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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 illiterate Mexican street vendor? How can a white, bourgeois Westerner 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 accessible to a North American audience? These are some of the questions that Ruth Behar persistently asks herself in this engrossing narrative of the life of Esperanza, a 60-year-old Indian woman from Mexquitic.

Behar starts off with a straightforward, transcript-like account of Esperanza's youth, troubled marriage, and tumultuous relations with her children. Later on, however, 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.