



# Mother Tongues: Sexuality, Trials, Motherhood, Translation

*Barbara Johnson*

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## **Mother Tongues: Sexuality, Trials, Motherhood, Translation** Barbara Johnson

Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, and Sylvia Plath make up the odd trio on which this book is based. It is in the surprising and revealing links between them--links pertaining to troublesome mothers, elusive foreign languages, and professional disappointments--that Barbara Johnson maps the coordinates of her larger claims about the ideal of oneness in every area of life, and about the damage done by this ideal.

The existence of sexual difference precludes an original or ultimate "one" who would represent all of mankind; the plurality of languages makes it impossible to think that one doesn't live in translation; and the plurality of the sexes means that every human being came from a woman's body, and some will reproduce this feat, while others won't. In her most personal and deeply considered book about difference, Johnson asks: Is the mother the guardian of a oneness we have never had? The relations that link mothers, bodies, words, and laws serve as the guiding puzzles as she searches for an answer.

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