


Chapter 10

Colors, Places, and Games:


Reading the Metaphorical World of the Netflix Series “Squid Game”

Gözde Sunal

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9535-5714>


Istanbul Commerce University, Turkey

Gamze Nil Arkan

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6637-5329>

Beykent University, Turkey

Gül Gürsoy

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3136-1578>

Istanbul Commerce University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how Squid Game uses color, spatial design, and childhood games as visual metaphors to critique capitalist structures and power dynamics. The stark contrast between the green tracksuits of players and the pink-red uniforms of guards reflects rigid social hierarchies. Labyrinthine staircases and playful color palettes evoke disorientation and nostalgia, while intensifying the brutality of the games. Innocent childhood contests are transformed into violent spectacles, revealing the psychological toll of systemic inequality. Through visual analysis, the chapter highlights how the series blends aesthetic contradiction and narrative tension to expose moral compromises in contemporary society. It situates Squid Game within broader debates on surveillance, social stratification, and the ethics of competition.

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INTRODUCTION

In twenty-first-century late capitalist societies, individuals are subjected not only to the pressures of economic precarity but also to the pervasive influence of invisible surveillance mechanisms and the hegemonic operations of mediatized representation. Neoliberalism has instituted a sociopolitical order in which perpetual competition is normalized, solidarity is delegitimized, and personal failure is recoded as individual deficiency (Brown, 2015, pp. 9–10). Among the most insidious instruments of this regime is the culture of spectacle, which aestheticizes and legitimizes violence while rendering it consumable. Contemporary media functions as a producer of commodified visual regimes that capitalize on suffering and survival, thereby transforming spectacle into a site wherein the neoliberal system is both reproduced and normalized (Debord, 1994; Foucault, 1977).

In this context, the 2021 Netflix series *Squid Game* can be interpreted not merely as a survival narrative, but as a striking allegory of neoliberal order, class-based inequalities, and the structure of the surveillance society. The fictional universe in which indebted individuals are compelled to engage in deadly competition exposes both the desperation of those marginalized by the system and the mechanisms through which human life is commodified. The games depicted in the series evolve into experiments wherein individuals are tested not only physically, but also morally and psychologically—transforming violence into both a method and a spectacle (Dolgun, 2008; Debord, 1994).

This study has approached the series *Squid Game* as a multilayered representation of neoliberal political economy, class-based violence, and the culture of surveillance. The series interrogates not only the competitive order in which individuals are positioned against one another but also the ways in which this violence is both spectatorship and internalized. In this regard, *Squid Game* serves as a compelling narrative that enables an analysis of contemporary capitalism's domination over the individual through the lenses of the aesthetics of spectatorship and body politics (Foucault, 1977).

This chapter aims to explore *Squid Game* as a critical cultural text that unveils the visual and narrative strategies through which late capitalist ideologies are disseminated and normalized. By examining the series through the lenses of surveillance society, visual culture, and neoliberal subject formation, the study seeks to demonstrate how symbolic imagery, spatial design, and aestheticized violence contribute to the internalization of systemic oppression. In doing so, the chapter not only investigates how media representations function as ideological apparatuses but also how they shape spectatorship, agency, and ethical boundaries in contemporary societies. The purpose is to critically engage with the intersection of visual codes, class metaphors, and mechanisms of control in order to reveal the latent discursive

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