Any piece of literary work with a peculiar form invites a question why it has to be written in this particular way. In the case of epistolary novels with their explicit formulas of letters that have been utilized since the incipient stage of the genre, the significance of the form has been argued in terms of the genre’s various causes or momentums. But the form may become especially intriguing when it is taken up as the structural principle of the novel on the decline of its tradition and at the cutting edge of the modern literature. The question to be asked would be: which particular functions of letters are needed “now” in making the novel up as it is. It is often the case, however, that the form is too easily taken for granted or that the intrinsic relation between the form and contemporary issues is overlooked.

It is well-grounded and apt to discuss epistolarity of Ana Castillo’s *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986) in terms of the feminist cause. The novel is written by a woman author, features a woman narrator/letter-writer, consists of letters addressed to her woman friend, and deals with various women issues. In the form where women have traditionally found a place to express their voices, a strong, subjective, female voice is no doubt prevalent and sisterly relationship seems to be widely developed. These feminist aspects may seem beyond dispute, but they cannot escape scrutiny. The epistolary form must also be observed in the contemporary context. There is another, prominent use of the form that looks more modern, promoted by the author herself. It is to allow the letters in the novel to be shuffled and to invite readers to read them in several different ways in order and combination. This formalistic and modernistic phase of the letter form proves that Castillo is fascinated by the freedom of
form or the “divisibility of the letter,” by the fact that not only a piece of the letter is divisible but letters in a bundle are also able to be shuffled and rearranged. The fragmental and flexible text with its segments intermixable emphasizes the novel’s fluid and dynamic structure and the theme of travelling. This trick definitely places Castillo, a Mexican-American writer, not only in the postmodern literary scene, but also in the contemporary Latin-American literature. Yet her Mexican-Americanness problematizes, politically and historically, the sense of freedom and destabilization aroused by the divisibility of the letter. Then comes up the idea of “border,” the site of duality and ambivalence, of fluidity and crossing, and another question should be asked in regard with the relation between the border and the letter. How is epistololarity of this novel engaged in the issues of migration?

It is true that The Mixquiahuala Letters presents itself as an exemplary case for the border issue, but the problem is that it has not been really explained why and how the epistolary form could contribute to the meanings of the border, contact, and crossing. In this novel, not only does the narrator/heroine of the novel repeatedly travel across the US-Mexican border, but the history and social situation of the Chicano/a people involves migration and evacuation. The most significant feature of the epistolary form for this novel is, then, that letters here epitomize these moves, since the letter entails the concept of movement, travel, or migration. It must be noted that migration can also go beyond a certain ethnic group, or become internal. In this transnational world, migration and diaspority are becoming the basic conditions of humans today. The letter is a very contemporary form.

Not all essays on The Mixquiahuala Letters are concerned with the form itself. There are some that are interested in reading in the novel the female epistolary tradition. Others deal with the issues of race or postcolonialism, since they see Castillo typically embodying the post-modern ethnicity, but they hardly question how letters work on those issues. Even mere allusions to an epistolary form are not many. Discussing eroticism of the novel, Norma
Alarcón argues that “the letter form” is conventionally similar to the lyric in revealing “the intimate events in the life of the speaker, combined with the speaker’s emotional response to them” (Alarcón 14 italic original), endorsing the sisterly relation of the addresser and the addressee. On suggesting the subjective ethnography, Alvina E. Quintana says that “Castillo uses the epistolary form as a vehicle, enabling her to move freely from one issue to another,” and that “it is the epistolary form which gives her flexibility to describe the differences between the way women are viewed in the United States and Mexico” (Quintana 81). Quintana may be speaking of the change of the scenes by fragmentary letters, but, though referring to “a vehicle,” she does not mention the letter’s intrinsic mobility. Direct comments about the functions of the form are few. Fatima Mujcinovic refers to its feminism effect: “the epistolary form of the novel allows the female subject to be the central consciousness in the textual narration and the individual self-evolvement, connecting the discursive agency with the self-defined subjectivity” (Mujcinovic 5) Tanya Long Bennett suggests Castillo manipulates the convention, and, pointing to the fragmentariness of the form, remarks about the heroine that “the epistolary form allows Teresa to be all the fragments that make up her self” (Bennett). Astrid M. Fellner finds epistolary narratives dramatic and performative (Fellner 97).

What I mean by the epistolary form is a form in which epistolarity functions significantly. It may look too formal, but it nevertheless has much to do with the meaning of the novel in which mobility and crossing are at stake. If the ethnographical significance of the letter that Quintana might have suggested could be developed, it would be that the letter automatically involves the comparison of differences between here and there, self and other, by its mobility, by its being ever displaced. In the case of this novel, travels to Mexico are recollected at home, and yet it is also imagined as if the letters that convey the recollection were sent from Mexico. The exchanges between the temporally and spatially diverse scenes of writing and the various destinations
of the letters create intersections of views and observations. This is made possible mainly by fragmentariness and mobility of the letter. There are other significant aspects of letters that function to highlight and problematize the modern issues. In its refashioning of the old tradition of the epistolary novel, *The Mixquiahuala Letters* demonstrates how the letter, as a form and a concept, serves not only to the manifest feminist issues but also to the immediate cultural needs today. In other words, we can see that, in order to present these contemporary issues, this novel elaborates the most intricate way of handling the diverse functions and features of the letter.

(1) Pronouns

The close relation between the epistolary form and the women’s voice goes back into history. The letter had been a significant literary form in poetry, in the real letters of notable people, or even in romances or short narratives long before the rise of the novel. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when those renowned “women’s letters” as *The Portuguese Letters* or the letters by Madam de Sevigne were published, the literary significance of the epistolary form became observable. But it is with the birth of the realistic narrative fiction in the rising British middle class society that the letter found the genre in which epistolarity had the crucial significance not only as a form of narration but also for developing the theme of the novel and delving into the consciousness of characters. Then the relation between women and letters entered a new phase.

Virtually with Samuel Richardson who used the letters as one of the first forms of the genre, everyday feelings and intimate human relations, previously neglected as themes of literature, became recognized as the center of interest. He might have adopted the letter form because he learned it from his profession of letter-writer, or because of those entertainment works of epistolary forms. But he knew well that the form was most appropriate to allow
a narrative to depict the inner world of an individual as well as the reality of a society. He may have picked up a female letter-writer as a protagonist only because he knew that the private letter writing was supposed to be a mainly domestic, female job. But, whether he was aware of it or not, it would eventually create a new reading market. Women readers sympathized with women letter-writers and were excited by the stories of friendship and separation, love and seduction. But that was not all. Epistolary novels and letter-writing heroines led to the birth of the women authors who would feature (letter-) writing women.

Not all epistolary novels are written or “narrated” by women, in and out, but it is true that in the works of this form stand out women’s voices. The feminist critics have considered letters as one of the most significant literary devices, epistolary novels as one of the most successful genres, for women. For it is epistolary novels that enabled women to come forward in the literary world. In early days, the letter was the only text that women usually excluded from writing were allowed to produce. There existed a strong tradition of public or official letters, but letters could also function as very private and domestic measures of communication. As mentioned above, the eighteenth century middle class women discovered a new literary genre of the novel, in particular the epistolary form, as a powerful means of expressing themselves, as heroines and/or narrators and/or writers. The genre not only dug up a new literary market for the increasing number of women who were confined at home yet becoming enlightened and leisured. It also generated a new kind of authors who started to voice their own female issues.

Numerous novels of this form have been written since, of the women, by the women, for the women. Even today, epistolary novels if any remain written according mostly to this formula. That seems to be the case with The Mixquiahuala Letters. It is a matter of course that the work is received as a distinctively feminine text and that, consequently, the main purpose of its epistolary form is deemed as the feminist cause. The novel shows one of the
classical designs of the woman’s narrative: a woman addressing letters to another woman. They seem to be in a close friendship.

Our first letters were addressed and signed with the greatest affirmation of allegiance in good faith
passion bound
by uterine comprehension. In sisterhood. In solidarity. A strong embrace. (Castillo 24)

The narrative is not of seduction or separation but mostly deals with their friendship, poignant love affairs of each, and how they learn from their experiences and mature. It may not be surprising that this postmodern epistolary work, unlike many of old-time counterparts, has a heroine/narrator who is not totally oppressed by or obedient to the male powers but often confronting and subverting them. Instead the most prominent feature of the novel seems to be a strong and active sisterly relation between the two women.

The letters are exclusively written by Teresa, a poet and writer, to her close friend Alicia, an artist. What Teresa mostly reports in the disordered miscellany of letters are recollections of the past travels in Mexico with Alicia and the occasions of the encounter with her in the States. Several poems are inserted, but Alicia is one and the only addressee of the letters, the interlocutor in whom the heroin/narrator is to confide. This closed connection may present a typical picture of the women’s bond. But in fact their epistolary relation is more complicated. In the randomly scattered collection of letters, crossing the distance of space and time, the addressee-addresser, confessor/confidant relation is entangled in a labyrinth.

The sisterliness is apparently too much emphasized in the reception of this novel. No doubt an addressee is a vital agency of the letter for activating correspondence, but in this novel the role of the addressee is far more complicated. It is often the case that an addressee rules the game, and, when an
addressee is someone close enough for an addresser to confide secrets, there emerges the space of confidentiality that drives the narrative. The addressee, whether present or not in the text, functions to enable or encourage the addresser to tell a story or to express his/her feelings, and, if present, by responding to the addresser, influences the addresser and directs/changes the course of the story.

The role of the friend who is to be confided a secret of a heroine/writer is called “confidant(e). The significance of confidence and a confidant is extensively discussed in Janet Gurkin Altman’s *Epistolarity* as a formal, functional factor of narrative development. It is a confidant who receives and bares the secret of the confessor. It is, therefore, through a confidant that the narrative develops. But it is also recognized that “[t]he confidant who inspires, wins, or loses trust is an essential figure in epistolary literature, called into existence by the need of every letter writer to have a ‘friendly bosom’ into which he can ‘disburthen his cares,’ as Smollett’s Lydia Melford so often expresses it to her friend Laetitia Willis in *Humphry Clinker*” (Altman 50).

In fact, in spite of Altman’s use of male pronouns, it is obvious that, as in her examples, an intimate space of trust and secret formed by a confessor and a confidant suits more to women. That is why the relation has played a significant role in the woman-related epistolary novels, and the feminist interpretation of these novels. One of the aspects to which the feminist criticism of epistolary novels by women pays special attention is that the addresser-addressee/confessor-confidant relation, the relation between the woman letter-writer and her woman friend, could represent the author’s relation to the readers. The relation is crucial to form the intimate space that is to be appreciated as the ground of solidarity between women against the adverse, patriarchal system of a society.

It is in terms of this concept of sisterly solidarity that *Mixquiahuala* has been discussed. However, the novel deviates from the format of confidence. It is true that the fundamental epistolary roles of Teresa and Alicia are those of
the letter writer and the addressee. The premise is that Alicia exists to receive and respond (if not directly) to Teresa’s words and make a narrative possible. Teresa could confess to Alicia the confidante. But here the epistolary relation between the two does not really come up to the confessor-confidant one. What is characteristic of Alicia is that she develops a narrative less as its receiver than as the actant in it. It is true that Alicia functions as a confidant to some extent in sharing or eliciting Teresa’s “confession” or writing. But Alicia does not function so as to “disburden” Teresa’s “cares” or to deepen their sisterly relation by complementing the other. Among the various functions of the confidant suggested by Altman, Alicia’s is categorized as “passive,” her being “absent,” serving as a “sounding board to the [heroine’s] sentiments” (Altman 51). Alicia may look “active” in that she witnesses some of events or secrets and her “voice is heard within the [heroine’s] letters through quotation or paraphrase” (Altman 51), but in fact she is less active as confidante than as actant. Alicia is too deeply involved in what Teresa narrates, or, in other words, Teresa’s narrative is almost exclusively devoted to the description of Alicia. Rather than a witness, Alicia is the leading actor of the play.

Even though sharing the experience, and having her words quoted, Alicia does not respond to Teresa’s “confession” through these words. Alicia is only speaking as a protagonist of Teresa’s narrative. Alicia’s epistolary involvement as a confidant in Teresa’s thoughts and actions is not detected in the text. There is evidence that Alicia does write to Teresa, though apparently disproportionately. Teresa writes, “I received only one letter for the three sent last year” (129). Not one citation of Alicia’s response or reply is found in or out of Teresa’s text, or no trace of Alicia’s words in her letters having affected in any way Teresa’s argument or writing.

That the confessor-confidant relation is not effective here and the letters of the novel do not offer a traditional site of women’s chat does not mean that there is no sisterly bond between these women. It only means that the relation of the women correspondents in this novel is not really as it looks. The main
structure of the novel is the subjective voice of the letter devoted to “the other.” In the intimate epistolary space a woman is writing to the other woman not about her own self but almost entirely about the other. Teresa is not really writing “to” Alicia, but virtually writing “of” Alicia, explicating what Alicia did and said, though it is in the way that the writer digests and absorbs her friend’s existence and that the latter’s words are less “quoted” than “paraphrased,” or rather interpreted, by the writer. As will be analyzed later, the most intriguing aspect of these letters is that one bothers to tell the stories of what a certain person did or said to the very same person. Instead of confidentiality, there is disclosure, not trust but doubt. This female epistolary space is not so much secretive, soothing or narcissistic, as critical, provocative, and subversive.

This is only made possible by the distinct subjective voice of the letter. It is no doubt that Mixquiahuala focuses upon the issues of women’s desire and will of self-realization that are to be expressed through a woman’s subjective voice. Teresa’s subjectivity as a writer in this novel is indisputable. But here, too, the novel defies what the feminist formulas may expect, and the heroine’s subjectivity is represented in linguistically distorted manners. First, it is not as “I” but as the lower case “i” that Teresa refers to herself in the letters. Second, throughout the text “you” is a more predominant grammatical “subject” than “i.” “On the 15th you arrive in L.A. i’ll pick you up at the air port...” (17 emphasis mine).

Belittling “I” looks an unduly submissive move, particularly for a feminist novel aiming a stronger self-expression, and it has been interpreted in a roundabout way either self-sarcastically as symbolizing the reality of the diminished social status of women, or strategically as stressing on the women’s non-nonsense resistance to the norm of the society. It would be more pertinent, however, to read the epistolary anomaly in terms of the rhetoric of letter-writing, or of the autobiographical voice in general. It is supposed that the first person subject dominates any autobiographical voice, but it does not mean that
this grammatical subject is absolutely indispensable. The text of letters, in particular, is a liberal, democratic narrative space where not only psychology of the subject but also the description of the objective world or even the exposition of the other party could be equally registered. The prominence of the first person subject is not always necessary. It may be paradoxical and tricky to efface the first person subject in the field originated by that person, but in so doing it in a sense demonstrates a right of “the author” to do so, not in any way authoritatively, but just functionally. The text is, after all, within the control of the narrator/writer, but the power could be swayed in reverse. Moreover, literally belittling the speaking subject “I” by lowering the case of the letter is graphically effective to set off “you” as the subject of the narrative. The feat could represent both the narrator’s confidence in her power and her submission and love to the other. Since this device is graphical as well as grammatical, it is literal, epistolary, and concerned with the materiality of writing.

It is not surprising that a letter-writer addresses exclusively to “you,” but in this novel the second-person pronoun to which Teresa frequently refers seems to carry out a peculiar function. Here “you” is as much subjective as objective and vocative, since the writer is largely talking about what “you” did, though of course she also talks of “you” and to “you.” As we have seen above, what makes this simple addresser-addressee relation odd is that the writer is mostly telling a story of what “you” did or what happened to “you” to nobody but “you.” In reality, letters usually omit the information the other party already has. Seemingly unnecessary accounts in fiction may be needed partly because the letters in the epistolary novels, unlike those in reality, have to obey the rules of the fiction to describe even what the addressee knows only for the sake of the readers to whom the news is new. Still what we witness is an awkward situation in which the addressee is made to hear about herself, to learn from the other what she did.

Teresa claims that she is just recalling her and Alicia’s past experiences
for the sake of both of them, that she is just attempting “a record.”

i doubt if what i’m going to recall for both our sakes in the following pages will coincide one hundred per cent with your recollections, but as you make use of my determination to attempt a record of some sort, to stir your memory, try not to look for flaws or inaccuracies. (53)

So what she actually does is mostly a simple re-registration of what the other did or said in the past.

The man you had been dancing with came over and said something to you and you got up to resume your dance. Instead of keeping up with the fast-paced rhythm he insisted on slow dancing, drawing you near his sweaty face and stale breath, to kiss your hair, whisper something inaudible in your ear. You pulled away, but kept dancing. (79)

To “you,” this must be nothing but the repetition of what “you” know well. Reiteration may be permitted because of the convention, an assumption that the information given through the letters in the novel is directed less to the addressee than to the readers of the novel. Still, the account, essentially a reminder, repetitious and redundant, must bore the addressee. Or even sometimes the addressee, too. As a reviewer of the novels says, “What is not clear is why anyone would write such elaborate letters simply to retell, without analysis, what the recipient already knows” (qtd. in Torres).

It is easy to understand, in terms of the sisterly relation, that this is a round about way of declaring “amour” to the other, that letters are very intimate love letters. But there is something obsessive and overbearing in this use of “you.” You could detect even self-centeredness on the reverse side of apparent obsession to the other. This is likely all the more because of the paradoxical function of the linguistic subject “you.” It is even suspected that
here the epistolary form might have been adopted for the very reason of invoking “you”; it is necessitated because “you” is the very subject of the narrative, both grammatically and thematically. In other words, one of the reasons for the epistolary form is to facilitate the composition of an idiosyncratic “you” novel.

The narration in the form of addressing to the other is not so common in ordinary, non-epistolary novels, as the omniscient third person narration or the first person narration. In the second person narrative, although the narrator is actually the first person, he/she (or “I”) less projects her role as the subject of the sentence than focuses on presenting what “you” did or said. This is an experiment of narration to utilize the logical gap between the subject and the speaker of the sentence and emphasize their tense relation. *La modification* (*The Second Thoughts, or Change of Heart*) (1957) by Michel Butor is one of the “classical” romans-nouveaux experiments exclusively devoted to this particular grammatical subject. “You” in this novel is usually understood to refer to the main character, the other to the narrator. But it is also possible to read the second person subject as the narrator her/himself. By referring to “you” instead of “I,” the narrator looks critically at her/himself at a distance, or the reader may feel a strange intimacy as if she/he is being addressed. The more recent work, Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984), is of this type. When a narrator says, “You see yourself as the kind of guy who appreciates a quiet night at home with a good book” (36), in fact the narrator sees himself seeing himself. In Jhumpa Lahiri’s short story “Hema and Kaushik” in *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), it is “I,” or Hema, who sees “you,” or Kaushik: “I had seen you before...” (xx). Though the main “subject” of her story is “you,” or Kaushik, the linguistic “subject” “I” is visible. It is revealed later that Hema is actually addressing to the dead. None of these novels is epistolary.

In letters, addressing is categorical and the use of “you” is normal. On the other hand, it is quite probable that “you” is situated as the topic of the letter.
The Mixquiahuala Letters and the Meaning of Epistolarity

In Mixquiahuala, Alicia functions less as the addressee or the receiver of the letter, as the topic of the narrative. And yet in the epistolary form the rights of “I,” the narrator, override “you” as the topic. “You,” or Alicia, is a reason or, an alibi, for Teresa’s letter writing. Or it is possible to assume that the whole epistolary system is configurated in order to institute the second person “you.” Teresa writes letters to Alicia so that she can write “about” Alicia. The basic epistolary frame of her writing “to” Alicia is maintained only because she can write about “you.” It must be noted here that it is not about “her,” the third person, that the writer wants to tell, but about “you,” or “the other” who is not entirely other.

Who “you” really is, who Alicia is to the narrator/writer, or why the person is so much elaborated by the latter, is another question. The intimate and intricate relation between “i” and you, and the highly regulated suppression of the speaking/writing subject, indicate another strategy of the narrator. Compare these examples:

You told me once, we were on a palm strewn beach in Puerto Rico, i believe, (i recall the gold-tooth peddlers and the old men weaving pajas) that you were taken to Spain when you were a small girl. (31)

You wouldn’t have to think of Rodney, your boyfriend from Harlem. Rodney, always down or high on something, who never kept an appointment on time, remembered to call or told the truth unless it was to his advantage.

So your passion poured itself into watercolors, pale and removed like the memories of a few luscious weeks in Acapulco, a brown-skinned man who’d sung lullabys in a native dialect and told folktales of his righteous ancestors. It would’ve all been relegated to your powerful dreamworld had it not been for one letter. (34)
The first example is presented as an ordinary indirect speech, in which the roles of the subject and the object are defined and differentiated, while the second example has no trace of the speaking subject. In the second, which is narrated from the point of view of “you,” not only Alicia’s action and the features of her boyfriends are described, but even her inner feelings are intimated by such words as “think,” “passion poured itself,” and “dreamworld.” In an occasion like this, it is as if the suppressed subject is identifying herself with the other, speaking as the other.

The voice of the letter-writer is intrinsically autobiographical: it is “I” who is speaking, and of whom the narrator is speaking. In the epistolary form, “I,” the writer of the letter, is dominant, no matter how it is hidden, no matter what linguistic subject is used. Even “you” could readily be “I.” As the addressee “you” is an alibi of the epistolary form, so the narrative subject “you” is the camouflage of the autobiographical voice.

It must be recognized, however, that this quaint way of constructing “autobiographical” voice in this novel is designed so that Teresa’s voice would not sound too loud. Not only the concealment of the self under the cover of “you” or the use of the small case “i,” but also the deliberate fragmentation of the text serves for the “suppression” of the strong autobiographical posture. Moreover, it does not in any way mean that Alicia is an imaginary character. There are many letters that account the joint travel experiences of Teresa and Alicia. In those cases, and in the cases depicting the episodes solely about Alicia, Alicia is an important partner and the center of focus, the point of reference and comparison to Teresa. It is no doubt that Teresa admires her, or loves her. And yet, the subtly and almost painstakingly elaborated use of epistolary form and devices imply that Teresa may be writing about herself, to herself, after all. Referring to the image of mirror in the novel, Ivonne Yarbro-Bejarano remarks about the two women, “In the other each sees the reflection of her own need and dependence from which she must avert her gaze” (67). This is of course more relevant to the narrator Teresa. It might be even a way
of “using the letter as a pretext for the ‘talking cure’ or the reconciliation of a schizoid identity” as Erlinda Gonzales-Berry suggests.

Teresa is invariably present, less as a by-stander than as the narrator/writer, when Alicia and what she did are the center of the episode.⁶ In Letter 18 Teresa recollects an incident at the ruins in Mexico, when Alicia approached a young man who looked like a painter like her, but without success. Teresa tries to divert her friend from disappointment, saying, “men were tiring me.” But Alicia is not consoled:

You refused to have your shield penetrated. You steamed your face over the bathroom basin...

i confronted it. What is it? Did you actually care about that guy? You didn’t even know him! He’s just some poor jerk with not much to offer! He can’t even paint!

i bit my tongue. You gave him that fine watercolor of the ruins in exchange for a work that never materialized that day...

You couldn’t bring yourself to look at me, who stood defiantly. Then, lifting your face up to the dull mirror, “You...Just...don’t...understand...Do...you?”

No! i lied. (63-4)

In this confusion of speech and narration typical to the text, “you” the addressee of the letter, “you” in Teresa’s speech, and whom Alicia calls “you” are all mixed up together and then converge in the small case “i,” Teresa, who understands all. This episode is preceded by another scene that sarcastically depicts Alicia’s boasting herself to attract regional men. Teresa ruminates how she was both amused and perplexed with Alicia’s folly. Before this conversation, Teresa describes herself reminiscing aloud about her and her husband. Now reenacting Alicia making a scene, Teresa is taking her friend’s infatuation as her own weakness. Almost the same incident is accounted in
Letter 23 with the exactly the same recapitulation: “you hated me too, i had lied and said i didn’t understand” (85). It is “i” who doesn’t understand.

Epistolarity of this novel has other dimensions than that of traditional women’s correspondence. The feminist agenda is in no way ignored, but the sisterly relation should not be overvalued. Teresa is the more independent persona. Her letters are addressed more to herself than to her woman friend. Or, in other words, they are addressed to a different self in her. The issue involved can be ethnic and cultural, because, the letters are concerned with two countries or two cultures. The narrative focuses on the trips to Mexico. Teresa is a Mestiza, living in the States. Even though with a partly Andalucian gypsy origin, with black hair, Alicia was raised in New York as an American by the parents “who fought in America for American ideals and the American way of life” (31). She has a pale face. To Teresa Alicia represents “Teresa’s ‘Anglo’ self” (Gonzales-Berry), or White Americanness that Teresa cannot perfectly make her own: “Alicia, why i hated white women and sometimes didn’t like you” (49). Alicia is Teresa’s own ethnic heterogeneity. It is true that “the search for subjective status in the form of narrative authority is a pressing issue for Chicano literature” (Torres) and the letter is most suitable form for it. But it is rather her complicate Chicana identity with the complicate border issues that Teresa tries to represent through Alicia, one of her split selves. The significant factor of epistolarity in Mixquiahuala is that it involves the idea of crossing, in other words, negotiation of difference as well as migration.

(2) **Divisibility**

The letter splits the writer, but it also splits itself. A foregrounded and manifest epistolary feature of the novel is divisibility. Fragmenting and shuffling the bundle of letters has been associated with postmodernism and Latin-American tradition. Isn’t it possible to account for this very formal feature in different terms?
Criticizing Jacques Lacan on the meaning of the letter, Jacques Derrida is right in protesting against indivisibility of a letter. It would be also significant, however, to note that there is divisibility of another level, that a bundle of letters is divisible, too. Letters usually exist in a bundle in reality, as a collection of sundry, received letters. An epistolary novel, consisting almost exclusively of a series of letters, is usually presented as a set of letters collected in the logical order. The convention rules that the bundle is never to be broken so that its order is not disturbed. If a consistent narrative is told through the letters, at least the chronological order will be maintained. But as it often happens in reality a bundle has the potential to be easily disintegrated.

In reality, it is difficult for a bundle of letters to remain as it is. A bundle of all the letters received may be possible, but the pack of all the letters received from one particular addressee in chronological order, or of the letters addressed to different addressees, is quite rare or impossible. Letters may exist in a bundle, but not in order. So the bundle ordered chronologically or whatever is often a sheer fictional or editorial achievement. It means that the “order” of fictional letters is left up to the author. In mixing up her letters, and suggesting various possible readings, Ana Castillo is assumed to have inherited the tradition of the Latin American novels, in which Julio Cortázar’s *Hopscotch* (1963) is a famous predecessor. But she may be taking a better advantage of an epistolary feature.

While *Hopscotch* suggests two different ways of reading, normal and hopscotch, though “normal” is not really normal, *Mixquiahuala* suggests three: “For the Conformist,” “For the Cynic,” and “For the Quixotic.” There is a letter from the author to the reader at the beginning: “Dear Reader: It is the author’s duty to alert the reader that this is not a book to be read in the usual sequence. All letters are numbered to aid in following any one of the author’s proposed options” (9). The author also proposes the reading of each chapter as a piece of short story. The letter includes the list of all three plans, and she ends it with her initials, A.C. A “normal” way of reading in “the usual
sequence,” reading the chapters from 1 to 40 in numerical order, is not recommended. It seems that both of these novels pretends to be reader-oriented and aimed at freedom of reading. But it is a kind of ironic freedom that in each suggested reading readers are supposed to miss some of the chapters in the book. In fact such tactics necessitate the control of the author, as Cortázar calls his plan the “Table of Instructions.” Castillo may also be authoritative in ruling this, but her wording, “the author’s duty,” sounds more humble. While *Hopscotch* requires one “abnormal” reading to follow the prescribed, fixed sequence indicated, *Mixquiahuala*, recommends three different, though fixed, readings. And there is a potential for more, freer readings for the latter. For its chapters are letters, and letters cannot really prescribe sequences.

The greatest feature of *Mixquiahuala* is that there is no text guaranteed to be normal. The text is instituted so that there is no authentic reading. Thrown into the chaos from the beginning, readers are technically free to construct any order as they like, because there is no single, right order. Furthermore, Teresa’s letters have no dates. It is apparent they are intended to come apart and escape documentation and sequences. It is uncertain how many readers actually follow the author’s direction. Probably most people would just read from the beginning to end. What is really suggested, however, is that there are always other ways to read the novel. Not only is it, as an epistolary novel, instituted to be “extravagant,” but, as a bundle of letters, it challenges the tyranny of rules and boundaries. The free movement of reading, and the narrative, could be generated because the relation between the letters, and between each letter and each reader, is intrinsically arbitrary and unbounded.

Cortázar’s trick is a typically postmodern feat, the demonstration of an open work, or a readerly text. It is not to deny in Castillo the heritage of both postmodern and Latin American fantasticism and conceit. In other words, *Mixquiahuala*’s is relevantly quixotic. But it must be noted that it is the letter and epistololarity that warrants quixotism. The letter is essentially the fragmentation of a narrative. Castillo also refers to the reading of each letter as
a separate piece. But once bundled, each letter acquires a kind of adhesive power with which it can be linked to each other or to the world, even without any documentation like dates or signatures, to build up a bigger narrative. The number of possible narratives is flexible. Flexibility of narrative, however, is not the only thing that the novel pursues. With the essential arbitrariness of letters in the relation to the world, Mixquiahuala represents a whole sense of unrestrainedness: freedom of writing, of soul, and of movement.

The freedom is not incongruous to the cause of feminism. Free imagination and unrestrained actions are the elements of quixotism. But it must be noted that divisibility or arbitrariness of the letter is only generated through a confined relation of correspondence. Even if “a letter does not always arrive at its destination” (Derrida 489), it has its destination. A letter is involved with the other and it intrinsically bears the tension between differences. It is its physical movement that warrants freedom in such tension. The move of the letter, or its will to reach, in other words, is crossing.

(3) Crossing the Border

The problems of contact and difference are materialized in a cartographical image of the “border,” a place where the complex relations between adjacent countries converge. This image, especially advocated by Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera (1987), has stimulated the academic world into what is called “border studies.” The concept of “Borderland(s)” epitomizes the territorial issue that created the history of oppressed status of Chicana/o people as well as the migration and border crossing of Mexicans to the United States today. Speculating upon the actual Chicano/a or Mestizo/a issues, Anzaldúa theorizes the border as a site of difference or ambiguity:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to
distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. (Anzaldúa 25)

She argues that it is particularly women, the third world women or lesbians, who can open a new perspective of the border issues beyond essentialism and masculinism. She calls the consciousness of the borderland “the new mestizo consciousness.”

Any theorization entails the conflict of the specific and the general. In the introduction to Border Women, Debra A. Castillo and Maria Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba summarize the concept of border in theoretical terms that Anzaldúa’s border “evokes the intellectual project of a discursively based alternative national culture while gesturing toward a more heterogeneous transnational space of identity formation” (3). The proportion of nationality to transnationality is at stake and, as Astrid M. Fellner suggests, there is a critique against “the appropriation of the border as mere metaphor” (Fellner 69 n3). Those against generalization fear that the importance of Mexican facts might be underrated if the border has become an abstract, theoretical space of “marginality” in a wider sense of the word. But the question is exactly what Anzaldúa makes an issue of. She says, “The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” (Anzaldúa 101). It is true that the socio-political meanings of borderland to the third world must not be slighted. But in this world of mobility and fluidity, the border has come to be deemed more as, if not a postmodern condition in general, a diasporic situation of all the migrating people of the transnational world, as read in Fellner’s wording of the subtitle of her essay: “The Concept of Borderlands as a Paradigm of Transnational Territoriality.”

It is obvious that The Mixquiahuala Letters is a typical mestiza text, written by a Mexican American writer, with a Mexican American heroine, and
dealing with the crossings of the US-Mexican border. Ana Castillo is aligned with Anzaldúa in the mestizo or Chicana context, as, Alicia Gaspar de Alba says that “Chicano, and especially Chicana, critics and writers including Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Ana Castillo have turned this negative image of the indigenous woman on its head, rewriting her story as that of an empowered woman” (Castillo and Córdoba 43). Castillo is one of the voices in “An Introduction in Ten Voices” to the third edition of Borderlands (2007):

“Anzaldúa addressed a condition which mestizos had been experiencing—born of two cultures, destined to navigate through various worlds at once—since the Conquest of Mexico” (Castillo, “As Relevant Today...”Anzaldúa). Castillo’s voice here, twenty years after the publication of her first novel, sounds more radically and politically Chicana: “It is important for us as Chicanas to remember that the social and political struggles of our sisters in the labor force and those who cross over without documents are still critical.” Her version of border consciousness is fully expressed in The Guardians (2007), which deals with the actual illegal crossing-over issues.

The local, or marginal aspect of the border consciousness is not overtly but tactically integrated in the transnational space in Mixquiahuala. The novel tackles the border issue, in particular the arbitrary nature of boundary. Characteristically, it does so in terms of the letter form. “The letter” has many dimensions other than a missive: a symbol of writing, literature, law, and writing in general. Most practically, there are the legal kind of “letters” that are essential to crossing the border. Also the letter-exchange is one of the lifelines for the migrants. These are significant roles of letters that could allegorize and overcome the border. It does not mean, however, that the letters in Mixquiahuala directly reflect the border crossing by the letters themselves actually crossing the US-Mexican border or bridging the people separated by the border. Rather it takes advantage of the figurative power of epistolarity for converting a specific border problem into the wider issue of border-crossing. Not only does the letter connect different geographical spaces and points of
time through the physical move of the material body of paper, but, on a symbolical level, it also links and negotiates different theoretical positions—in and out, here and there, now and then, self and other, etc.—in its very movement.

It does not really mean the letter fluxes the border, but it rather means that the border itself is flexible. The border (land) concept must not be encapsulated in the interstice, but it should be taken as more active. Chicana/o culture has been related more to “movement” than what obstructs or imprisons people or soul. If the border appears static and fixed, it might be because of the scene of threatening blocking at the real border. Contrary to it, the theoretical border is significant in that it figures the arbitrariness of boundary and the act of transgressing. David Saldivar defines the US-Mexican border, not as “la frontera,” but as “Transfrontera contact zone” (Saldivar 13, italic original). Astrid M. Fellner finds the border “the interface between opposing forces” (Fellner 70). It must be noted that those prefixed relationalities are conditioned by the idea of trespassing or “trans”gressing, in other words, migration and crossing, in terms of which the ethnic, gender identity, or the wider diasporic identity is formed. Today the border is characterized less by obstruction than transgression, less by steadfastness than tenuousness and unreliability. Fellner adds that “boundaries are not stable” (70).

It is true that many people at the border are forced to feel trapped: “Living in the borderlands thus means to experience the feeling of being trapped in an in-between and often produces a feeling of being torn between different subject positions” (Fellner 71). But the “in-between” is not a no-man’s land but rather a never-never land where you would be capable of being paradoxically free from being fixed. Trin Minh-ha says that “[l]iving at the borders means that one constantly threads the fine line between positioning and de-positioning” (Minh-ha 12, italics mine), and, citing Basho’s words about bats, suggests that it is like “something in between” (16). The border itself is unstable and being at the border is being fluid. The “in-between” is a contact
zone “where extreme tension and shifts keep everything in constant flux” (Fellner 73). Particularly in regard to the ethnic issue, it involves migration, actual mobilization of people, as well as a transaction of internal differences: “[T]he concept of borderlands allows for a conceptualization of ethnic identity in terms of the articulation of the migration between selves” (71).

We see an interesting relation between the border and the letter in an episode of “a missing letter” from an essay of a philosopher Etienne Balibar (Cited in Castillo and Córdoba). A Mexican fisherman can never cross the border since a missing letter is never retrieved, while American tourists can without minding missing of the letter. The letter here means the authorized approval of immigration. This letter is used as a sign of “the equivocal and vacillating nature of borders” as well as of “the site of discursive contestation” (Castillo and Córdoba 1), and its metaphorical potential is contested with the material conditions of closed borders. The letter is the law, a figure of power and restriction. Here, it is used as a sign of arbitrariness or inequality of power exertion. But arbitrariness is exactly a feature of the letter. Letters may regulate, or even create the border, but from a different point of view they could overcome or annihilate it. Not only do letters themselves cross the boundaries, but people could cross or trespass the borders in terms of writing letters.

*The Mixquiahuala Letters* is a novel of letters, but paradoxically the letter is not really the focus of the drama. Unlike many of the letter-writers in the epistolary novels, Teresa is not very conscious of writing letters. Among very few that mention “letters” is Letter 3. After the first, very ordinary-looking letter, and the second, a verse letter celebrating Alicia’s 30th birthday, Teresa writes:

My sister, companion, my friend,

Our first letters were addressed and signed with the greatest affirmation of allegiance in good faith
It is conjectured that “our first letters” refer to their first set of correspondence. Since letters are not dated, we cannot know what those “first letters” are. The present letter goes on to describe the first encounter of the two women at a North American institution in Mexico City. It looks as if the first letters Teresa mentions, which are absent, precede their first scene. This first paragraph is written like a poem, with alliterated words stressed, the phrase “passion bound” highlighted. In this pledge of sisterly solidarity, it is evident how the act of addressing and signing of the letters exaltedly celebrates their exchanging of enveloped passion. Peculiarly enough, though addressed and signed, Teresa does not assert that those letters were also “sent.”

Not only indifference to, or absence of, the letter, but even a hint of possible malfunctioning of communication lingers on in the narrative. The rest of Teresa’s references to their letters are in fact to the scarcity of correspondence. Neither materiality of the letter, its function, nor its physical migration, is given any consideration. References to the letters that are not theirs are also few. In Letter 7, Teresa alludes to a letter that is sent to Alicia by an Indian she loved. Their affair might have felt to Alicia as a dream, Teresa says, “had it not been for one letter” (34). Teresa may recognize that the letter is an evidence of love, but she dismisses the idea. She teases Alicia, saying, “Did you keep the letter after reading it twice, under your pillow, or in the bureau drawer with the mementos of your adolescence?” (35). Materiality of a letter is scoffed by the insinuation about what is figured to be women’s sentimental liking for storing a keepsake. Another problematic letter appears in Letter 28, which is the one Alicia received from a man she and Teresa met in Oaxana. Here the letter is exceptionally concretely described, in a scene of reading Christmas cards. Finding a card from this man, Teresa reminds Alicia of his letter, that Alicia once “reached into the papers on the shelf and pulled
out a neatly folded letter and handed it” (106) to Teresa. His picture is enclosed in it, and Teresa, reading the letter, notices that it “indeed asked to deliver the photograph to [her]” (107). It is interesting that, as far as it is described, what the letter says is to “deliver” something, a photo that is soon to be destroyed. Communications are not only slighted, but also rejected. The letter from Adan the Indian, without a return address, did not expect to be replied. The photo of the man in Oaxana, enclosed in his letter, is burned by their boyfriend before Teresa requests it to be incinerated. Not only letters but also telephone fails: “Forgive me for not having returned your call” (114).

The low profile of the “actual” letters and correspondence accentuates the imaginative and symbolical functions of the letter. It is not certain whether the letters in Mixquiahuala are actually mailed and sent. On the other hand, it is certain that they are not sent across the border (with perhaps a very few exceptions). The novel, however, tells of a story of migration. The protagonists have crossed the border of US-Mexico repeatedly. A considerable proportion of the narrative consists of the story of Teresa and Alicia, citizens of the United States, traveling to Mexico. As travelers and intellectuals they could occupy an anthropological advantage, “the privileged site of operation” (Castillo and Córdoba 3), but by their instinct and the sense of heritage, they choose to embrace the Mexican experience and ask themselves what they are. Their three visits at least make explicit the unsettled identities of immigrants and women and they struggle with the oppressive history and patriarchy. As Fellner says, “[b]order crossing not only becomes apparent in the protagonists’ travels through Mexico, but the narrative itself constitutes a space of fluidity and transgression which subverts traditional notions of origin and authority” (Fellner 73). What makes “fluidity” or “subversion” possible is “the narrative” that is “retracking the migrations of the diverse elements of [Teresa’s] past” (73).

It is, however, not simply the story of traveling, or the physical border crossing of the two women, that is at stake. The novel does not register the
actual acts of crossing the border: the scene of crossing is never described in the narrative but the protagonists are always already there: “Enrolled at a North American institution in Mexico City for a summer to study its culture and language, we were among six young women assigned to the same boarding house...” (24), “In Mexico” (62), or remembered as they were there: “Nearly a month has gone by since I began to remember the Yucatan saga” (70). It cannot be denied that these border crossings do not really matter for “Americans.” There is another, abstract crossing: “Teresa travels in both time and space, crossing many borders” (Maszewska 267). Though neither Teresa nor Alicia is the first generation “immigrant,” nor are they writing as immigrants, they travel through recollection and remembrance, through memory and history, from which the migration and border-crossing of Chicana/o people is figuratively evoked. Also their wanton sexual pursuits to subvert their gender restriction, or the literary device, an odd mixture of the styles in the text of letters and poems, might help create the sense of crossing or transgressing.

But, needless to say, the most significant agent of crossing is the letter. Neither Teresa nor Alicia bothers with the border because the two women are living by the letter and in the letter, so to speak. It is letters that are most unsettling and subversive. Arguing on the concept of space in Chicana Literature, Mary Pat Brady says, “Literature thrives on the intersections between the shaping powers of language and the productive powers of space. Literature attends to affect and environment; it uses space and spatial processes metaphorically to suggest emotions, insights, concepts, characters” (Brady 8). Letters can sharpen the function of “literature” here. Letters develop on the intersection between language and space. Or letters can specifically represent the spatiality of literature and function as the interface to “suggest emotions, insights,” and so on. It can also suggest “time” or “history.”

On the other hand, letters, in their essence, travel the distance (including temporal) and cross the border. Immigrants’ letters cross the oceans as
immigrants do: they are immigrants of the world themselves. Moreover, as they are, or collected, letters present themselves not only as movement but also as the site (or the approval, or the evidence) of movement. In reality people who migrate may need correspondence by mail with those they left. By connecting separate people, letters create a distinctive space. In the introduction to *Letters Across Borders*, essays on the letters of immigrants, editors Bruce S. Elliott and others write: “[T]he letter becomes a unique social space that exists neither in the homeland nor the land of resettlement, but in a third place that is, in effect, in both simultaneously” (12). This implies that the letter is a unique site of “in-between” or “neither-nor.”

In *Mixquiahuala*, Teresa and Alicia are described as travelers to Mexico, and it is not really appropriate to seek a direct analogy between them and Mexican border-crossers. Nor is it truly relevant to compare their physical move with the crossing of letters. Instead what matters is a complex status of the letters and the scene of writing. The letter both creates a border and crosses it. The letters in *Mixquiahuala* embody the in-between-ness of Teresa and Alicia being both in the US and Mexico (or neither). In “reality” Teresa is probably writing from the US to Alicia in the US. However, because Teresa mostly recounts the memories of the trip to Mexico, it is as if they are in Mexico, not in the US. Or, on the contrary, they may be in the US, but many of the letters travel once to Mexico, so to speak, and then return to the US: they cross and re-cross the border as two women do. Then, if we assume that Teresa is writing to an internal “you,” the letters will represent the “migration between selves” of a diaspora with complicated ethnicities.

Moreover, the title “the Mixquiahuala Letters” intimates that Teresa may be figuratively writing “from” that particular place Mixquiahuala. This is “a Pre-Conquest village of obscurity, neglected of progress,” (25) which they visited and which Alicia later enjoys telling people that Teresa “was from” (26). As a sign of her Mexicanness, it is a symbolic site of her writing where she interacts with her Americanness surrogated by Alicia. If Teresa were
writing from Mixquiahuala, it is assumed that Teresa, who “originally” crossed
the border into the US, would re-cross it into Mexico to write, and all the
letters, Teresa’s voice, being sent from her “at home” to the US, would re-re-
cross the border. Thus letters remind us, by their potential of crossing, of the
history of border-crossings that the writer or the letter might have experienced
or that is buried in people’s memory.

Letters thus work as a reification of human migration, as a figure of the
movement in a static text. Or letters themselves form a flexible site of border
that enable different people or different points of time to cross, where the
border is virtually crossed. The letters in Mixquiahuala are fictional after all
and may have nothing to do with the actual scenes of writing or corresponding,
but the epistolary form has its own reason and significance for this novel.
Otherwise, Teresa’s writing could have been shaped as lyrics like ones inserted
in the text. Teresa does not seem to need correspondence. She is writing is to
herself and her letters are not really to be sent or delivered. The insubstantiality
of the addressee, Alicia, also explains Teresa’s self-reflexive and self-
complacent writing. The addressee, or one-to-one contact is not so important in
the first place: a letter does not always arrive at the destination. But it has a
destination, the other, or others, and that is why Teresa forms letters.

Even if Teresa does not need a particular woman friend to send letters to,
she has to send herself out and cross the border. Or she has to stand in “in-
between” and speculate on the fine line between positioning and de-
positioning. No doubt the writing helps her recognize her “identity,” the
meaning of the ethnic history and the present reality, and obtain a desirable
womanhood, overcoming the tangled net of patriarchy. But it is significant first
of all that what she has chosen is a vehicle to send her to the others, writing as
an active agency, or the reification of writing. It is the letter that has allowed
her to confront herself in terms of otherness. It is the letter that has enabled her
to cross the border spatial and temporal. It is the letter that has empowered her
to challenge the received values of ethnicity and gender. It is the letter that has
created the unique writing space of freedom and subversion.

Notes

1 It is known that there were quite a few epistolary pieces, short stories or romances mostly of entertainment, published before Richardson. See Robert Adams Day. They are not called novels, though some of them, Day argues, anticipate the characteristics of the genre. On the distinct relation between women and epistolary novels of the early days, see Ruth Perry.

2 “It is not surprising that, during the same period, the form of writing most accessible to and acceptable for women was letter writing. Female letters traditionally focused on domestic life or on love; they spoke in the private voice appropriate to women whose roles were increasingly circumscribed within the constraints of bourgeois ideology” (Golroy and Verhoeven 2).

3 Ana Castillo, The Mixquiahuala Letters. The page numbers of the text hereafter will be parenthesized without the title of the book.

4 In Epistolarity, Altman maintains that confidenciality structures “the thematics, character relations, and narrative action of letter novels” (47) and that confidant is a receiver of confidences. A confidant is regarded, based on Francois Jost’s theory, as one of the two possible types of addressees, a confidant and an antagonist. Altman, like Jost, focuses more upon the narrative of an epistolary novel than the letter as form, takes a confident as a significant character. A confident, she says, is “an essential figure in epistolary literature, called into existence by the need of every letter writer.” He/she has a passive role of listening to the stories, but it in turn is the “function of triggering the exposition” (50) or of having the story/confidence disclosed. The confidant, therefore, is defined as an alibi, so to speak, for story-telling.

5 Tanya Long Bennett argues that “her choice of ‘i’ as pronoun for herself undermines the notion of the authorial ‘i’ in that it refuses to indicate the authority representing dominant discourses” (Bennett). It also helps to two women be united nondiscriminatory: “They fused together into the subjective lower-case ‘i,’ refusing the objectification of the other bound up in heterosexual
norms” (González 87). Another interpretation would be that the English/western uppercase “I” denotes the oppressive culture while “i” chooses to remain small like Spanish/Mexican “yo.” Incidentally “yo” looks similar to “you.”

6 On the letter’s first-person narrator, Astrid M. Fellner in the chapter on Mixquiahuala in her Contemporary Chicana Self-Representation, says, citing Janet Altoman’s epistolarity, “Letters, if considered performative speech acts, not only fulfill the function of conveying events to an addressee, but already constitute such actions themselves” (97). Letters are acting by speaking.

7 Criticising Lacan’s idea of the letter, which is a signifier, indivisible, Derrida in “Le facteur de la verite,” The Post Card, points that it is not about its materiality but about its ideality, that it is actually about speech: “If [the letter] were divisible, it could always be lost en route. To protect against this possible loss the statement about the “materiality of the signifier,” that is, about the signifier’s indivisible singularity, is constructed...Only the ideality of a letter resists destructive division (464); This vocal “letter” therefore also would be indivisible... (465).

8 Hopscotch suggests two different ways of reading: one “in a normal fashion” (Cortézar Table of Instructions) from Chapter 1 to 56, which is by no means normal because this reading omits the rest of the book; another is a characteristic hopscotching, beginning from Chapter 73. Consequently the reader is enticed to take the latter way because they do not want to waste the latter half of the novel and it is probably impossible from them to “ignore what follows with a clean conscience.” Interestingly, the last chapter of this reading is supposed to be Chapter 131, but it does not end but directs readers to hop to the next chapter that is the previous one, Chapter 58, which means that readers find themselves in an inescapable infinite loop of 131 and 58.

9 In her book on French epistolary novels, Elizabeth J. MacArthur argues that the narrative of epistolary novels is structured by the tendency toward “mobility and desire” (25), which means they are devoid of restrictive conclusiveness and exempt from authoritarian didacticism. The title of the book is “Extravagant Narrative.”

10 Cf. Jadwiga Maszewska, “The Quixotic Strain in Ana Castillo’s The
Some of the cultural critical works on Borderland(s) are, Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Jesus Benito, and Ana Maria Manzanas, eds., *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands*; Debra A. Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, eds, *Border Women*; Michele Bottalico and Salah el Moncef bin Khalifa, eds. *Borderline Identities in Chicano Culture*; Claire F. Fox, *Fence and the River*; Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, *Rethinking the Borderland*; Scott. Michaelsen, *Border Theory*; Jose David Saldivar, *Border Matters*;

Pages of the introduction of the third edition, “Gloria Anzaldúa ¡ Presente !: An Introduction in Ten Voices” are not numbered.

Border and borderland may be slightly different. But it is apparent from the citation from Gloria Anzaldúa that the border is already interpreted as space. Border is more appropriate to be crossed. But the land or zone seems to have, by its spatiality, own power of transgression. Border may be crossed, but borderland seems to allow trespassing or to trespass by itself.

Basho in *Kashima Kiko* (Traveling Kashima) says about a bat, “In-between a bird and a mouse,” but it corresponds to the description of himself at the beginning, “neither a priest nor a layman.” So this intimates that “in-between” could mean “neither-nor.”

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