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Nota di contenuto	Introduction: the serpent's gift. Faith, reason, and gnosis ; The premodern, the modern, and the postmodern ; Toward a gnostic (post) modernity ; Medi(t)ations ; Writing as hissing ; Autobiographical and pedagogical contexts ; The essays -- The apocryphon of the beloved. Invocation ; The quest for the heretical Jesus ; "One will know them by their roots" ; From the womb ; Sexual healings: dispelling the demons of abuse ; Sexual teachings ; The man Jesus loved ; The woman Jesus loved ; The secret -- Restoring the Adam of light. The Adam of light awakened by her ; The fiery brook ; The sacrilegious secret of Christian theology ; Implications of the method ; The historical and intellectual contexts ; "Man is God to man" : the virtues of pluralism and polytheism -- Completing the incarnation of love (and sex) : embodiment in Feuerbach's thought ; The sexuality of numbers ; The cancer and the cure ; Toward a mystical humanism: a gnostic rereading -- Comparative mystics. The rebuke of the gnostic and the oriental Renaissance ; Comparative mystics ; Ramakrishna: colonialism, universalism, mysticism ; Doctrinal and historical-critical analysis ; Ramakrishna and the comparativist ; The critical study of religion as a modern mystical tradition ; The scandal of comparison ; Professional heresy: the gnostic study of religion -- Interlude: Logoi mystikoi; or how to think like a gnostic -- Mutant marvels. Educational and sexual

allegory ; On puberty and powers ; Denying the demiurge ; Toward a more radical empiricism ; Dissociation and the release of nonordinary energies ; On death as dissociation ; Real X-Men ; On x-clusions and x-ceptions ; Political allegory; or, how (not) to be an X-Man -- Conclusion: return to the garden. The other tree ; The forbidden fruit ; "When He becomes troubled, He will be astonished" ; The flaming sword and the bridal chamber.

Sommario/riassunto

"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field." With those words in Genesis, God condemns the serpent for tempting Adam and Eve, and the serpent has shouldered the blame ever since. But how would the study of religion change if we looked at the Fall from the snake's point of view? Would he appear as a bringer of wisdom, more generous than the God who wishes to keep his creation ignorant? Inspired by the early Gnostics who took that startling view, Jeffrey J. Kripal uses the serpent as a starting point for a groundbreaking reconsideration of religious studies and its methods. In a series of related essays, he moves beyond both rational and faith-based approaches to religion, exploring the erotics of the gospels and the sexualities of Jesus, John, and Mary Magdalene. He considers Feuerbach's Gnosticism, the untapped mystical potential of comparative religion, and even the modern mythology of the X-Men. Ultimately, *The Serpent's Gift* is a provocative call for a complete reorientation of religious studies, aimed at a larger understanding of the world, the self, and the divine.
