Translated Woman: 
Crossing the Border with 
Esperanza's Story 
by Ruth Behar, Beacon Press, 1993, 
374 pp., $25.00 (cloth).

How does a gringa writer del otro 
lado presume to tell the story of an 
iliterate Mexican street vendor? 
How can a white, bourgeois West-
erner span the chasms of race, 
class and nationality, and write 
such a life story in a way that is 
faithful to the teller and yet acces-
sible to a North American audi-
ence? These are some of the ques-
tions that Ruth Behar persistently 
asks herself in this engrossing nar-
native of the life of Esperanza, a 
60-year-old Indian woman from 
Mexquitic.

Behar starts off with a straight-
forward, transcript-like account of 
Esperanza's youth, troubled mar-
rriage, and tumultuous relations 
with her children. Later on, how-
ever, the book becomes more 
dialectic in tone, reflecting the 
back-and-forth conversation 
between the two women. The most 
absorbing part of all is Behar's 
concluding rumination about what 
it means to take Esperanza's story 
back with her across the border.