



The Poverty of Television

The Mediation of Suffering in Class-Divided Philippines

Jonathan Corpus Ong

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The first book to take an ethnographic approach in the study of distant suffering and the media

'Ong's bottom-up approach [...] opens new horizons for understanding the role(s) of the media in facilitating moral and social processes. These important insights make a significant and compelling contribution to the field.' —Tal Morse, *International Journal of Communication*

"The Poverty of Television" is an important book that will be cited for years to come. Not only is this the first ethnographic study on mediated suffering in the global South, but it is also written with great intellectual lucidity and a profound sense of care and responsibility for those it talks about.' —Lilie Chouliaraki, *London School of Economics and Political Science*

'This thoughtful and rigorous examination of lay moralities among Filipinos watching images of the poor in their own country not only de-Westernizes the notion of "media witnessing", but also calls on media studies writ large to actually talk to the presumed victims of televised representations.' —Vicki Mayer, *Tulane University*

'This is the first scholarly book on Philippine television. Ong goes to the core of the issue – the cultural politics of news and entertainment, the lifeline of poverty of and in Philippine television. Ethnographic and political economic, the morality of media and development are critically engaged in this book.' —Roland B. Tolentino, *University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication*

'This is a profound, path-breaking, and brave study of the portrayal of poverty and suffering in television. Marshalling solid ethnographic data, it shows how the class position of television audiences inflects their moral stance vis-à-vis mediated suffering. Ong compels readers in the Philippines and beyond to reflect on their own moral frame regarding this haunting, if seldom confronted, question.' —Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr, *Ateneo de Manila University*

Based on a 20-month ethnographic study of television and audiences in class-divided Philippines, this is the first book to take a bottom-up approach in considering how people respond to images and narratives of suffering and poverty on television. The book aims to contribute to the broader project of de-Westernizing media studies and explore the tension between ethical prescription and anthropological description in the social sciences and humanities.

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