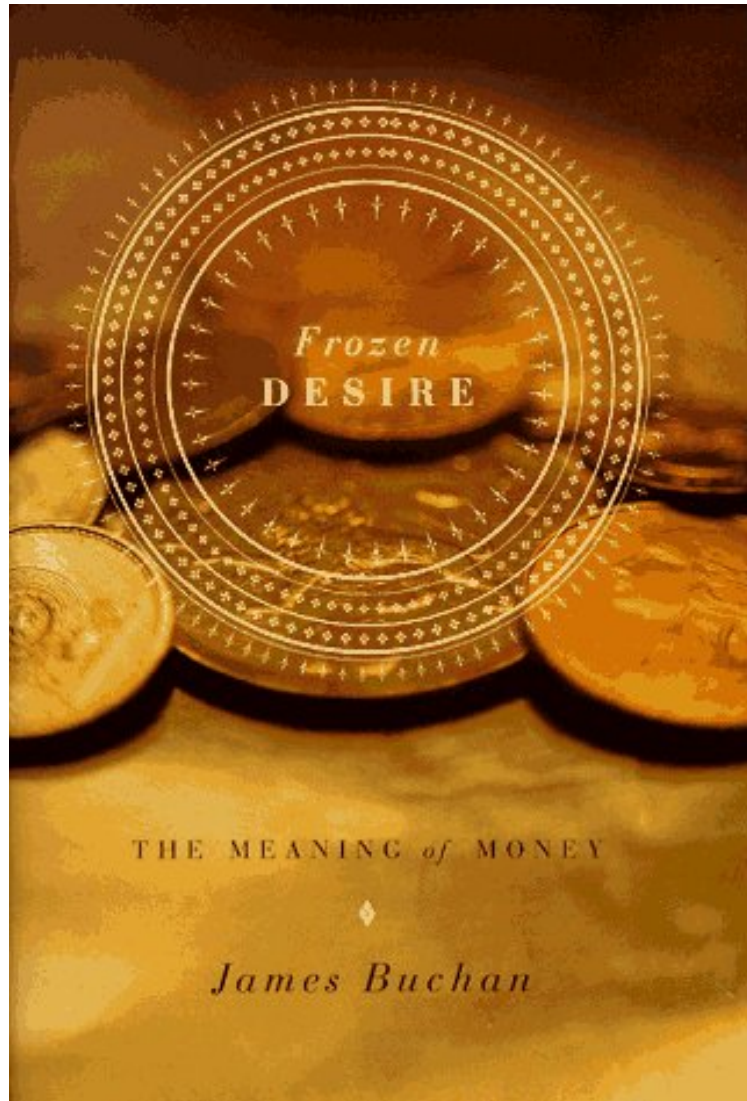


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Frozen Desire: The Meaning of Money

Mark Buchan

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Mark Buchan : Frozen Desire: The Meaning of Money before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Frozen Desire: The Meaning of Money:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A work of brilliance, sheer joy to read, line by line, for the right audience By Phil O. First, a quick sample, and not the most graceful passage, rather clunky and businesslike, but showing the nuggets to be found, rooting here, which are everywhere, page after page: here is the best compact description of modern big banks and our times (2008 and all), capturing in an almost offhand sweep of the author's pen the roots going back 150 years to England (mind you, in a 1997 book): "... Parliament [in 1879] reformed the [banking-

corporate] law, permitting limited liability to banking companies other than the Bank of England: that had the perverse effect of making banks even more irresponsible and, now that their deposits are de jure or de facto guaranteed by the state, they have become, with a handful of exceptions, institutional imbeciles that loses their capital once in every cycle of cheap and dear money. ..." (Pg. 209.) I take extended walks, often on trails, gazing off to various horizons, imbibing books. (It is usually audio on trails, sometimes running plus listening, but I can read print books and hike). Point being, I love all kinds of odd and challenging stimuli: the outdoors, bodily challenges, challenges to the thinking and reflecting mind, often all at once.. This book is a perfect companion for that approach, even if read in bed or bathtub! Think of an author with a sheer gift for words, wrapping money concepts in and around all sorts of well-illuminated historical scenes, traipsing across wonderful and often wicked portraits of characters, and great snippets of their best ideas. Here are kings, prostitutes, poets, con-artists. Here are minds and events as I've never seen them, different takes on Adam Smith, Karl Marx, tulip mania (to cite more familiar ones), on and on, page after page, and piercing quotes from many brilliant souls unheard of. It all parades from back in the recesses of time, all the while holding up the ideas of money and its uses (and interfaces with all aspects of ourselves) to every light and angle. Societies rise up in money-addled ecstasy and crash on the reefs of the same. The language and thinking are colorful and made with a joyous wink. Lyrical, virtuoso, funny, made with a flourish. This is my grail, this I seek in my self-education in recent years. This surpasses in depth, intensity and richness all my past in law school, etc. This time around, I do it for joy, in this sort of wide, looping style of indirection, wanderings, sure I will find critical insights along this path. And I do find them: this is the liberation of the intellectual from a thousand little traps set in this biological soup of manipulation and purposeful distractions we call "society". This book liberates me, and not a little, and spoils me every inch of the way with its nimbleness of language and thought, its new angles on things I thought I knew, things I have read multiple books on! I daresay it is my all-time favorite book, ever (though I say this a few times every year). As I tell students, if you only take at face value the slick and shiny surfaces nowadays tossed up right in your face,,dancing with superficiality and distraction by design, you will not reach the heights of the smart money, or the even greater depths of a real philosopher, here paraded so brilliantly. Here I get new insights on every single page, and often two or three. And in this, it dances all the way. For personal use, I'm going to read this, record a copy to listen to, maybe once a year. It's that good, with this praise coming from a guy who reads 2-3 books per week. A person without a fair background in European history, ideas and letters (a great start: Clark's 'Civilisation' in print), and nimble reading skills, and a sheer love of words, might flounder here, and see this as needlessly complex gobbledegook. With all respect, I'm sorry for you. Your joys lie elsewhere. This book liberates me from my own ignorance every time I pick it up. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly erudite, a pleasure to read By Owen Brown Buchan's extraordinary breadth of knowledge spans centuries and subjects - doubtless a fitting example of both the opulent educational system of post war Great Britain and a long apprenticeship at the Financial Times. This is a book to chew through, and my copy is now covered with notes and underlining. But what is it about? Money, value, desire, the change in perception of money over the ages (from the Greeks to us)- philosophy, economics, psychology, history, fiction (in the form of Sir Walter Scott and Shakespeare, no less) are all handmaidens to Buchan's task. I highly recommend it. Written in the '90's, prescient about the collapse of 2000 and the debacle of 2007, if it is not now in print, it should be. My one fault is its ending: Buchan, romantic, product, perhaps of the class which Thatcher so rudely (and rightly) unseated, speaks about an end to the age of money (shadows of Thomas Hardy's Winter words!) but what is it, and how will it come about? For us to discover, I suppose. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Demanding but rewarding By Mark K. Jensen This is a very unusual and original work that the author acknowledges to be "amateur and impressionistic" (11). Its manner is highly personal. Buchan challenges the reader with opaque, cryptic, sometimes hyperbolic modes of expression. An erudite man, he assumes his reader is well grounded in history and literature. Buchan's thinking is often difficult to follow and is expressed in a manner designed to force the reader to slow down and reflect. This is a book for pondering and rereading. As he anticipated (268), professional readers have tended to dismiss it. One wrote: "'Frozen Desire' [shows] and the ticks and twitches of too much research, too many lost hours amongst the library stacks, show on almost every page. Unsure why it started, the book upends itself by closing with . . . hopeless, romantic idealism." But ecologist Peter Warshall of Whole Earth Catalog, who holds a Ph.D. in biological anthropology from Harvard, called Buchan "the only nonfiction writer willing to trek into this dangerous world . . . His breadth is huge, from Homer to Rembrandt to liability/asset management to John Law. And quixotic. . . . An accomplished writer with a roller-coaster style that loops you back to read the best paragraphs two or three times." Buchan hoped 'Frozen Desire' would "survive for a while as a sort of by-way of the study of money, like an alley one enters to escape the blinding, crowded street" (268), and there are many signs that this has come to pass.

Novelist Buchan, a former correspondent for the Financial Times, traces the meaning of money since its beginning. He discusses money in its various formats, emphasizing that money itself is not just an object but "an outcome of a vast mountain of social arrangements." Various scenarios depict the role of money in love, war, religion, and other areas of human culture. Buchan uses many historical and literary works to clarify the perception of money throughout the ages,

relying on Aristotle, Columbus, Shakespeare, John Law, Marx, and Keynes, to name a few, in these stimulating discussions. Although he writes in a scholarly style, Buchan has many suspenseful and intriguing passages.

From Library Journal
Novelist Buchan (High Latitudes, Farrar, 1996), a former correspondent for the Financial Times, traces the meaning of money since its beginning. He discusses money in its various formats, emphasizing that money itself is not just an object but "an outcome of a vast mountain of social arrangements." Various scenarios depict the role of money in love, war, religion, and other areas of human culture. Buchan uses many historical and literary works to clarify the perception of money throughout the ages, relying on Aristotle, Columbus, Shakespeare, John Law, Marx, and Keynes, to name a few, in these stimulating discussions. Although he writes in a scholarly style, Buchan has many suspenseful and intriguing passages. Recommended for public and academic libraries. -- Steven J. Mayover, Free Lib. of Philadelphia
Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Kirkus
A discursive and idiosyncratic appreciation of currency, from British novelist and former Financial Times correspondent Buchan (High Latitudes, 1996, etc.), who, the subtitle notwithstanding, never manages to construe its many-splendored meanings. Drawing on a wealth of sources, the author offers hit-or-miss audits of the mediums of exchange humankind has used and abused down through the years. Characterizing money as "incarnate desire" (in the sense that it takes individual wishes and transmits them to the wider world), he compares the dichotomous teachings of Jesus with those of Muslim prophets, who viewed the religious and socioeconomic spheres as an indivisible whole. Buchan goes on to assess the varied implications of coinage, the just-price construct of medieval theologians, the invention of double-entry bookkeeping by Fra Luca Pacioli, Europe's lust for precious metals in the Age of Discovery, and the emergence of bank notes (which undermined the sovereignty of monarchs). Covered as well are the fiscal discipline a gold standard imposes on spendthrift governments, the sundry roles played by money in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the latter-day ascendancy of creditors (including junk-bond king Michael Milken) over borrowers, and capital as the sine qua non of belligerencies ranging from revolutions through wars of conquest. At the close, however, Buchan abruptly changes course. In the stated hope that the Age of Money (like the Age of Faith before it) will soon draw to an end, he exits with an impassioned albeit unsubstantiated diatribe indicting money as the principal cause of environmental destruction, global warming, overdevelopment, perpetual conflict, and other ills to which modern civilization is heir. These often murky essays will add precious little to anyone's understanding of what makes the world go around. -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.
Many business writers tend to suffer from the mental burden of covering seemingly unsophisticated or uneducated people who earn more in a month than they do in a year. James Buchan seems to have this problem in spades. A British writer with a superb education, an adventurous spirit, highbrow tastes, and a grandfather (John Buchan) who was a famous novelist, he has labored for many years as a correspondent for the Financial Times--a noble soul locked in the most pecuniary of papers. As this book makes clear, he loathes money with an overriding passion, and dreams of a society without it. It would be wrong to dismiss Buchan as a crank simply because he purports to loathe the riches he finds in this country (all the while building a successful career built on globetrotting and expense accounts). He is better seen as an aspiring Ruskin or Carlyle, one of those dissenters who strike a necessary and even appealing note of anger and nostalgia while failing to put a halt to the processes they decry or to further the causes they advocate. -- Commentary, David Brooks