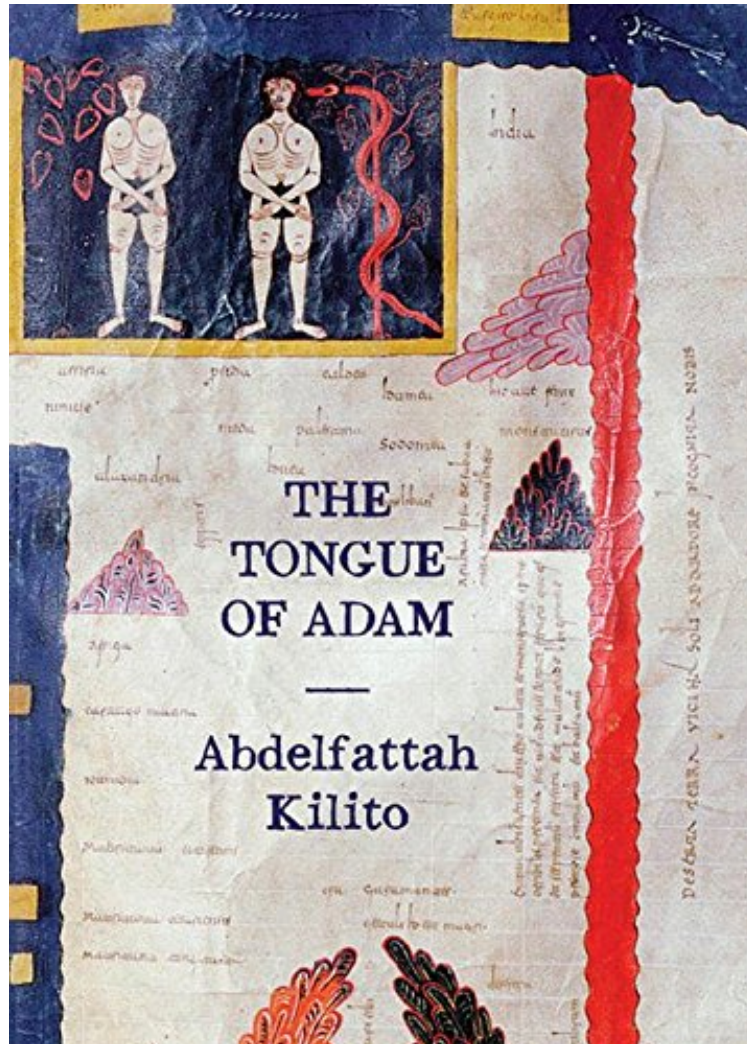


The Tongue of Adam

Abdelfattah Kilito

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#742637 in Books Ingramcontent 2016-11-22 2016-11-22Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.30 x .40 x 4.50l, .0 #File Name: 0811224937128 pagesThe Tongue of Adam | File size: 40.Mb

Abdelfattah Kilito : The Tongue of Adam before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Tongue of Adam:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Full of sound and other stuff. Not sure what it signifies.By Steven T. Abelli try to find something positive to say about this book, and find that to be difficult. There are several essays here referring to the big-name sacred texts of the Middle East, to secondary authors, to commentators on these, and to commentators on the commentators. The presentation is agreeable and induces one to engage with the discussion, leaving the impression that some useful mentation has occurred. Then one notices that, while every side of the issue has been covered, no useful conclusion has been drawn, or can be. Or, if one has, it will be contradicted in the next essay. This is something like eating Cheetos: one can consume a vast number of these things, acquiring no positive

nutrition or even volume of substance, but large amounts of tasty salt, flavorings, and color have passed over the tongue. Broccoli might be less fun, but it is a better investment. Also, \$9.99 is a heavy toll for this little thing. I suggest you dicker for a better price. If one is looking for a lesson in Arabic literature and culture, then perhaps this work is more instructive than it at first appears to me. I have no way of knowing. If it is, then Arabic thought is an acquired taste that I failed to acquire from reading this. Truly, though, this man knows his stuff and loves it, even if I don't. That is something I can appreciate across the distance between us, and the world might be a better place if there was more of that going around. The final essay is off-topic, and more useful to me than anything that preceded it. Arabic is the author's first language, but he was a professor of French literature for forty years, and in France, too. His French must be pretty good, as well as his understanding of French Lit. One might hope this would earn him some credit when he announces to his French colleagues that he intends to publish some of his works in Arabic. But apparently not. Culture is thick stuff, and cultural pride is one of its thickest ingredients. As I said earlier, I try to find something positive to say about this book. The best I can do is to point at this final essay, which is not hard to understand at all, and say "I only speak English, and so I can't understand what the author would dearly like to share with me." This is, perhaps, what he has to tell us after all.

A playful and erudite look at the origins of language In the beginning there was one language one tongue that Adam used to compose the first poem, an elegy for Abel. These days, no one bothers to ask about the tongue of Adam. It is a naive question, vaguely embarrassing and irksome, like questions posed by children, which one can only answer rather stupidly. So begins Abdelfattah Kilito's *The Tongue of Adam*, a delightful series of lectures. With a Borgesian flair for riddles, stories, and subtle scholarly distinctions, Kilito presents an assortment of discussions related to Adam's tongue, including translation, comparative religion, and lexicography: for example, how, from Babel onward, can we explain the plurality of language? Or can Adam's poetry be judged aesthetically, the same as any other poem? Drawing from the commentators of the Koran to Walter Benjamin, from the esoteric speculations of Judaism to Herodotus, *The Tongue of Adam* is a nimble book about the mysterious rise of humankind's multilingualism.

Abdelfattah Kilito turns his obsession with 'the fact of language' into a thrilling tour de force that invites us to rethink the myths of our human origins, leading us into a labyrinthine wonder world of linguistic inquiries. - Poupeh Missaghi, *Asymptote Journal* Yet his commentary on the age-old debate, though minimal and mostly contained in an afterword, reveals his personal connection to the subject as a writer in both French and Arabic, making the work both poignant and relevant for contemporary readers. - *Publishers Weekly* In this slim volume based on his lecture series, prominent Moroccan writer Kilito muses on the origins of multilingualism via an analysis of the historical debate about what language Adam and his family spoke. Citing an array of sources—medieval Arab theologians, the Hebrew Bible, Herodotus, and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III—he opens up a new world for his reader, demonstrating the religious and philosophical urgency this question held for many through history and the many forms it has taken, including debates over whether poetry could be written by Adam and experiments with depriving children of language. Kilito treats his history with respect (especially considering the implications and controversial nature of the questions) and, with his blend of erudition and whimsy, comparisons to Borges are inevitable. Yet his commentary on the age-old debate, though minimal and mostly contained in an afterword, reveals his personal connection to the subject as a writer in both French and Arabic, making the work both poignant and relevant for contemporary readers. Fans of Kilito's work should be pleased here, and those who have never read him should be intrigued by this introduction. - *Publishers Weekly* (starred review) *The Tongue of Adam* is a quiet intellectual indictment of racial, ethnic, and national chauvinism, a text which derives an egalitarian beginning to language from the oldest of religious traditions. A brilliant and necessary book. - Mohamad Saleh, *The Culture Trip* Reading Kilito for me has always been a kind of adventure. We normally speak of writing as an adventure, but Kilito dares his reader to travel with him, on a quest to override the boundaries between reality and fiction, between literary criticism and storytelling. - Elias Khoury The abiding spirit is Borgesian, a lifelong curiosity about the nature of words and books and how texts call out to and comment on each other.... As a scholar of classical Arabic literature, Kilito employs those texts to ask intriguing, vexing or playful questions about how words work. - Ron Slate One would be hard-pressed to find a Moroccan writer who is more respected by his peers and more appreciated by his readers than Abdelfattah Kilito. - Laila Lalami, *The Nation* Borgess' afterglow falls on Kilito's pages, and he shares the Argentinians' relish for puzzles, mazes, and riddling forms, as well as a love of pulp on one hand and the rare and raffin on the other, al-Jahiz's philosophy of discretion alongside Tintin, Sufi metaphysical lyrics and the Queen of the Serpents spells. Kilito is a mandarin who likes comic books. - Marina Warner, *The London of Books* Abdelfattah Kilito's *The Tongue of Adam* is the rarest of essays: intensely focused and full of surprises, instructive and illuminating. To read this book is to set out on an astonishing and unique voyage through classical Arabic literature. - Daniel Heller-Roazen About the Author Abdelfattah Kilito was born in Rabat, Morocco, in 1945. He has received the Great Moroccan Award (1989), the French Academy Award (1996), and the Sultan Al Owais Prize for Criticism and Literature Studies (2006). A critic, translator, and scholar, Robyn Creswell is currently the poetry editor for the Paris and assistant professor of comparative literature at

Yale. Marina Warner is a British novelist, short story writer, and historian.