decades has redirected attention on the war and early colonialism and shown just how racially “visible” Filipinos were during that moment. Colonial amnesia was further abetted by the representational absence of this historical drama in U.S. literature of repute. Nick Joaquin notes that “the romance of the early American soldiers, teachers, and missionaries in the Philippines has been ignored by American literature” and that the “‘Empire Days,’ a theme worthy of a Kipling or a Maugham, have become merely an ironic footnote to history.” Miller speculates that this “literary lacuna is an unconscious means of forgetting an unpleasant history.” The implications of this lacuna for postcolonial literary studies cannot be overstated. Wondering why there is a “dearth of critical attention on the Philippine colonial experience as literary theme,” Jaime An Lim offers an astonishing answer in his 1993 monograph Literature and Politics: “One likely explanation . . . is the fact that no significant Western writer has appropriated that theme in an important work. No colonial novelist, no Spanish, American, or even Japanese writer of international stature has dealt with the issue of Philippine colonial experience.” Lim’s observation implies that critics of colonial literary discourse have been solely interested in those geopolitical areas first represented by renowned Western or colonial writers, and only subsequently by “native” or postcolonial writers. The usual procedure of approaching “postcolonial literature as a critique of Western tradition involving the rewriting of specific works (The Tempest and Heart of Darkness, for instance) thus proves problematic in this context since there exist no U.S. analogues to Shakespeare or Conrad. Without an equivalent to The Tempest or Heart of Darkness, how are we to determine what colonial images, literary strategies, and political effects Philippine literature is endeavoring to revise or remake if understood as “postcolonial”? What is more, like their counterparts in the Philippines, Filipinos in the United States have not been portrayed in U.S. literature of “stature” either. As Elaine H. Kim writes, “There had been Filipino characters in the writings of Peter B. Kyne, Rupert Hughes, William Saroyan, and John Fante, although they were never as grotesquely omnipresent in American culture as Chinese and Japanese caricatures had been.”

To the extent that identity politics typically operates by locating and contesting the material and ideological means through which a “minority” group is subordinated and denigrated, one might posit that “invisibility” names the negativity that currently afflicts Filipinos in the United States. Although Filipinos were not (and have not been) depicted widely