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Once upon a time in the anthropocene: myths, legends, and futurity in Turkish climate fiction

Merve Tabur  ^{a,b}

^aDepartment of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway; ^bComparative Literature Section, Department of Languages, Literature, and Communication, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Myths and legends in climate fiction are often studied with reference to fantasy and magical realism; yet the relationship between the two forms remains understudied. This article examines the use of both as they overlap in Turkish climate fiction to address the multiscale complexities of climate change and to offer imaginaries of multispecies solidarity. Through close readings of Ayşegül Yalvaç's *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi* (2022; *An Istanbul Legend*) and Oya Baydar's *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi* (2019; *Night of the Children-with-Dogs*), I demonstrate how the texts adopt a feminist ethics of care to create speculative legends dramatizing cofutures in the making. I argue that the speculative legend serves three major functions: It challenges universalizing, apocalyptic, and anthropocentric Anthropocene discourses by depicting localized histories of collective action and multispecies solidarity. It ironizes the engendering of messianic figures. Lastly, the speculative legend reveals the possibilities of multispecies cosmopolitics while exposing the limits of utopian cosmopolitanisms.


KEYWORDS

Turkish literature; climate fiction; legend; multispecies justice; cosmopolitics

The way things are going, I am afraid we will take refuge in old myths. Faced with the greatest evil brought on by our epoch, the ecocide whose perils we do not sufficiently understand, we will create myths of fear, just like our ancestors did.¹

Yaşar Kemal

The urgency of addressing climate change and its differential impacts lies at the forefront of environmental activism today. Extreme weather events, planetary scale transformations, and mass extinctions, which have long abounded in mythological, religious, scientific, and science fictional narratives, are no longer contained by the temporalities of once upon a time or apocalyptic futures. Climate change is happening in the here and now of the Earth, carrying its past iterations and future possibilities into planetary presents that are increasingly marked by the exigence of collective action. Yet, despite the growing efforts of environmental activism from around the world and the scientific consensus

CONTACT Merve Tabur  m.tabur@uu.nl

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on the reality of anthropogenic climate change, mitigation and adaptation strategies remain insufficient in reducing carbon emissions to the desired 1.5°C. This kairotic need for timely human interventions to abet an impending doom, which marks mainstream discourses on climate change, is undercut by a cascade of crises in ontology, epistemology, representation, and futurity that have come to define the impasses of the Anthropocene in humanities scholarship.

As a scientifically contested term that identifies an undifferentiated humanity as the primary agent of ecological change in the current geological epoch, the Anthropocene functions as a grand narrative of what Elizabeth DeLoughrey calls “the crisis of ecological modernity.”² The Anthropocene’s foundations in conceptions of universal human agency, apocalypticism, and historical change as rupture from the past have been criticized for their Eurocentrism and dismissal of histories of colonialism and imperialism.³ Karsten Schulz has further argued that “the European mythological tradition” with its Promethean narratives of human mastery over nature underlie “the symbolic and conceptual structures with which ‘we’ are trying to make sense of the current Anthropocene condition.”⁴ One could thus argue that the grand narrative of the Anthropocene is becoming a myth in the sense of the term used by Roland Barthes – a semiological system which “transforms history into nature” by reducing the complexity of historically situated realities into essences and universals.⁵ Masking itself as universal History, the Anthropocene discourse as myth, as Delf Rothe argues, mobilizes the discourses, images, and motifs of secularized Western eschatologies.⁶ How we understand and respond to local and global environmental issues in their multiscale complexity and entanglement with social, economic, and political forces depends on where we are situated and which epistemologies, concepts, and vocabularies we mobilize to examine presents and envision futures. As Donna Haraway writes, “it matters what stories we tell other stories with.”⁷ So, how can we tell different stories about the current plight of the planet and its multispecies communities at risk?

A major challenge faced by contemporary ethical, political, and aesthetic engagements with climate change then is to formulate questions of urgency, agency, and futurity without recourse to grand narratives, apocalypticism, colonial epistemologies, and anthropocentrism. While many popular (particularly science fictional) narratives of climate fiction emerging from the Anglo-American context operate within the grand narrative logics of the Anthropocene, activist and artistic movements such as Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurisms, and Solarpunk, among others, have produced more variegated, historicized, and complex visions of environmental futures. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay argues that these “CoFuturisms” between art and activism refrain from reproducing universalist environmentalist discourses. Instead, they offer localized “micro-narratives that foreground community experiences of climate change.”⁸ The futures envisioned and enacted by these movements, namely “cofutures,” are, as Chattopadhyay argues, marked by “complexity, coevalness, and compossibility.”⁹ At a difference from the universalizing mythologies of the Anthropocene, cofutures attend to the multiscale (temporal and spatial) and multigeneric complexities of climate change and envision the ways in which diverse futures can become possible together.

Currently one cannot speak of an emergent futurism movement in the Turkish context. However, Turkey’s liminality vis-à-vis Europe, its fraught history of state-controlled Westernization, and its complex relationship to the cultural and political legacies of the Ottoman Empire open up a critical space for contesting European modernity’s teleological conception of the future.¹⁰ While scholars have addressed the technological

triumphalism and ethno-linguistic homogenization of national futures envisioned in Turkish literary modernity in the context of the formation of the Turkish nation-state, the question of how contemporary Turkish literature rewrites or challenges these earlier conceptions of national futures requires further scrutiny.¹¹ As extractivist and energy infrastructure projects, which formed the backbone of the nationalist project in the early twentieth century, continue at an accelerated pace, neglected ecological issues such as desertification and biodiversity loss are exacerbated by institutional indifference to climate change and the suppression of environmental activism. In the face of these challenges, Turkish literary production has become increasingly more concerned with ecological and planetary futures – a topic that remains understudied.¹² Turkey's current positionality as a major host and transit country for refugees and immigrants – a reality that manifests in the texts that inform this study – further calls for an examination of the cofutures that are constituted in diverse languages, ontologies, epistemologies, and forms of world-making beyond the nation-state framework.

One of the strategies contemporary Turkish authors employ to envision cofutures is to integrate formal and thematic elements of myths, legends, and folktales into climate change narratives. The diverse sources of these folkloric elements range from Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Turkic mythologies and Anatolian oral storytelling traditions to religious and mystical tales in the Biblical and Islamic traditions. Novelistic articulation of folk narratives with an attention to ecology can be traced back to a pivotal figure of modern Turkish literature and leftist intellectual: Yaşar Kemal (1923–2015). Kemal's work, which thoroughly mobilizes the power of Anatolian epic and legend traditions, precedes the growing prominence of climate fiction and Anthropocene discussions in Turkey.¹³ Yet, his focus on social justice in the countryside often converges with a meticulous attention to ecology and biodiversity.¹⁴ The folkloric evocations in the works of contemporary eco-fiction authors such as Latife Tekin (b. 1957) and Buket Uzuner (b. 1955) engage more explicitly with contemporary ecological crises and reflect ecofeminist concerns. To problematize the entanglement of ecocide and patriarchy, Tekin's *Muinar* (2006) reinvents the figure of the hag alongside folkloric elements evocative of ancient Anatolian mythologies and animistic beliefs. Criticizing Kemal's language for being "too epic, too masculine, too grandiose," Tekin creates in *Muinar* what Jale Parla has called a "women's epic" and a "pastoral utopian poem."¹⁵ Uzuner also mobilizes folkloric motifs and beliefs in her climate fiction series, *Uyumsuz Defne Kaman'ın Maceraları* (2012–2023; *The Adventures of Misfit Defne Kaman*). By depicting the journalist-environmentalist protagonist of the novel as a shaman who challenges discourses of human control and mastery over nature, Uzuner explores non-anthropocentric ways of relating to the Earth that underline the relationality and entanglement of human and nonhuman actants.¹⁶ This contemporary strand of climate fiction diverges from earlier examples of eco-fiction in the social realist and village novel traditions in three major ways. They depict strong female heroes who are environmentalists originating in urban settings. They address the local and global manifestations of climate change and the accelerated rate of environmental destruction. Lastly, they aim to redefine the terms of human-nonhuman relationality through speculative and feminist worldbuilding.

In this essay, I examine two exemplary uses of mythopoesis (including legends and myths) in Turkish climate fiction, Ayşegül Yalvaç's¹⁷ (b. 1986) *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*

(2022; *An Istanbul Legend*) and Oya Baydar's¹⁸ (b. 1940) *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi* (2019; *Night of the Children-with-Dogs*), to shed light on the possibilities and limits of mythopoetic imaginaries in representing climate futures.¹⁹ Literary criticism on myths and legends in climate fiction often does not clearly define or distinguish between the two forms but rather focuses on their relationship to established genres such as magical realism and fantasy.²⁰ Although myths and legends are often intertwined, they operate at different scales, much like climate change. The legend (*efsane*), as defined in scholarship on Turkish folk literature, narrates a historicized story about real or imagined people, is set in a particular place, and is believed to be true.²¹ The legend's prioritization of ordinary people's agency, geographic specificity, and historical situatedness demonstrates that it operates at the level of localized action. Myths, even though emerging from localities, are narratives that tend toward the universal due to their timelessness and engagement with epistemologies of nature and being. In Yalvaç's and Baydar's texts, figures and motifs emerging from myths reflect these globalizing and universalizing tendencies while their involvement in legendary formations of multispecies collective action situates them in local histories.

In what follows, I examine the relationship between myths, legends, and climate fiction, and I propose the concept of "speculative legend" – a distinct form of mythopoeisis which designates the integration of new legends in speculative fictional works. Here I work with Haraway's conception of speculative fiction/SF ("science fiction, speculative fabulation, string figures, speculative feminism, science fact, so far") and understand speculation as a feminist mode of relational worldmaking.²² I demonstrate how Yalvaç's and Baydar's texts reconfigure figures and motifs of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern folklore through an engagement with feminist ethics of care to generate speculative legends depicting cofutures in the making. While these legends foster spaces of multispecies agency, hope, and futurity in the seemingly foreclosed presents of climate change, they also risk engendering messianic figures upon whom the responsibility of action and historical change rests. *An Istanbul Legend* and *Night of the Children-with-Dogs* point to messianism as the limits of the speculative legend by ironizing the relegation of responsibility to marginalized communities who are among the most precarious in the face of climate change.

Thinking multispecies solidarity with legends in Ayşegül Yalvaç's *An Istanbul Legend*

An Istanbul Legend tells a story of solidarity between human and nonhuman agents who work together to protect the marine ecosystem of the Bosphorus. The central protagonists of the narrative, algae-human creature Periyân Valentine and engineering student Aliço, fight against the impact of climate change and marine pollution on acidification and toxicity levels in the Marmara Sea. The text begins in the mythical time of the "broken alliance" (*kırık ittifak*) between humans and nonhumans and soon after introduces the historical time of present-day Istanbul.²³ The unspecified temporality of this broken alliance is narrated as "eons" (*çağlar*) of negative human impact on the urban ecosystem: "One could perhaps use the word weird (*tuhaf*) to define the imperfection that has befallen the beauty of Istanbul, [a city] born out of eonian disasters, wars fought in its name, conflicts, and humanity's fight with nature."²⁴ In addition to plural nouns and indefinite

numeral adjectives such as “many” (*pek çok*) and “countless” (*sayısız*) which underline the scale of human destruction over the ages, the third person omniscient narrator employs Arabic loanwords in Turkish such as “misfortune” (*badire*), “event” (*hadise*), “mystery” (*muamma*), and “creature” (*mahluk*), among others, to depict the mythical city. Although these words are still in use in modern Turkish, they elicit a hazy sense of pastness by evoking an Ottoman Turkish narrative style. This evocation does not extend beyond the introduction which quickly culminates in the city’s current plight: a chemical tanker explosion and climate change induced biodiversity loss in the Bosphorus.²⁵

The text’s framing of the city’s present within eonian transformations sets the stage for the interplay between mythical and historical temporalities which underlies the narrative’s engagement with the multiple scales of climate change. I argue that the speculative legend, which lends the book its title, emerges from this interplay, and offers fertile ground for the collaboration of multiple temporalities, ontologies, and epistemologies in building cofutures. In contradistinction to the Anthropocene as myth, which is rooted in a foundational discord between humans and nonhumans, the speculative legend centers multispecies justice and solidarity.

The principal heroes of Yalvaç’s text, the Periyans, emerge from mythology and allude to the mythological foundations of Istanbul. As algae-human chimeras, Periyans are “chthonic” (relating to the underworld) beings who navigate the drowned worlds of the Bosphorus with their glistening algal fluke, blue hair, and female torsos.²⁶ The figure of the Periyans draws on at least three mythical creatures which are prevalent in global folklore and often depicted as female and enchantingly beautiful: the mermaid, the siren, and the nymph. The name Periyans, which derives from the Turkish word for nymph or fairy (*peri*), conjures up ancient Greek mythology, particularly the foundation myth of Byzantium which links the formation of the city to water nymphs. According to one version of this foundation myth, Keroessa (the daughter of Zeus and the Naiad nymph Io), who was born in the Golden Horn and raised by the nymph Semystra, had a son from Poseidon. This son, Byzas, was the founder of Byzantium.²⁷ The myth both showcases the foundational character of the sea for the city and links Periyans to a tradition of female nature spirits. Like the Greek nymphs, Periyans manage and protect the geographic locations they are attached to – in this case, the Bosphorus, the only place where they can survive. As a result, nonhuman actors fully take on the responsibility of ecosystem restoration and conservation, refusing to collaborate with humans.

The relegation of responsibility to nonhuman agents in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss ironically enacts and challenges two myths of European modernity that underlie the historical conditions of the Anthropocene: the myth of nature’s endless capacity for regeneration and the myth of human separation from nature:

But now it was time for nature’s fight against humans. Thus, whoever was a part of nature in Istanbul – except for humans – had joined forces, doing everything necessary to protect the city. [...] Humans could not possibly partake in this struggle. Although humans were a part of nature, when they became cruel towards everyone other than themselves, nonhuman beings could not regard them as allies in this accord.²⁸

The title of the first chapter, “Broken Alliance – Humans and Everyone Other than Humans” (*Kırık İttifak – İnsan ve İnsandan Gayrı Herkes*), further reinforces the positionality of the human estranged from nature as the villain in this Anthropocene mythology. The broken alliance ushers in a dystopian view of human-nonhuman relationality, marked by exploitation, destruction, and alienation.

The mythical hostility between two diametrically opposed poles (human and nonhuman) transforms into the historical possibility of multispecies justice and solidarity through the agency of the Periyans, represented by Periyen Valentine. Multispecies justice, as outlined by Donna Haraway, identifies the subjects of justice as emerging from relational ontologies through practices of “thinking with” and “making kin” which I conceptualize as forms of multispecies solidarity here.²⁹ Multispecies solidarity takes two forms in the text: solidarity among marine beings to maintain and protect their ecosystem, and solidarity between sea creatures and humans, exemplified by the interaction between Aliço and Valentine following the latter’s capture and placement in a university laboratory. As a graduate student working on a cleanup boat project and an environmentalist who is concerned with ecological futures, Aliço is uniquely endowed with the ability to talk to Valentine. Although the centrality of language to interspecies communication foregrounds the human through anthropomorphizing, the interaction between the two figures challenges anthropocentric notions of human superiority and stewardship over nature.

Following their encounter, Aliço offers to help migrate the endangered fish with the university’s state-of-the-art cleanup boat. However, Valentine rejects his stewardship attempts that are reminiscent of Noah’s ark by mocking his desire to become a “hero” (*kahraman*).³⁰ When Aliço attempts to prove his commitment to multispecies justice by declaring his vegetarianism, Valentine bitterly responds:

But your goal is not to help us protect these species. You are an average human. You contribute to the disappearance of beautiful things, but you have excuses to turn a blind eye to it.³¹

An Istanbul Legend offers a dual critique here: On one hand, the text criticizes anthropocentric discourses on the control, management, and protection of a victimized, nonhuman nature. On the other hand, it challenges the myth of the broken alliance by illustrating how, despite human attempts at timely action, structures of oppression prevent environmental activism from enacting its full potential. The technoscientific solution proposed by Aliço may be effective and well intentioned, but the institutions which produce such solutions (in this case, academia) are restrained by politics, regulations, and structures of inequality. These restraints reinforce dystopian sentiments in the text which allude to the struggles of environmental activists and scientists in Turkey.³² Aliço is ultimately imprisoned in an elaborate plot to appoint someone else to his post, but he escapes prison with the help of an algae and leaves for Iran as a fugitive. The story of Aliço points to the limits of the individual hero in fighting climate change and highlights the need for collective action. *An Istanbul Legend* responds to the limitations of scientific discourses to incite action, with an imaginary of collective action in the form of multispecies solidarity. By doing so, the text does not only highlight the entanglement of environmental and social justice, but it also offers a more diversified vision of historical agency.

Although this vision serves as an ironic testament to institutional negligence toward climate change, it also foregrounds multispecies agencies in ecosystem management. In contrast to the fatalistic outlook of her friend, who perceives the arrival of the toxic algae and the tanker explosion as the final blow, Valentine holds onto the utopian impulses and sense of futurity that emerge from quotidian needs, desires, and practices and drive her to action for the sake of the collective. Not only does she refuse to abandon the Bosphorus when given the option to migrate elsewhere, she actively seeks plausible responses, if not long-term solutions, to climate change, marine toxicity, and biodiversity loss. When Valentine hears a chemical tanker explosion shortly after being engulfed by a ship's bilge water and getting stung by an algae monster, her immediate response is to attend to the endangered fish species the marine creatures keep in optimal temperature and acidity levels in underwater pools.³³ Made with shards of glass found in the sea (i.e. repurposed waste) these pools are the collective creation of the Bosphorus' chthonic inhabitants and reflect a vision of low-tech conservation infrastructures that parallels Solarpunk futures built with sustainable technologies.³⁴ The multispecies solidarity which underlies this technology emulates a utopian vision of the resilient and self-regulating marine ecosystem.

Utopian impulses, which emerge to the surface from the mythical, more-than-human depths of the marine underworld, become historical possibilities through the mediation of legendary heroes. This, I argue, arises from the situatedness of the legend in ordinary, material, and daily practices, which, Frederic Jameson argues, are sites of utopia "in which individual and collective time come to be identified with each other."³⁵ On the one hand, the legend functions in the text as a site of utopian hope and futurity against the seemingly foreclosed dystopian presents and apocalyptic futures of climate change. In this sense, the Periyans acquire messianic qualities as a utopian collective that works altruistically for the maintenance, recuperation, and conservation of the marine ecosystem. This vision parallels Jameson's definition of the first strand of utopia: revolutionary practice, reorganization of space, and formation of intentional communities.³⁶ On the other hand, the legend is not concerned with the question of what constitutes utopia at all: It simply depicts the ordinary lives and survival strategies of the subaltern agents of history. In this sense, *An Istanbul Legend* both embodies and deconstructs utopianism. As a legendary hero that represents the collective agency of the Periyans, Valentine is first and foremost a figure of action who stands in solidarity with multispecies actants in their everyday life. Her ethical, embodied, and practice-based engagement with the planet is thus more of a modeling of feminist ethics of care and multispecies solidarity than abstract utopianism.³⁷

Their chimeric ontology set aside, the Periyans are depicted as earthly heroes in the narrative. As such, all of the Periyans' characteristics and capabilities are limited to the natural consequences of their material existence. The Periyans' bodies work "sympoietically," which Haraway defines as a form of relationality, of "making with."³⁸ While the algal fluke attached to the torso from below the waist performs the crucial tasks of absorbing CO₂ from the water, oxygenation, and acidity reduction, the human part engages in speculation, complex problem-solving, and linguistic communication. Neither part acts in magical or supernatural terms; instead they operate in accordance with the possibilities of mimetic realism. This emphasis on the material reconfigurations of the present to imagine the future aligns *An Istanbul Legend* more with speculative

fiction than with fantasy or magical realism. As a loosely defined term applied to a broad range of works that incorporate supposed supernatural elements into otherwise realistic narratives, magical realism fails to capture the centrality of futuring – active making of future worlds in the present continuous – to the integration of the legend and speculative worldbuilding. SF, as an embodied, situated, and feminist mode of relational worldmaking, harbors the presence of futurity in the present as well as the presence of science in myths and legends, culture in nature, and heroism in the ordinary. Between the view that climate fiction is necessarily rooted in science fiction³⁹ and the view that science fiction’s genre conventions and futuristic tendencies fall short of addressing the scale and urgency of the climate crisis,⁴⁰ *An Istanbul Legend* offers an alternate vision: the legend as a site of science and futuring.

An Istanbul Legend depicts the relationship between science and legend as one of communication and cooperation although not without tension, as the previously mentioned dialogue between Aliço and Valentine shows. A state-of-the-art clean up boat renders possible the migration of endangered fish species to a safer location while chthonic beings maintain the ecosystem through bodily absorptions and the repurposing of materials found in their environment. Sensorial experiences of ecosystem disruption play a particularly important role in the Periyans’ production of embodied knowledges about climate change, which complements rather than challenges climate science: “When the fight against nature became a global deed, all of these ecological negligences had combined, explicitly leading to another problem. Whatever this problem was, it could not be seen but it could be sensed (*hissetmek*).”⁴¹ Valentine’s chthonic knowledge of climate change stems precisely from its bodily manifestations, such as her algal fluke growing bushier and her multisensorial experiences, expressed as “seeing, sensing (*hissetmek*), smelling, and hearing major disasters.”⁴² The recurrent use of the word *hissetmek*, which points to an affective experience and encapsulates the meanings of sensing, feeling, and perceiving, marks the multispecies sensorium as a site of knowledge production at the intersection of planetary and individual materialities. Climate science, as explained to Valentine by Aliço the engineering student, only corroborates her embodied and localized knowledge.

Valentine’s plan to protect endangered fish by adding special rocks to their underwater pools offers another view of the cooperative relationship between legend and science. The plan involves the removal of rocks from the cursed Weeping Rocks neighborhood which would act as a “natural clean-up mechanism” for the Bosphorus.⁴³ In this locality, where the bodies of “sensitive beings” (*narin ruhlu yaratıklar*) and “the oppressed” (*mazlumlar*) have turned into rock formations, the teardrop-like liquid that flows through the cracks is believed by the characters to carry healing properties that can help safeguard the pools.⁴⁴ A study published in 2016 demonstrates that adding olivine rich rocks to seawater can indeed help reduce acidity.⁴⁵ Although the link between the legend and the study may be coincidental, it demonstrates that the legend is situated close to the realm of material possibility and plausibility. In his discussion on Indian science fiction and the “mythologerm,” Chattopadhyay argues that myths localize scientific method and reactivate “certain types of knowledge in sf that are typically associated with the past, even if such knowledge seems futuristic.”⁴⁶ *An Istanbul Legend* makes a similar move in its attention to local knowledges and indigenous practices that may be tangential to or lie completely outside the purview of natural sciences

and globalized discourses on climate change. Such positionality in the local and the particular is established through the feminist practice of producing “situated knowledges” – embodied, contextualized, and self-reflexive epistemologies that envision a distributed model of agency and knowledge production within “material-semiotic nodes.”⁴⁷ Yet, at a difference from myths which may contain transcendental visions, cosmological statements, and divine interventions, the legend depicts an immanent world in which historically and geographically situated actors, ordinary heroes, take collective action in the present. Situated at the interstices of myth and history, the legend thus carves out a space for agency and action in a seemingly foreclosed present. As the text’s prioritization of applied knowledge and praxis over theory reminds us, climate change and ecological disasters impel multispecies agents to respond with a sense of urgency that effectively catalyzes awareness and knowledge into action.

By proposing a solution that aims to revitalize the embodied and petrified histories of alterity encapsulated by rocks, the Wailing Rock legend situates naturalcultural memory (and particularly subaltern memories of oppression) as central to building cofutures. *An Istanbul Legend* repeatedly underlines that environmental and social justice are irreducibly entangled. It is precisely the rock’s witnessing and petrification of the memory of oppression, materialized in the tear-like fluid that relentlessly flows through the cracks, that endows it with restorative qualities. Home to many recuperative and sacred places as well as talismans, Istanbul’s topography is woven with folk tales and legends that shape its inhabitants’ relationship to geography and memory.⁴⁸ Tales of turning to rock are particularly common in Anatolian folklore, forming their own sub-category of legends.⁴⁹ The Weeping Rock neighborhood of Şile (a district of Istanbul), which Yalvaç refers to in the book, is locally identified with such an urban legend that tells the tragic story of an ill-fated love affair between Mehmet, an orphaned Turkish shepherd, and Eftelya, the daughter of a wealthy Greek merchant. According to this legend, the star-crossed couple who feels despair at the rejection of Eftelya’s family ultimately commits suicide, and the rocks they are seated on before jumping into the sea are believed to weep for them. Yalvaç does not explicitly cite this urban legend, which narrates a microhistory of class and ethnic discrimination in Turkey. Yet the overlap between fictional and historical locations as well as the petrified memories of discrimination that end fatally in both cases link the two Wailing Rock legends. This entanglement between world and text, history and myth, nature and culture, which has led some readers to approach *An Istanbul Legend* as a book about the existing legends of the city,⁵⁰ demonstrates how the legend in speculative mode expands the scope of reality, possibility, and history. The urban legend which narrates the tragic story of humans who could not render their futures compossible commemorates a past utopian possibility. The speculative legend activates this foreclosed possibility in the present of multispecies actors who strive to render their futures possible together in the face of ecological catastrophe.

Although the title of *An Istanbul Legend* frames the book as a legend, Yalvaç underscores that the Periyans are speculative, fictional creatures.⁵¹ Both legend and speculative fiction operate in a similar way: they reconfigure the realm of the real and the possible by depicting events that are out of the ordinary. Yet, while the legend implies the event has allegedly already taken place, the “what if” mode of speculative fiction situates the event as a possibility to come. What I call the speculative legend brings this tension between

what is believed to have happened and what could happen into a productive collaboration of multiple temporalities, expanding the possibilities of the historical present.

Furthermore, the legend grounds speculation not only through claims of historicity but also through the collective imaginary. Legends, which often serve a commemorative function, draw their authority from the collective imaginary that sustains and transmits them. The speculative legend taps into this power of the legend form to harbor collective investment in the speculative scenarios it presents. Grounding the plausibility of the narrative in the affirmation of the collective imaginary creates a third space in which the boundaries between rationality and the fantastic imaginary blur. This liminal space allows the speculative legend to accommodate temporal, scalar, ontological, and epistemological pluralities such as those addressed in this section: history and myth, particular and universal, the past and the future, human and nonhuman, fact and fiction, theory and action, and science and embodied knowledge. Embodying and putting into practice the feminist ethics of care, which Haraway calls “making kin,” the speculative legend’s cofuturistic imaginary extends beyond species boundaries, blood lines, family ties, and national belonging.⁵² These features render the speculative legend a fertile ground for envisioning the sympoiesis of cofutures.

Futures-in-the-making as legends in Oya Baydar’s *Night of the Children-with-Dogs*

The speculative legend in *Night of the Children-with-Dogs* (henceforth, *Night*) unfolds in conversation with the broader framework of an Anthropocene story: a dystopian planet in the thick of apocalypse, a human world possibly beyond salvage and recuperation. The protagonists, a woman and a man who used to be lovers, have taken shelter from the planetary floods and disasters in a mountain cabin, awaiting the arrival of their “saviors” (*kurtarıcılar*), the Children-with-Dogs.⁵³ The unnamed woman, a Botanist turned activist, is sick with a virus that disrupts people’s sense of reality and causes amnesia. As her perception of reality and memories of a rapidly disappearing planet slip away, she records her thoughts and reminiscences on a solar-powered device with an infinite amount of memory. In the meanwhile, the man, environmentalist and peace-activist, Adam, suffers from the injuries he sustained while doing humanitarian work with refugees in the war zones of the Middle East. The possibility of a “future world” (*geleceğin dünyası*) and utopian hope in the dystopian present rests on multispecies justice and solidarity, heralded by the legendary Children-with-Dogs.⁵⁴ In contrast to *An Istanbul Legend* which presents a dynamic story of localized action in the present tense, *Night* creates a patchy archive of the Anthropocene comprised of fragmented memories, monologues, and dialogues. Despite their scalar and narrative differences, both stories revolve around the same axis of tension between theory and action in the face of climate change. In Baydar’s novel, the dialectical tension between theory and action is framed by the Botanist’s oscillation between academia and activism, which ultimately leads her to discover utopian possibility in the collective agency of the Children-with-Dogs.

Both *An Istanbul Legend* and *Night* envision the heroes of their speculative legends as multispecies dyads working sympoietically, albeit in different ways: The first portrays a chimeric figure that embodies the entanglement of algae and human while the latter reimagines a familiar form of companionship between dogs and children. The

Children-with-Dogs comprise a supranational group of homeless refugee kids and street dogs: “In one sense, they are poor, orphaned, vagrant, and wretched kids with stray dogs, in another sense, they are a fairy tale (*masal*), a legend (*efsane*).”⁵⁵ Reminiscent of the legendary Islamic figure of al-Khidr⁵⁶ who comes to the rescue of those in distress, the Children-with-Dogs bring food, water, and medicine to those in need, help the injured and the sick, and lead those in danger to safety. The collective is particularly active in war zones and refugee camps in the Middle East where the failure of humanitarian organizations and human rights discourses have led people to rely on the Children-with-Dogs for basic sustenance.⁵⁷ Just like the Periyans and other marine beings who work collectively to protect their ecosystem without human support, the Children-with-Dogs, in the absence of organized and effective action by adults, engage in practices of communal care that underlie the sympoiesis of cofutures in the face of catastrophe. Beings who are among the most vulnerable in the face of climate change related disasters and wars thus become the saviors of those who relegate the responsibility of action and recuperation to human and nonhuman Others.

Although *Night* expresses the desire for multispecies justice and solidarity through the collective figure of the Children-with-Dogs, the Botanist dismisses them as a legendary formation which marks a utopian horizon. Their legendification parallels the legendification of Adam, the first child-with-dog, who is ascribed extraordinary powers in war zones such as owning “a miraculous defense mechanism” and “a natural armor they cannot comprehend the magic of.”⁵⁸ When Adam reminds her how the Children-with-Dogs, “her saviors,” rescued her from the floods, the Botanist struggles to accept their agency and “sarcastically” calls them a legend.⁵⁹ Through the several encounters she has with the Children-with-Dogs, however, the Botanist’s sarcasm eventually yields to wonder and a burning desire “to know, to understand” who they are.⁶⁰ As multispecies solidarities and agencies remain illegible to her, she uses terms such as “dream” (*rüya*), “fairy tale” (*masal*), and “miracle” (*mucize*) to make sense of these seemingly supernatural encounters with alterity.⁶¹ The transformative encounter which leads the Botanist to acknowledge more-than-human agencies takes place right outside a health camp in a war zone. Amidst the bone-chilling sounds and techno-ruins of war, a dog guides her in the night to the meeting place of the children. Upon arrival, the Botanist observes, “It is as if the dogs have adopted the kids, the dogs protect the kids, not vice versa.”⁶² At this point, the Botanist bonds with the dog that guides her and accepts its agency by sensing the dog “wanted to take me somewhere” and suspecting it can read her mind.⁶³ Yet, the Botanist remains an external observer to the complex reality of the Children-with-Dogs which she interprets as a magical reality using an Orientalist trope: “Soon each child will take their dog, jump on their magical carpet and fly over to the source of the voice that calls them.”⁶⁴ Despite her desire to understand the children, she does not speak their languages. Although she has quit academia to do humanitarian work in the war zone, she “cannot tolerate” (*dayanamamak*) witnessing “people’s pain.”⁶⁵ Soon after the encounter, she leaves the camp for an office job, riddled with feelings of guilt over serving “no function other than bearing witness” to others’ suffering.⁶⁶ Although this encounter imprints her with an individualized sense of multispecies solidarity (“Now I have a dog too, I have become a Woman-with-Dog”), the internal workings of the collective escape her.⁶⁷ As she is unable to

“become one of them” (*onlardan biri olmak*) and comprehend their reality, the Botanist continues to experience the Children-with-Dogs primarily as a legend.⁶⁸

The question of how to stand in solidarity with others without victimizing or exoticizing them underlies a central tension in the narrative: intergenerational conflict. In contrast to *An Istanbul Legend* which addresses the broken alliance between humans and nonhumans, *Night* problematizes the broken alliance between human generations, thus depicting a more anthropocentric view of multispecies justice. At the individual level, the broken alliance between generations manifests in the disconnect between the Botanist and her son, Doğa, whose name means “Nature.” When his mother refuses to bring home a refugee child and a dog sleeping on the snow-covered street, Doğa feels betrayed by her incapacity to “endure discomfort” to “stay true to her teachings of goodness.”⁶⁹ Through his continued interactions with the Children-with-Dogs in an attempt to help them, Doğa decides solidarity necessitates moving beyond being “a good-hearted stranger” in order to “become one of them.”⁷⁰ Eventually he leaves for refugee camps to work alongside the Children-with-Dogs. The Botanist, on the other hand, lacks the sense of futurity to sustain such becoming-with: “I miss the hope of a future.”⁷¹ Although she follows in his wake to the health camp, the generational disconnect, exacerbated by feelings of disingenuity, guilt, and belatedness ultimately lead her to abandon activism. To the older generation that “could not grasp the integrality of polar bears and the revolution,” “the new thought and society of the future world” – a “true internationalism” – signifies the utopian horizon for a future-to-come.⁷² This new society which is rendered possible by multispecies solidarity is seen as arising from “the innocence of the oppressed (*mağdurların masumiyeti*).”⁷³ To the younger generation that is forced into this messianic role, multispecies justice and solidarity is not a utopian horizon: it is an engaged practice of building cofutures in the present. Similar to Periyân Valentine’s rejection of mythification,⁷⁴ in *Night* Adam (the ancestral Child-with-Dog) refuses to deem the Children-with-Dogs merely a legend.⁷⁵ What is experienced by the multispecies actors of the speculative legend as active futuring in the here and now is experienced as utopianism and mythification by others.

The vocabularies Baydar employs to depict the transition into a new planetary era and the emergence of its posthumanity – with its emphasis on relational ontologies and its critique of liberal humanism’s anthropocentrism – comes from myths and legends of the Middle East and beyond. The mythical character of the Anthropocene is emphasized by her recurrent use of the word “deluge” (*tufan*) which evokes the flood narratives in Sumerian, Greek, and Biblical mythologies, among others. Framing the planetary floods caused by climate change as a mythological deluge narrative serves two main purposes in the text. Firstly, myths coupled with the speculative legend expand the temporal and spatial scales of the narrative. While the mythical framework of the narrative points to the continuity and repurposing of “deep history”⁷⁶ in the present, the speculative legend of the Children-with-Dogs marks historical action in the present continuous, what Jameson identifies as the site of utopia.⁷⁷ Furthermore, mythopoesis as a retroactive act gestures toward the horizon of the future-to-come: “This deluge will also become mythologized. Of course, if the good ones can survive it and carry the legends into the future.”⁷⁸ The pluralization of temporalities parallels the movement between the local and the global, as well as the particular and the universal, through the interplay of myth and legend forms in the narrative. *Night* negotiates the multiscale complexities

of the Anthropocene and the posthuman of the new epoch through the figure of Adam whose name refers both to a historical agent (a legendary hero) and is a mythical signifier for the universal (*man* in Turkish and the archetypical human). The protagonist Adam has emerged from a specific historical context in the Middle East, yet he is planetary in his self-identification with “terrestriality” (*dünyahlık*) beyond national, ethnic, and religious identities.⁷⁹ The story of Adam stems from Abrahamic religions, all of which originate in the Middle East, yet Adam claims universality as the first human (and posthuman) on Earth. Unlike *An Istanbul Legend* which conceives a highly localized legend focusing on the Bosphorus, *Night* recounts a legend that emerges from a vaguely defined Middle East but aspires to planetarity: “Geography is no longer destiny, being born on Earth is.”⁸⁰

The second function myths and legends serve in the narrative is to envision futures in conversation with pasts and presents. Myths, particularly cosmogonic myths, explain the origins, endings, and new beginnings of the Earth and of humans. They narrate periods of transition and testify to the resilience of Earthly beings even when they narrate events of mass extinction such as the Genesis flood or the climate crisis. Thus, rewriting ancient myths by way of speculative legends promises the continuity of human pasts and presents into the future. This emphasis on continuity instead of rupture and apocalypse is reflected in Adam’s vision of a cosmic futurism, which “edges on mysticism.”⁸¹ Adam argues that “the deluge was not a mass extinction legend.”⁸² It rather marks a transition period in which the unstoppable “continuity of evolution” and “the constant renewal of humanity”⁸³ within “the unity of the universe”⁸⁴ heralds the hope of humanity’s rebirth in a different form. Thinking climate change through the lenses of myths and legends allows one to simultaneously reckon with the past and imagine the future, to conceive future anterior mythologies of the posthuman. Mythopoesis as such serves as a method of futuring.

While the future is actively built in the present, the hope and fear of transitioning into a new era engenders utopian and messianic visions. As Rebekah Sheldon argues, the figure of the child as the symbol of futurity lies at the center of such visions, particularly in dystopian narratives.⁸⁵ The Children-with-Dogs mark the pinnacle of the messianic imaginary of the Anthropocene. They are endowed with messianic qualities as “future bearers of truth” (*geleceğin hakikat taşıyıcıları*),⁸⁶ “saviors” (*kurtarıcı*),⁸⁷ and “harbingers of good news” (*müjdedi*).⁸⁸ When Adam argues that “the future human will evolve from the children and the young who carry hope and goodness inside, not from roboticized AI,” his discourse parallels the Romantics’ idealization of children as symbols of innocence, authenticity, and effortless connection with nature.⁸⁹ The Botanist adopts a similarly idealized, messianic view of children in the text as a site of futurity: “To make the world a better and more beautiful place, to alleviate people’s pain, to build a better future, I would defend the need to give birth to children.”⁹⁰ Such privileging of reproductive heteronormativity as the foundation of futurity and hope upholds the ideology of “reproductive futurism,” which as Lee Edelman argues, “perpetuates as reality a fantasy frame intended to secure the survival of the social in the Imaginary forms of the Child.”⁹¹ Operating between reality and fantasy, history and myth, The Children-with-Dogs become legendary heroes upon whom the survival of humanity beyond eco-catastrophe and the emergence of the posthuman rests.

Although *Night* aims to challenge the anthropocentric biases of climate change and extinction narratives by envisioning children in multispecies solidarity, it does not reimagine human-nonhuman relations and nonhuman agency as radically as *An Istanbul Legend*. The latter seeks to establish an ecocentric middle ground between the anthropomorphic representation and the absolute illegibility of the nonhuman other. This negotiation allows for a multispecies storytelling that acknowledges the complexity of more-than-human agencies while highlighting, as Kathryn Yusoff argues, the need to “make present” the violence of biodiversity loss for beings further removed from human affinity, affection, and awe than children, charismatic megafauna, or domesticated species.⁹² *Night*, on the other hand, summons some of the most enduring and familiar images of human sociality and companionship as the archetypes of a future-to-come: man and woman (Adam and the Botanist), mother and child (the Botanist and her son), human and animal companion (the Children-with-Dogs). The agency of dogs as a devoted and trustworthy companion species remains limited to the guidance (*rehberlik*) and guardianship (*koruyuculuk*) of the human.⁹³ Although the novel refrains from anthropomorphization and nonhuman speech in its imaginings of interspecies communication, its vision of multispecies justice and solidarity remains focused on anthropocentric sensibilities, anxieties, and affinities.

How do we make sense of this seeming retraction into the familiar and the familial (as opposed to the unusual in *An Istanbul Legend*)? I argue for an ironic reading of the text’s seeming reproduction of Romantic ideals of nature, the past, humanity, children, and love. As a text that underscores the urgency of action in the face of climate change and extinction, *Night* is primarily concerned with the possibilities and limits of human agency. Focusing on a foreclosed present that, as Meliz Ergin argues, is marked by feelings of belatedness and an apocalyptic imaginary, the text depicts the impasse of anthropocentrism: discourses that underline human exceptionalism and mastery over nature fail to produce effective and timely responses to climate change.⁹⁴ Within the cascade of crises in agency, epistemology, and futurity that underlies the tragic fall of the Anthropocene human, the only site of action that remains is fragmented remembrance. This emphasis on memory is what gives the text its patchy character: the narration bombards the reader with sequenced names of species, lists of events, and disjointed images of people, places, and moments, as if desperate to capture a totality of experience before it dissolves. Amidst images of the rapidly eroding material and social fabric of life, the protagonist rummages through her faded and fragmented memories for images of a past that could serve as an anchor and an archive for the future to come. It is important to note here that the recorder which was given to her by the children will eventually be collected by them. Intergenerational memory, alongside myths and legends, are constitutive of the future.

Yet an ironic reading of the novel shows that the new sociality of the posthuman, what Adam calls “a different kind of human,”⁹⁵ will not emerge from the familiar and the familial forms of Romantic idealization and kinship. It will be based in a feminist ethics of care that centers multispecies justice and moves beyond the retracted boundaries of established social identities, gender norms, and the species divide. The familiar images of heteronormative romance, family, and social relations conjured up by the Botanist in the last hours of her life ultimately do not survive the climate apocalypse: Her nuclear family dissolves following her affair with Adam. She never reunites with

her son despite searching for him everywhere. She does not quite develop an autonomous sense of self (and remains anonymous in the text) as she lives vicariously through Adam. The imbalance in their relationship, which is masked in hackneyed visions of romance, finds its final hyperbolic expression in the irony and incongruence of their last words. While the Botanist says her only regret is not to have spent her entire life with him, Adam remarks that his “only regret is not visiting the Maldives before it submerged in water” and not seeing “the emperor penguins in Antarctica.”⁹⁶ The Botanist then willfully follows Adam into death, despite the appearance of an auspicious omen: the sun and clear skies. The intergenerational tension and imbalanced gender relations that underlie the anthropocentric imaginaries of the old world resolve with adult protagonists’ double suicide, ushering the arrival of a new sociality in the last sentence of the novel: “Yesterday’s end, tomorrow’s beginning” (*Dünün sonu, yarının başlangıcı*).⁹⁷

Speculative legends and multispecies cosmopolitics at the limits of utopian cosmopolitanism

Speculative legends diverge from earlier uses of myths and legends in Turkish fiction in their diversification of heroisms through feminist, multispecies, and futuristic visions in response to climate change. The mundane and earthen heroisms of figures such as the Periyans and the Children-with-Dogs underscore collective agencies and activisms based on experiential and situated knowledges. *An Istanbul Legend* and *Night* model ways of making kin and building communities based on feminist and multispecies ethics and practices of care. Care as the foundation of multispecies solidarity entails both the “arts of noticing”⁹⁸ and the “arts of attentiveness” necessary for cultivating practices of listening to, getting to know, and responding to diverse forms of existence on the planet.⁹⁹ Multispecies solidarity as such is a practice of becoming-with others and ultimately concerned with the question of how to build cofutures. This is also a central concern of multispecies “cosmopolitics” which Haraway, building upon Isabelle Stengers’ work, defines as a “practice for going on, for remaining exposed to consequences, for entangling materially with as many of the messy players as possible.”¹⁰⁰ Multispecies cosmopolitics is an open-ended, daily, embodied process of doing and undoing that attends to the complexity of planetary existence. As such, it challenges utopian conceptions of cosmopolitanism that generate idealized and abstract generalizations of peaceful co-existence. Any conception of cosmopolitanism – the demarcation of a common ground for agency and representation – generates its own exteriority and is marked by the limits of representation.¹⁰¹ As texts that explore ways to address this limit in envisioning cofutures, *An Istanbul Legend* and *Night* mobilize the multiscalar relationality between legend and myth as a strategy to simultaneously acknowledge historical particularity and gesture toward planetary commonality. By doing so, the texts point at the potential of multispecies cosmopolitics in building cofutures with an ironic awareness of the limits of utopian cosmopolitanisms in attending to subaltern histories.

Both texts depict individuals and collectives emerging from subaltern histories of ethnic discrimination and forced displacement in the Middle East. Although the speculative legend renders their agencies visible, the texts offer only brief glimpses upon the particularities of their experiences. How can we make sense of this seeming dismissal? How do the texts engage with the question of alterity? The cloud of mystery that

surrounds *Night's* Adam throughout the novel lifts only briefly when he vaguely reveals that he was orphaned in an attack on an unnamed Christian village in the Middle East and subsequently adopted by a Norwegian woman.¹⁰² At this point, Adam also discloses he is a native speaker of Aramaic – “the language of Jesus” (as the section title underscores) and an endangered language spoken today by Christian, Jewish, and Mandaean minority communities in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran.¹⁰³ Adam’s story parallels those of the Children-with-Dogs and encapsulates histories of ethnic violence and displacement in the Middle East. Yet, despite this situatedness in the local, both Adam and the Children-with-Dogs embody the promise of utopian cosmopolitanism: Adam self-identifies as a “nationless, terrestrial, identitiless person who is open to all identities and beliefs, who is from nowhere and everywhere.”¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the Children-with-Dogs are a supranational and multilingual group emerging from the Middle East, but their eventual meeting with Climate Children from the North heralds the formation of broader, cosmopolitical solidarities. Here, *Night's* utopian imaginary of cosmopolitanism which supersedes national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and species belonging runs the risk of brushing over alterity and subaltern histories of violence and displacement. Baydar addresses this impasse, which remains unresolved, by situating the narrative perspective in a figure, the Botanist, who despite all her good intentions to understand Adam and the Children-with-Dogs, cannot fully grasp the complexity of their reality but nevertheless seeks ways to stand in solidarity with them. I read this strategy as an attempt to envision the workings of multispecies cosmopolitics in building cofutures (as opposed to utopian cosmopolitanism) within the text where diverse ways of relationality aspire to coexist, cooperate, and communicate and not subsume or speak for each other. Alterity as such opens up ways of solidarity building, rather than marking a radically illegible and unrelatable otherness or a state of subalternity that is uncovered in ethnographic detail.

An Istanbul Legend engages with the question of alterity and the limits of utopian cosmopolitanism more implicitly, through the brief exchange between Periyân Valentine’s grandfather Hamid Rıza and David, an algae creature rendered toxic by climate change and forced to become a climate refugee. When he hears of David’s arrival to the Bosphorus as an “uninvited guest” (*davetsiz misafir*), Hamid Rıza’s response to the alterity of this dangerous creature whose presence threatens marine biodiversity is to simply convince him to leave.¹⁰⁵ Although this strategy works in the narrative as a model of interspecies communication and empathy, it points to the limits of a cosmopolitanism based on imperial models of the cosmopolitan city. When David arrives in the Bosphorus, he envisions a cosmopolitan and perhaps utopian place: “Who would Constantinople not welcome?”¹⁰⁶ Not only does he put blind faith in the Bosphorus’ capacity to self-regulate acidity levels with strong currents, but his use of the city’s Greek name from the Byzantine era suggests the anachronicity of his historical reference point. Assuming David has departed from Athens and traveled across the Aegean Sea, Hamid Rıza’s first impulse is to claim the city as “ancient Ottoman lands” (*kadim Osmanlı toprağı*) and to reassert its modern Turkish name, using the royal “we” to establish authority.¹⁰⁷ This is the only point in the narrative where Yalvaç alludes to the unspecified ethnic heritage of Valentine and her mother İzabel whose names suggest non-Muslim origins. Hamid Rıza, who reflects a more traditional and nationalistic view, quickly brushes over the question of ethnic and cultural difference by saying, “It is difficult to tell who is who anymore. What is important is that we enjoy and protect

diversity now.”¹⁰⁸ I suggest that this statement be read ironically and not as indicative of the text’s naïve idealization of a utopian cosmopolitanism that erases difference. The nationalistic impulses of both sides, which feed into the native versus alien dichotomy, are quickly dissolved in David’s utopian vision of the city: “Be it Istanbul or Constantinople, the power of this city will suffice to let us all live. Together!”¹⁰⁹ Yet, David’s idealized vision of the city’s cosmopolitan future ultimately clashes with the ecological reality. As he finally accepts to leave the Bosphorus, Hamid Rıza warns him to beware of humans who could “destroy him, thinking he is a toxic weed,” once again illustrating that the promise of a multispecies cosmopolitanism is yet to be fulfilled.¹¹⁰ This exchange evokes a vision of a once cosmopolitan city whose diverse foundations are forgotten and eroded, while the details of this erosion, which underlies Turkish modernity, remain untold.

An Istanbul Legend and *Night* narrate climate change and extinction with references to histories of violence and displacement in the Middle East. Although the specifics of these histories remain unclear, their spectral persistence in allusions point to the inevitability of reckoning with persisting pasts while building futures. Perhaps underneath this spectrality, particularly of histories of ethnic violence, lies the desire to depict subaltern agencies as dwelling in what Gerald Vizenor has called “survivance” – “an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry.”¹¹¹ The Periyans, Adam, and the Children-with-Dogs are not heroes defined by trauma and victimhood; they are the co-creators of diverse and multispecies futures that move beyond earlier exclusionist visions of futures offered by ethnonationalisms. Although they are endowed with legendary qualities in the texts, they are not defined by the magical or the supernatural. Ultimately *An Istanbul Legend* and *Night* depict mundane heroes who do what they do for survival and solidarity in the everyday struggle for multispecies justice. Here the speculative legend offers something different from the science fictional imaginaries of technoscientific solutions or fantastic imaginaries of supernatural interventions. It reconfigures some of the most familiar figures and existent materialities of everyday life in new constellations of the present, giving rise to previously unsuspected solidarities between children and dogs, between humans and algae. The speculative legend invites the reader to relate differently to the possibilities immanent to the present and to explore the future in the now. As Ursula K. Heise argues, narratives of climate change and extinction do not merely address ecological concerns but also reflect “the stories that particular cultures tell about their own origins, history, modernization, and futures, as well as about their relation to a broader ‘humanity.’”¹¹² *An Istanbul Legend* and *Night* show that climate change, biodiversity loss, and extinction are culturally and politically charged issues that re-articulate questions of representation, alterity, justice, and futurity in the Middle East.

An Istanbul Legend and *Night* respond to the climate crisis and the increasing risk of mass extinctions with visions of multispecies solidarity and cofuturing. These future visions emerge in conversation not only with climate science but also with ancient myths, legends, and folk tales depicting temporal, spatial, ontological, and epistemological relations that are marginalized by dominant historical and mythological narratives such as the Anthropocene. The latent utopian impulses in legends serve as profoundly powerful sites of hope and futuring although they may be deceptive, as the reception of the Periyans by readers as an actual legend illustrates. Perhaps the Periyans have

now become a legend. This vibrant porosity between fact and fiction, text and world, speaks to the worldmaking power of speculative fiction which can rewrite extant myths, legends, and archetypes as well as engender new ones for future imaginaries. *Night's* Adam may dismiss legends as “made up” (*uydurmak*) stories and desperate attempts to “overcome fear” (*korkuyu yenmek*); yet, both texts animate the enduring power of the legend form to transmit memories of subaltern agencies to call people to action for building futures of multispecies justice.¹¹³ This preliminary outline of the speculative legend in Turkish climate fiction is an invitation to further explore, from a comparative perspective, CoFuturisms’ shared concerns with questions of compossible futures, localized activism, and multispecies cosmopolitics beyond established genre conventions.

Notes

1. Kemal, *Binbir Çiçekli Bahçe*, 164. All translations from Turkish are mine.
2. DeLoughrey, *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, 6. For an overview of the stratigraphic understanding of the Anthropocene, see Davies, *The Birth of the Anthropocene*.
3. For decolonial critiques of the Anthropocene, see Davis and Todd, “On the Importance of a Date;” Simpson, “The Anthropocene as Colonial Discourse;” and Whyte, “Indigenous Science (fiction).”
4. Schulz, “Decolonising the Anthropocene,” 54.
5. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 128.
6. Rothe, “Governing the End Times?” 146.
7. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 12.
8. Chattopadhyay, “Fictioning the Futures,” 9.
9. Chattopadhyay, “Manifestos of Futurism,” 8.
10. See Topal, “Order as a Chronotope,” on the chronopolitics of Ottoman modernization.
11. See Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*; Göknaar, “Ottoman Past and Turkish Future;” and Seyhan, “Writing the Future,” on literary modernity and conceptions of Turkish national futures. For a broader critique of the problematic of reading global modernisms through “Eurochronology,” see Dolcerocca, “Transnational Modernism.”
12. See for example Erdoğan, *Kurbağa Adası*; Kutlu and Tohumcu, *İstanbul 2099*; Alibey, *Karanlık Şafaklar*. For contemporary discussions on Turkish eco-fiction see, Gürses and Ertuna Howison, *Animals, Plants, and Landscapes*; and Oppermann and Akıllı, *Turkish Ecocriticism*.
13. For a comparison of Yaşar Kemal’s work to the Homeric epic, see Tharaud, “Yaşar Kemal, the Son of Homer.”
14. Chovenac, “Shifting Baselines;” Irzık, “Yaşar Kemal’s Island of Resistance.”
15. Tekin, “Sözünü Sakınmadan;” Parla, “Kadın Destanı Olur Mu?” 125. For further discussion on Tekin’s work, see Tabur, “Ends of Language in the Anthropocene,” chapter 4.
16. Yazıcıoğlu, *Shamanism in the Contemporary Novel*, 131–50.
17. Ayşegül Yalvaç is an environmental engineer who works in the field of water recycling systems. In addition to short stories in the science fiction and fantasy genres, she has also written many popular science articles on climate change and sustainability. Her short stories have been published on online platforms such as Bilimkurgu Kulübü (Science Fiction Club) and Kayıp Rıhtım (The Lost Jetty) which are particularly popular among speculative fiction fans in Turkey. *An Istanbul Legend* is Yalvaç’s first book.
18. Oya Baydar belongs to an older generation of leftist writers. She was trained as a sociologist and worked as an assistant at Ankara Hacettepe University until she got arrested during the 1971 military coup due to her socialist activism. She spent 12 years in Germany following the 1980 military coup and returned to Turkey in 1992. A prolific and renowned author, Baydar has written many novels and a short story collection. In her works, Baydar often reckons with Turkish political history and engages closely with contemporary social

issues. Although many of her works are written in a realist style, Baydar has also produced works with speculative and dystopian elements such as *Çöplüğün Generali* (2009; The General of the Garbage Dump) and *Night of the Children-with-Dogs*.

19. Neither text has been translated into English. All translations are mine.
20. Holgate, *Climate and Crisis*; Oziewicz et al., *Fantasy and Myth*.
21. Sakaoglu, *Efsane Araştırmaları*, 7–24.
22. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2.
23. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 5.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2.
27. Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman*, 520, 674.
28. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 6.
29. Haraway, “Staying with the Trouble.” See also Celermajer et al., “Multispecies Justice.”
30. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 60.
31. Ibid.
32. See Arsel and Adaman, *Environmentalism in Turkey*.
33. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 24.
34. The Solarpunk Community, “Solarpunk Manifesto.”
35. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 7.
36. Ibid.
37. Desai and Smith, “Kinship Across Species;” Narayan, “Colonialism and its Others;” Whyte, “Ethics of Caring.”
38. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 58.
39. Frelik, “On Not Calling a Spade.”
40. Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, 72
41. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 8.
42. Ibid., 26.
43. Ibid., 23.
44. Ibid.
45. Montserrat et al., “Olivine Dissolution.”
46. Chattopadhyay, “On the Mythologerm,” 437, 438.
47. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 595–7.
48. Yerasimos, *Türk Metinlerinde Konstantiniye*; Öztürkmen, “From Constantinople to Istanbul,” 278–80.
49. Sakaoglu, *Anadolu-Türk Efsanelerinde Taş*.
50. Yalvaç, interview by Hakan Birol.
51. Ibid.
52. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2.
53. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 55.
54. Ibid., 36.
55. Ibid., 55.
56. See Omar, *Prophet al-Khidr*, particularly Chapter 4.
57. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 71, 125.
58. Ibid., 34.
59. Ibid., 55.
60. Ibid., 131.
61. Ibid., 131.
62. Ibid., 130.
63. Ibid., 129.
64. Ibid., 131.
65. Ibid., 133.
66. Ibid., 132.
67. Ibid., 131.

68. Ibid., 134.
69. Ibid., 81–2.
70. Ibid., 85.
71. Ibid., 54.
72. Ibid. 104.
73. Ibid., 58.
74. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 130.
75. Ibid., 36.
76. Shyrock, *Deep History*, 3–15. The concept of deep history expands the spatial and temporal scope of what is considered history, challenging the notion that the availability of written records marks a transition from prehistory into history.
77. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 1–9.
78. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 105.
79. Ibid., 186.
80. Ibid., 189.
81. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 24.
82. Ibid., 20
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., 99.
85. Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 23–54.
86. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 36.
87. Ibid., 55.
88. Ibid., 74.
89. Ibid., 58.
90. Ibid., 59.
91. Edelman, *No Future*, 14.
92. Yusoff, “Aesthetics of Loss,” 582.
93. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 28.
94. Ergin, “Ecodystopia and Climate Temporality.”
95. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 178.
96. Ibid., 268.
97. Ibid., 269.
98. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End*, 11–26.
99. Van Dooren et al., “Multispecies Studies,” 6.
100. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 106.
101. Watson, “Cosmopolitics and the Subaltern.”
102. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 109.
103. Ibid., 180.
104. Ibid., 186.
105. Yalvaç, *Bir İstanbul Efsanesi*, 70.
106. Ibid., 69.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid., 70.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid., 71.
111. Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance,” 11.
112. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 237.
113. Baydar, *Köpekli Çocuklar Gecesi*, 35, 34.

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ORCID

Merve Tabur  <http://orcid.org/0009-0003-2687-8276>

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