
Conspiracy's Howl: Valley of the Wolves and the Conspiracy Genre in Turkey

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Résumé

The immensely popular *Valley of the Wolves* franchise, running for 11 years and encompassing 3 TV series and 4 feature films thus far, has been lauded by some for its "exposure" of Turkish "reality" while being panned by others for its contribution to ethnic and political strife. Both sides of this argument tend to focus on *Valley's* engagement with conspiracy, but in very different ways. In a country marked by a past and present in which collusions between the state, media, big business, and organized crime are widely acknowledged, conspiracy thinking may be an important means for framing everyday life. This presentation focuses on competing discourses about *Valley*, taking into account understandings of conspiracy theory as a strategy for coping in a world where master narratives are increasingly scarce (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff 2003, Fenster 1999, Marcus ed. 1999, Song 2006, West and Sanders eds. 2003). Issues of genre (of both *Valley* and of conspiracy theory) and intertextuality are key to understanding how theories take on meaning and spread amongst various publics. Through a light examination of the *Valley* text, and a more thorough engagement with the discourses surrounding it, I note the abundance of anecdotal evidence attesting to the naiveté of Turkish viewers, but suggest that this is marked by considerable investment on the part of cultural intermediaries to portray the public as ignorant, and that this portrayal has a long history in Turkey. Ultimately, I conclude that the circulation of conspiracy through *Valley* must be read in part as a cynical response to Turkish socio-political life.

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