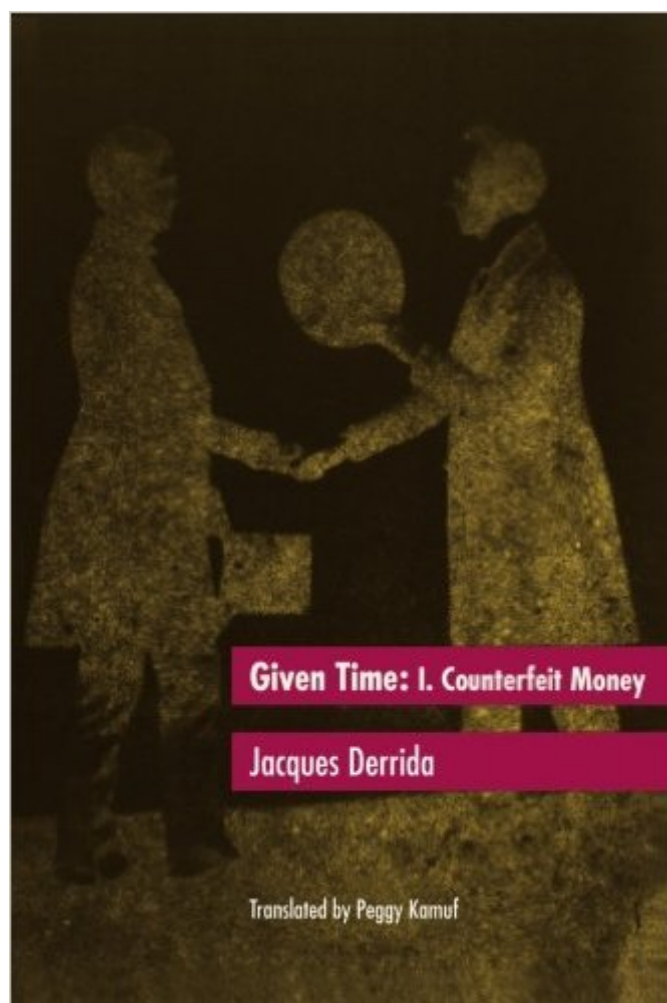


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Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money (Vol 1)



Synopsis

Is giving possible? Is it possible to give without immediately entering into a circle of exchange that turns the gift into a debt to be returned? This question leads Jacques Derrida to make out an irresolvable paradox at what seems the most fundamental level of the gift's meaning: for the gift to be received as a gift, it must not appear as such, since its mere appearance as gift puts it in the cycle of repayment and debt. Derrida reads the relation of time to gift through a number of texts: Heidegger's *Time and Being*, Mauss's *The Gift*, as well as essays by Benveniste and Levi-Strauss that assume Mauss's legacy. It is, however, a short tale by Baudelaire, "Counterfeit Money," that guides Derrida's analyses throughout. At stake in his reading of the tale, to which the second half of this book is devoted, are the conditions of gift and forgiveness as essentially bound up with the movement of dissemination, a concept that Derrida has been working out for many years. For both readers of Baudelaire and students of literary theory, this work will prove indispensable.

Book Information

Paperback: 182 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; Reprint edition (September 1, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226143147

ISBN-13: 978-0226143149

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #309,903 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > European > French #219 in Â Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Literature > World Literature > European #349 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > European > French

Customer Reviews

If there could be such a thing as a text that 'exemplifies' Derrida's thought, one that meticulously and clearly explains the strategies of 'deconstruction,' while at the same time distilling not just its own theory, but also producing a critical reading of several other prominent thinkers and their texts (and one that of course demonstrates the practical ends of the exposé of his theory), then "Given Time" ("Donner le temps") would unequivocally be that book. It is that good. In fact, it is superb. For those who have read Derrida's texts of the late 60s and early 70s, and know where they stand

regarding Derrida's ideas, this book acts like a kind of overview or survey of his thought, a matrix or map of his thought, an architectural plan, even a game plan. The primary text is a story by Baudelaire, and Derrida uses this two-page story to explicate the relations he has with his own masters, the lessons learned and the major points that he has taken from them and transformed. Husserl on the notion of the gift and the necessity to zigzag (a "Zick-Zack" or "mouvement en vrilte") between bound and free idealities; Heidegger on being and temporality and the impossibility of appropriation or presence; Bataille on excess. All through a refreshing reading of Baudelaire's story together with Mauss' seminal essay from 1923 "The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies" (often considered the most influential work of anthropology, focusing on the social customs of exchange and the obligation to reciprocate) which conceives of a total social fact of gifting that Bataille had himself begun to unhinge in his 1949 "The Accursed Share" by implicitly laying waste to Hegel's philosophical economy - a multivolume work that was itself greatly influenced by "The Gift.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) was a French philosopher and writer, best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as "Deconstruction." He wrote in the Foreword to this 1991 book, "this work follows a trajectory that corresponds faithfully to the one I followed in the first five sessions of a seminar given under the same title in 1977-78 at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris and the next year at Yale University | the distribution of the four chapters reproduces the rhythm of | Lectures delivered at the University of Chicago in April 1991. On that occasion, I in fact attempted to formalize the discourse first proposed in 1977-78 and which still had a particular significance for me: It was in the course of this seminar that I gave more thematic figuration to a set of questions which for a long time had organized themselves around that of the gift | The problematic of the gift, such as it had signaled itself to me or imposed itself on me up to that point reached there, precisely at the limit of its formalization, a sort of intermediary stage, a moment of passage. The premises of this unpublished seminar remained implied, in one way or another, in later works that were all devoted | to the question of the gift |." The "gift" concept comes from the epigraph from Baudelaire: "The King takes all my time; I give the rest to Saint-Cyrm, to whom I would like to give all." (Pg. 1) He says in the first chapter, "The motif of the circle will obsess us throughout this cycle of lectures. Let us provisionally set aside the question of whether we are talking about a geometric figure, a metaphorical representation, or a great symbol, the symbol of the symbolic itself | Saying that the circle will obsess us is another way of saying it will encircle us.

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