill begins to be called the home of prostitution and hashish. "‘Flower Hill — Hashish Hiding Hole’ or ‘Flower Hill — Nest of Whores’ took its place" (Tekin,1993, p.154). The families who gather at the literal and figurative urban margin gain their urban identity which is shaped by poverty, pollution, and illness. "The novel problematises the urbanisation of peasants in the city, challenging a uniform understanding of urbanity[...] the novel emphasises the need for a perception of multiple urban identities" (Cengiz, 2017, p.111).

Tekin centers on the role of policies, regulations and cooperate forces in contributing to social and environmental inequalities in residential closeness to industrial dumps. She builds her toxic discourse on the personal, communal, and political meanings of hazardous garbage that is produced in the industrialization process and the vulnerability of the poor community to

chemicals. Flower Hill is situated near the areas of dumps that are integrated with industries. At the beginning of the novel, Gullu Baba prophesies about how the factories will dominate the environment and human lives in Flower Hill. He says: “Factories would be opened on Flower Hill where the deformed men would work, and there would be so many more factories that the women and children would stop scavenging” (Tekin, 1993, p. 46). In the following years, Gullu Baba’s prophesies about the dominance of factories, industrialization, and environmental degradation come true. The residents find jobs at the car battery factory, the linen factory, and the detergent factory so the factories take the place of the garbage as a source of their livelihood.

Tekin deals with mostly “industrial toxicology” (Buell, 2001, p. 40) in the novel. Factories dispose of waste that contains diverse types of chemicals contaminants and toxins in garbage areas that stay on the soil, evaporate in the air, dissolve in water, and flow through the neighbourhood into creeks, rivers, and drinking water. The environment has numerous ways of showing warning signs before everything collapses. The snow turns into the waste of the factory, and the plants fade, “Those flowers too, like others on Flower Hill, afflicted by pollution from the factories, wilted before anyone could smell them” (Tekin, 1993, p. 141). These images reveal how industrial pollution endangers the animate and inanimate communities in the environment. The physical environment speaks loudly about the character’s health as “they all relish a sense of an enfolding co-existence performatively enacted in an immense field of interconnected materiality” (Opperman, 2013, p. 59). The act of relatedness and communication of the animate and inanimate entities brings about the issue of ecosickness. While bringing the toxic landscape alive for readers, Tekin proclaims the victimization of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

The inhabitants separated by class and region face social and environmental injustice, they are prone to industrial threats, and they are daily subjected to contact with environmental toxicification. “Hut people fight not only against the exploiters but also against the chemical waste that makes them ill. Surrounded by social, political and ecological injustices, they perform solidarity, which is not untouchable” (Atay & Atay, 2022, p. 167). Industrial modernity’s hazardous garbage dumps which are generally thought to be empty and waiting for waste become the place of many people’s struggle with environmental health problems in the novel. In the context of the novel, ecosickness refers to the psychological and physical costs that the polluted and poisoned environment or living conditions inflicted upon the dwellers of the impoverished community. She details the debilitating experiences that drive them to illness inside the toxic zone, revealing day to day impact of toxic pollution on neighbourhood children and families. As Flower Hill is being industrialized, its air is increasingly polluted, the description of the chemical clouds is detailed by the author as follows:

The sham factories went on spreading, reaching from the huts right down to the Rivermouth Neighbourhood. In time the site was given the name of 'Flower Hill Industries'. Small textile workshops opened on the site, and from them, blue, green and red smoke blew into the sky. Clouds of all shapes and colours lay over Flower Hill. Factory snow fell on the huts and the clouds descended as coloured rain. (Tekin, 2013, p.105)

White substance begins to rain down on Flower Hill which the inhabitants at first assume as snow, this substance which remains as 'factory snow' for the residents is a chemical waste that dries the flowers and harms the animals, but the residents cannot assess the potential dangers.

In early summer, showers of pure white from this factory began to pour over Flower Hill. At first, they thought it was snow and were amazed. Then an intolerable stench reached the huts and within three days this factory snow had withered the first blooms on Flower Hill and wilted the branches of trees. Hens curled up with drooping necks and died, and people were unable to hold their heads upright. In the middle of playing, children turned dark purple as if drugged and fell into a deep sleep. One of the sleeping children never woke up. (Tekin, 1993, pp. 27-28)

The dangerous toxins in the showers of pure white factory snow result in health problems, "once more the snow that made people faint and ill fell on Flower Hill, and blue water streamed from the warm fountain"(Tekin, 1993, p. 62). Despite living as hapless victims of exploitation, her characters speak against the toxic facilities in their midst, they raise their voices against "corporate greed"(Buell, 2001, p. 40). They start to fight against chemical waste which poses unimaginable threats to human and environmental health. They reflect their reactions to the factory by throwing stones at its windows and demolishing its walls. When the infuriated residents cannot find the factory owners, they beat their workers. Tekin creates a sense of hope for the readers by referring to local resistance to unwanted facilities and land uses. However, when the factory owner comes with gifts of yoghurt and a doctor, the residents give up cursing the owner and everyone raises their hands in prayer for blessings to him. This proves the idea that factory owners find an escape route to protect themselves and their capitalistic gains and mask their poisoning the environment and people. Once rewarded with their prayers, the factory owner washes the neighborhood with "the hot bluish water in which the factory serum and medicine bottles were washed" (Tekin, 1993, p. 28). It becomes a festive day for Flower Hill because

Only Flower Hill had the good fortune to wash in blue hot water under snow on a summer's day. The men dragged an old truck chassis a long distance to the fountainhead and from then on married couples on the Hill took it in turns to get inside this chassis at night after intercourse and wash themselves in hot water. (Tekin, 1993, p. 28)

The residents build a fountain and wash their household items such as clothes, kilims, scraps of wool, pots, and pans in this hot water. Even the children bathe in this water. Nevertheless, they are not aware of the toxicity of this hot blue water, it becomes the source of various sicknesses, respiratory problems, and infections. “The skins of some began to peel, while the faces of others turned purple. Bright blue spots come on the children’s bodies and the hair of two women went white” (Tekin, 1993, p. 29).

After a while, the health of the residents deteriorates further because of the spread of the diseases through contaminated drinking water. Life and the physical appearance of the sick residents in the neighborhood are depicted as follows:

a strange epidemic from the drinking water spread over Flower Hill. Red beak-like sores appeared on every face, big and little, and soon the sores had covered the whole body. The numbers dropped off those who came from Rubbish Road to the tin minaret mosque on Flower Hill, and the gap widened between the strikers and the hut people. (Tekin, 1993, p. 59)

In keeping with what Alaimo identifies as transcorporeality, Tekin constructs the physical environment and human body in a way that displays transcorporeality in which toxins in the environment penetrate human bodies and result in sicknesses. Such transcorporeal interchanges and interconnections are central to Tekin’s narration, Stacy Alaimo states that two significant movements, environmental justice and environmental health highlight the material interchanges between human bodies and environments (Alaimo, 2010, p. 3). Therefore, she does not simply deal with the question of the human dehumanizing discourse of class but also the theme of metamorphosing bodily natures. The chemical substances that have an ongoing biological presence in the lives of the inhabitants and the environment leave them chemically grotesque. The risks of toxicity or the chemical contamination that is increasingly dispersed are presented grotesquely as discussed by Buell in one of the constituents of toxic discourse: “As toxic discourse focuses on specific cases, it readily montages into gothic” (Buell, 2001, p. 42). Tekin changes her plot into a gothic scenario. The toxic neighborhood embodies modern environmental dystopia.

Moreover, the novel denounces victimization and dehumanization of the workers by industry, the workers of the car battery factory suffer from lead poisoning and become impotent. The linen factory worker girls’ lungs are filled with dust.

The workers named the factories after their effects; some made the lungs collapse, some shriveled the eye, some caused deafness, and some made a woman barren. Their proverb for marriage between equals was ‘A bride with dust in her lungs to the brave lad with lead in his blood’. The saying gained ground when one after another the



young car battery workers married girls from the linen factory. Young men who had worked in the car battery factories for two or three years could contract lead-poisoning and become impotent and the only match they could find on Rubbish Road was with the pale wan linen workers. (Tekin, 1993, p. 56)

Tekin speaks to the relationship between environmental toxicity and the health of the poor community. The local authorities in the novel permit the toxic waste to be piled up in the hills, which emphasizes that the local authorities do not attach value to the poor and marginalized people and environmental health in the suburbia of the city. The poor and marginalized people who live in unsafe living conditions are in physical proximity to environmental threats such as toxicity. They suffer from disproportionate consequences such as sickness but their sufferings have been ignored. According to Nixon “environmental slow violence, materializes temporal as well as spatial denial through a literal concretizing of out of sight out of mind” (2011, p. 20). In the same way, Tekin unveils the capitalist violence exerted on the environment, the poor, and the marginalized, blending her narration of environmental risks with a kind of slow and invisible violence.

The residents not only face additional burdens due to toxic release but often do not have the social or financial resources to reduce their exposure. In other words, the dangers are amplified by negative socio-economic and health factors including substandard housing, lack of access to healthy foods and proper sanitation, poor hygiene along with inadequate infrastructure, and stress from poverty, unemployment, and crime. The social isolation of the residents is interweaved ecosickness as they are not only physically sick but also cast away from the support and resources available to others. The scenes in the novel disclose various levels of slow violence. People are exposed to slow violence of toxicity that is kept invisible for years, however, it is revealed through ecosickness.

To sum up, *Berji Kristin* is the novel of Flower Hill as Flower Hill is at the center of the novel as its protagonist. It is the portrayal of escalating environmental degradation and traumatic changes in communal and individual lives in Flower Hill. It tells the story of families who migrate from rural areas and live in slums, shedding light on the harsh realities faced by families and their capacity for adaptation and survival in the face of difficulties. The garbage and debris of the city become the source of the lives of the families. The novel probes the environmental impact of industrialization, capitalism, and urbanization in relation to ecosickness. Global capitalism disturbs the inhabitants’ domestic and social lives and degrades the environment in Flower Hill, the neighborhood is transformed into a sacrifice zone where sites of minority communities are targeted to build waste facilities and bearers of toxification by the rise of industrial capitalism, garbage hills near the neighborhood is turned into a poisoned ground due to chemical contamination as a result of this, the landscape is contaminated with

images of toxic waste and people living in the neighborhood has been subjected to toxic risks. In this regard, *Berji Kristin* is a fit illustration of the issue raised in the toxic discourse. It tells the story of industrial toxic threats and features how environmental toxification can have profound physical, psychological, and social repercussions for people. The residents who handle garbage and work at factories become tainted by toxins. It thematizes a double perspective of environmental injustice and social injustice. Ecosickness in the novel serves as a metaphor for the social and environmental issues faced by marginalized people in urban areas. seen in this light, her novel can be said to disclose the ethical power of literary writing that brings to the fore the vision of ecosickness.

### 3. CONCLUSION

This article revolves around the intersection of environmental health and human health in *Gain* and *Berji Kristin*. Industrial toxicity which functions as a major risk to the environment and human health is at the core of this article. The particles of the toxins, not even visible to the naked eye, inhabit the environment and act on the bodies of the humans and non-humans in the environment, as a result, they render them non-living or lifeless and create ecosickness. This article points out that “the contemporary toxic discourse is retelling narratives of a rude awakening from simple pastoral to complex” (Buell, 2001, p. 37) because Powers and Tekin deal with the pastoral disruption, transformations of the pastoral to industrial areas, they portray how industrialization shapes the environment and the bodies in these novels. The contaminated environments make those living or dwelling in the center of industrialization exposed to toxins and suffer from sicknesses. The writers speak for the people who live in contaminated environments, particularly, they convey the experiences of those who are exposed to industrial toxins and other harmful chemical substances that negatively impact their health and well-being. In *Gain*, through a narrative that interweaves historical and contemporary issues, Powers presents a profound exploration of the impacts of profit-driven corporate practices on the environment and human health. Clare establishes a factory site in Lacewood, and the inhabitants of the town who are disproportionately exposed to toxins endure health problems. Powers underlines the slow violence of toxicity in Illinois, and raises awareness of the slow degradation inscribed on a promiscuous scale by international companies. The poor inhabitants suffer from toxicity, proving that slow violence is related to social class and income. It sketches the sickness of the main character, Laura Bodey. In *Berji Kristin*, Tekin tells the story of families who migrate from villages to the outskirts of an industrialized city. The garbage hills of the city that are integrated with factories become the source of their lives. She portrays how the release of diverse industrial chemical pollutants that are transported to dumps threatens the environment and human health.

Powers and Tekin's ecosickness narratives reveal the relation of the "experiences of ecological and somatic damage through narrative effect" (Houser, 2014, p. 21) to move readers towards environmental awareness. Powers and Tekin imaginatively rethink the relations between toxified environments and sick bodies in their fiction to raise environmental consciousness. The analysis of these novels from an ecosickness perspective makes readers think and understand the invisible and gradual effect of toxins on the web of life and how both humans and the environment are sdefenseless against toxic objects. The novels aspire to increase environmental awareness and promote environmental protection by highlighting the harmful impact of toxins on the interconnectedness of web life, resulting in ecosickness. Toxic exposure plays a significant role in maintaining social injustice and class discrimination in the settings of the novels. Contaminants, risks, threats, diseases, and sickness that have initially been animated by capitalist practices and policies continue to affect human beings. The writers underline that the status of sick characters represents the societies' lack of ethical engagement with their environments. Therefore, the novels can be defined as an ecosickness narrative that describes the experiences of the characters who are members of the lower class and bear the burden of society's environmental pollution.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

**ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study. There are no participants in this study.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The author did not receive any kind of financial support for this research.

**AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

This research and all its stages were conducted by one author.

## REFERENCES

- Alaimo, S. (2010). *Bodily natures: science, environment, and the material self*. Indiana University Press.
- Atay, H. D. & Atay, H. (2022). As natural as eating and drinking: garbage collection and perpetual recovery in Latife Tekin's *Berji Kristin: tales from the Garbage Hills*. *WOLLT*, 3 (2), 152-170.
- Buell, L. (2001). *Writing for an endangered world: literature, culture, and environment in the U.S.* Harvard University Press.
- Cengiz, N. B. (2017). 'Non-Istanbulites' of Istanbul: the right to the city novels in Turkish literature from the 1960s to the present. Leiden University Scholarly Publications. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/49670>
- Houser, H. (2014). *Ecosickness: in contemporary U.S. fiction*. Calombia University Press.
- Lerner, S. (2010). *Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States*. MIT.
- Oppermann, S. (2013). Material Ecocriticism And The Creativity Of Storied Matter. *Frame: Journal Of Literary Studies*. 26, 55-69.
- Özer, P. (2005). *Latife Tekin kitabı*. Everest Yayınları.
- Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*. Harvard University Press.
- Powers, R. (1998). *Gain: a novel*. Picador.
- Steingraber, S. (1997). *Living Downstream: an ecologist's investigation of cancer and the environment*. Da Capo Press.
- Tan, C. (2022). A Comprehensive Survey of Ecocritical Studies in Turkish Academia. *Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Letters*. 39(1), 212-226.
- Taylor, M. C. (2013). *Rewiring the real: in conversation with William Gaddis, Richard Powers, Mark Danielewski, and Don DeLillo*. Columbia University Press.
- Tekin, L. (1993). *Berji Kristin: tales from the garbage hills*. (R.Christie, and S. Paker, Trans.) Marion Boyars