

Introduction

The Discourse of Money in Literature

Money does not occur in nature, and no version or analog of it exists among any other members of the animal kingdom. Money, like language, is uniquely human. Money constituted a new way of thinking and acting that changed the world immediately. Only now, after nearly three thousand years, is the full power of money becoming apparent in human affairs, as it supplants or dominates many of the traditional social bonds based on family, tribe, community, and nation (Weatherford, 27).

Money defines many aspects of human existence, such as the exchange of goods and the ways in which we represent value. Money has a direct influence on social behavior because it promotes a monetarization of value by equating any kind of product, tangible or intangible, to a common denominator. In a money economy, all goods and services can be expressed using this common denominator, money. The metaphorical character of money – the fact that it always stands for something else – provides money with the ability to implement new structures of thought.

The processes of signification changed in society when money was elevated from being just one commodity among many to an exclusive position as the measure of all things. Modern money¹ has an

1 One important attribute of modern money is that it serves as the *exclusive* means of exchange. Jack Weatherford (1997) points out that the Aztecs used cacao beans for money. In some ways their cacao beans had many of modern money's attributes (for example, criminals would "counterfeit" cacao beans by emptying their husks and replacing the contents with mud), but cacao bean money was not the general equivalent of modern money because it merely served as a way to "calculate value and to round out the exchange, but it did not serve as the exclusive means of exchange" (19). The dominant principle of this "commodity money" society was still barter trade. In addition, as Jochen Hörisch (2000) indicates, a distinguishing factor of modern money is that it is

infinite capacity to represent, and ultimately subsume, all other things. Its move from facilitator in the process of exchange to holder of endless possibility had a destabilizing effect because accurate representation was no longer possible. The distinction between signifier and signified was compromised. Furthermore, subsequent shifts in money form (the physical shape of money itself, such as coins made of precious metals and alloys, paper money, and electronic money) have had a fundamental impact on human life, inspiring new ideas in the realms of literary and philosophical thought. Literary critics such as Marc Shell, Richard T. Gray, Jochen Hörisch, and John Vernon have focused on the connection between economic thought and literature.

In an economy based on the exchange of gold coins for products and services there is a direct correlation between the purchasing power of the coin and the value of its metallic substance; the inscription on gold coins precisely represents the value of the metal from which they are made. The idea of a linkage between the substance of money and its inscribed value was reinforced by the gold standard, in which a central bank was required to keep a sufficient supply of gold to cover the value of government promissory notes. Over time, this strict relationship between symbol and substance in gold coins was diffused by the introduction of other forms of money that strayed from a direct correlation of value, such as coins made of alloy, and, eventually, paper and electronic money. These alternative and more modern money forms, to a greater or lesser extent, represent value without being “guaranteed” by the substance from which they are made.

guaranteed by the leadership of the society in which it is being circulated: “A ruler acquires credit for himself not least of all by creating and authorizing a valid currency. The head lends the number on the other side authority and validity [...]” At the same time “the number on the coin acquires validity and recognition not least of all through the authority of the one who issues it [...]” (15). Hörisch takes this idea further by contending that there is a circular relationship between heads and tails of coins, and that both sides of the coin have authority to the extent that they become one in the coin: “This means, however, that heads and tails obtain their authority, their cover and their validity from a third entity, into which they are synthesized: from the coin whose sides they are [...]” (15).

Changes in money form have brought about debates concerning the nature of language² and representation within the economy. The substance of the debates revolved around the question of whether it was acceptable to abandon what was considered “real money” with a commodity value, such as gold, for money that merely represented value, and in that sense was not “real”.³ These debates on monetary representation and the metaphoric language they generated were picked up in other discourses in which issues such as value, substance, and representation played a significant role. “Economic” patterns of

- 2 The debate concerning the structural similarities between language and money has a long history. To give an example, Klaus Riegel (1979) compares monetary and linguistic systems by building on the changes in money form over time. His discussion begins with a comparison of the barter system with proto-language, stating that both, despite their relative simplicity, rely on basic rules (61). Further, Riegel compares the coinage system to token language (a system which has ways of expressing temporal and spatial properties) (64). The significance of the coinage system was its ability to accommodate delayed and sequential exchanges and multiple distributions (63). The last set of systems in Riegel’s comparison is that of the debenture system and interaction language. Relevant here is that he distinguishes the debenture system from the paper money form, stating that it would be “misleading to think about paper money only in terms of the common bills issued by national banks” (66). Instead, he proposes the inclusion of bonds issued and guaranteed by national governments, as well as by corporations. The introduction of different forms of paper money allowed the economy to expand and ultimately to reflect the “sum total of activities in which a whole nation, an industrial complex, or lastly, a single individual was, is, or was to be engaged” (67). Riegel concludes that neither the barter nor the coinage systems are appropriate to use in the comparison with language: “An adequate understanding of language can be achieved only through comparisons with the debenture system which is based upon matrices of transactions rather than upon classes of fixed elements” (67).
- 3 A good example of the debate about coined and paper money is the American political discourse from 1825 to 1875. The advocates of paper money – the paper money men – were set against the advocates of gold – the gold bugs – in a debate on monetary and aesthetic symbolization, i.e., the relationship between the substantial thing and its sign. Marc Shell (1982) has incorporated this debate into a chapter on Poe’s *The Gold Bug* (5–23).

thought, such as money metaphors, tropes, and symbols, have claimed their place in intellectual discourse and literature.⁴

Marc Shell, for example, has made economic thought a central tenet of his style of literary interpretation. In *The Economy of Literature* (1978), Shell focuses on the relationship between economic and verbal representation. Among other things, he investigates why coinage, tyranny, and philosophy developed in the same time and place. Another important topic in this book is the semiology of coins as material media of exchange and as symbols or works of literature. In *Money, Language, and Thought* (1982), Shell interprets literary and philosophical works by exploring the ways in which money speaks in and through their discourse. He focuses on topics such as dispensation, usury, and hypothesizing which, in his words, are “telling intellectual procedures through which economic form expresses itself in language” (Shell 1982, 181).

In his interpretations of literary and philosophical texts, Shell explores issues of symbolization relating to the realm of the economy. In the conclusion of his book *The Economy of Literature*, Shell states that the work “seeks to understand dialectically the relationship between thought and matter by looking from the formal similarities between linguistic and economic symbolization and production to the political economy as a whole” (Shell 1978, 152).

In his approach to literature, Shell draws on a wealth of economic and philosophical traditions. He does not simply suggest that a relationship between money, language, and thought exists but rather establishes the *necessity* of such a relationship. Shell emphasizes the

4 Richard T. Gray (1996), for example, has used an economic perspective in his interpretations of German bourgeois literature: “One of the hypotheses that my essays pursue is that the economic conflict between use-value, or intrinsic worth, and exchange-value, or extrinsic worth defined in the differential system of exchange, parallels not only the dialectic struggle constitutive of bourgeois (self)-divided subjectivity, but likewise the structural tensions inherent in the bourgeois work of art” (16). In his interpretations, Gray focuses on a close reading of the canonized, literary texts of his choice, but draws conclusions that have social-political implications. One of his contentions is that the middle class authors were struggling more against bourgeois economic practices than against an oppressor external to their own class (2).

tropic interaction between economic and linguistic symbolization and production: “Literary works are composed of small tropic exchanges or metaphors, some of which can be analyzed in terms of signified economic content and all of which can be analyzed in terms of economic form” (7). The primary goal of literary criticism, according to Shell, is understanding the connection between literary exchange (such as the connections between the smallest verbal metaphors and the largest tropes) and the exchanges that constitute the political economy.

Shell’s analysis of tropic interaction in literary discourse can be exemplified by his interpretation of Goethe’s *Faust*, which focuses on how the concept of “translation” (*Übertragung*) has both a linguistic (as relating to meaning) and an economic (as relating to property) component in the drama. One aspect of translation that Shell discusses relates to paper money and its inflationary tendencies. Shell draws the conclusion that there are strong commonalities between the “mentality” of paper money, idealist philosophy, and Mephistopheles’ linguistic doctrine which disassociates words and concepts (1982, 99–111). Mephistopheles is the proponent of what Shell calls both a monetary and linguistic immaterialism (104).

Shell’s work exposes the “money of the mind” which exists, sometimes openly, sometimes latently, in any text. The participation of economic form in literature and philosophy is defined by the tropic interaction between economic and linguistic symbolization and production, and not by content. “A formal money of the mind informs all discourse and is as unaffected by whether or not the thematic content of a particular work includes money as by whether or not the material content of the ink in which the work may be inscribed includes gold” (4). Shell rejects critical approaches to literature that focus exclusively on economic content because “such studies fail to consider the formal similarities between metaphorization (which characterizes all language and literature) and economic representation and exchange” (1978, 3).

Shell’s work is heavily focused on philosophical discourse. He mostly discusses philosophical concepts as pertaining to the words and structures of thought that they have borrowed from the realm of economics. Shell also uses a specific linguistic analysis that draws on

the common heritage of certain words that connote both economic concepts and philosophical and linguistic thought such as *seme*, which in Greek means both “coin” and “word” (1982, 2). Due to Shell’s pronounced concentration on philosophical discourse and reliance on this type of linguistic analysis, his approach is only partially applicable to my interpretation of *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer*. My analysis has no direct link to philosophical texts. Instead, my approach constitutes above all a close reading of the primary texts and offers an interpretation in light of the secondary literature on realist representation. However, Shell’s contention that an analysis of economic form in literature is universally applicable because literary theory necessarily deals with concepts such as verbal value and therefore cannot avoid economic and political problems is convincing (1978, 6). It was Shell’s insistence on the necessity of these connections between money, language and thought that piqued my interest in a comparison between a novel that focuses on the economic (*Soll und Haben*) and a novel that distances itself from it (*Der Nachsommer*).

In his studies of nineteenth Century British literature John Vernon points out that the realistic novel is an outcome of the changes in the “art of representation” that took place in all spheres of life, including art, politics, economics, and religion, during this time. Vernon connects these changes in modes of representation with changes in money form:

The shift from metal currency to paper money indicates a more general shift that submitted immediate reality to a kind of semantic coding; and the realistic novel was part of this shift. As money was becoming more fictional, fiction was becoming not only more profitable, not merely more concerned with economic themes, but also more mediated, more representational, more omniscient – in a word, more realistic [...] (Vernon, 17–18).

Further, Vernon claims that “the failure of money, the fact that paper money is money, but at the same time the absence of money, parallels in the realistic novel the failure of mimesis, which can never be a pure, homogeneous extension of its world” (19). This notion is important and has served as a guiding principle in my own interpretation.

In the two novels that I will interpret, *Der Nachsommer* by Adalbert Stifter and *Soll und Haben* by Gustav Freytag, the narrative revolves around the problem of representing reality in art, literature, and finance. While Stifter focuses his attention on the aesthetic aspects of private life, Freytag poeticizes the life of the bourgeois merchant in the public economy. The two works have in common the thematization and integration into their “poetic plots” of certain phenomena that accompanied industrialization, such as the concept of credit, consumption, and financial speculation. These thematic realms are locations in the novels at which economic and aesthetic representation coincide and mutually inform each other.

Vernon emphasizes the importance of some of these concepts by pointing out that the Industrial Revolution was not the beginning of capitalism, but rather the “final climactic stage of a long process in which its characteristic devices and apparatus – credit, speculation, bills of exchange, banks, investment capital – evolved largely out of international trade” (29). The shift to paper money was an ongoing process with roots going back several hundred years. The widespread acceptance of paper money, however, was unique to the nineteenth century. Money in the nineteenth century was qualitatively different from money in previous ages because, as many other critics have also noted, it was symbolic money – paper, paper inscribed with text.⁵

Constant change and insecurity were exacerbated by evolving ideas concerning money and wealth. Vernon presents his finding that with the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, wealth gradually came to be thought of as an active agent, a power.⁶ It

5 Here again is the foundation of Shell’s (1978 and 1982) critical discourse on literature and philosophy (“electrum” to electricity), and Hörisch’s (2000) focus on the compromised materiality of paper money: “Monitor-money is quite plausibly the logical conclusion of the development from concrete value via minted gold and assignats to the check and from signed paper on into the sphere of the fully immaterial” (65).

6 This new force needs to be compared to the “old” habits of thought, i.e., that the only real money was gold and that the only stable and secure form of wealth was land. According to Vernon (1984), the transition to paper money and the new concept of wealth was a long-drawn-out process that extended back to the previous century (33).

became a means of expansion and increase, of augmentation, amplification, and multiplication.⁷ Paper money especially gave rise to a more volatile and unpredictable conception of wealth. As a literary example of the economic implications of changes in money form, Vernon establishes a connection to literary realism by discussing different literary types and their relationship to money, specifically the miser's connection to gold and the spendthrift's to paper money.⁸ The miser seeks a shield from change, increase, expansion, the unknown, and the future by accumulating wealth. The spendthrift, on the other hand, gets social energy and companionship by spending money. Money for spendthrifts is not real; it is merely the paper image of money (36–7). This is because “gold tends to stay in one place, in contrast to paper, which is inclined to circulate. Gold is hoarded, paper spent, gold is stable and paper unstable, gold attracts misers and paper spendthrifts” (35). The connection of gold coins to stability and paper money to instability is a prominent theme also in *Soll und Haben* that informs the greater issue of representation in the novel.

It is precisely these types of intersections of the material and poetic economies that are of interest in my investigation of *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer*: how money issues are related to the problematization of the limitations of realist representation as presented in these two literary works, as well as the overlapping modes in

7 Gordon Craig (1982) points out that also in Germany, in “the new integrated capitalistic society, money possessed a power and a seductive attractiveness that it had not possessed for the masses of society during most of human history. It thus assumed palpably magical qualities” (108).

8 In his chapter entitled “The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism” Walter Benn Michaels (1987) explores the miser's relationship to money. He concludes that the miser is not really interested in the money itself but instead in its indefinite potentialities, i.e., the power to buy, even though the miser refuses to exercise that power. The miser “exhibits the psychological law that the potential has often a greater influence over our mind than the actual” (140). Michaels traces the origin of these ideas to Georg Simmel and his *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900). Gordon Craig (1982) emphasizes money's ability to transform itself into any object of desire. He quotes Schopenhauer, saying that the focus on and love for money is a natural one because: “Money alone is the absolute property, because it satisfies not merely one need *in concreto*, but need as such *in abstracto*” (108).

which they deal with the formal aspects of representation in literature and economics.⁹ I have coined the word “economopoetics” in order better to be able to facilitate the discussion of the intersections of the material and poetic economies in the two novels. The concept refers to the informative connections between economic and aesthetic structures in literary discourse and, more specifically in the case of my interpretation of *Der Nachsommer* and *Soll und Haben*, to the symbiotic¹⁰ relationship between money form and representational considerations as pertaining to Poetic Realism.

There is a rich tradition among philosophers and literary critics of exploring the connection between economic and literary discourse. Again, Marc Shell relates what he calls the development from “electrum to electricity,” i.e., from coins to electronic money, to forms of representation and symbolization in literature and philosophy. Shell insists that this relationship is universal and therefore applicable to the literary and philosophical thought of all times. John Vernon (1984) also views the relationship between money and literature as essential in his exploration of British literature. However, he contends that economic approaches to literary scholarship are more productive for specific literary periods such as, for example, nineteenth century realism. Based on French literary tradition, Jean-Joseph Goux has developed a similar thesis concerning the relationship between money and literature in which he focuses on the idea of money as the “general equivalent,” and how the concept of the general equivalent manifests itself in literature.¹¹

9 Russell Berman (1986) points out that the descriptive nature of post-1848 writing coincides with a focus on commodities in the real world. Realist literature is concerned with the “new wealth of commodities which it tries to organize and reproduce within the framework of literary communication: an equal exchange of the images of commodities” (60). Organizing and reproducing products and artifacts are important in both the novels, *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer*. In both texts these activities take place in the representational act of writing, as well as in the aesthetic/economic realms of the novels and therefore are important to my analysis of the works.

10 I am using the word symbiotic to express how the economic and poetic mutually rely on each other in these two works.

11 As Jochen Hörisch (2000) has pointed out, the cultural contexts of Britain and France are quite different in their relation to money, which explains Vernon’s

Drawing on this research, my thesis is that the move to a more abstract and symbolic representation in the money economy has had significant impact specifically on the literary discourse of the nineteenth century, which was the zenith of change in money form. I place myself in a rich tradition of philosophers and literary critics who have explored economic thought in literary and philosophical discourse.

I suggest that the exploration of the traces of economic structures in literature contributes to the discourse on literary tendencies and movements by adding what I call an “economopoetic” dimension. I employ this concept on three levels in my literary interpretation. First, there is the content level which includes economic and business related topics with simultaneous poetic implications. This level also includes economic language, for example metaphors. The second level pertains to representational issues, and in particular, to the process of exchange. This level focuses on the structural similarities between the way in which money mediates in the process of commodity exchange and the way in which *Schrift* mediates in the exchange between reality and literary text. The third level relates to economopoetics as a literary strategy. This is really an economopoetic representational model whereby the author makes explicit connections between the material and poetic economy. The way in which Gustav Freytag poeticizes the bourgeois economy in *Soll und Haben* is an example of economopoetics as a literary strategy. The three levels of economopoetics often interact with each other but this is not necessary.

In many cases, economopoetics is a helpful component in shaping a better comprehension of issues of representation, exchange between text and reality, and the creation of meaning between reader and text. My investigation will focus on the economopoetics of two novels within the German-speaking tradition: Gustav Freytag’s *Soll und Haben* (1855) and Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Nachsommer* (1857). This exploration of economopoetics is a tool to develop interpretations that comment on fundamental issues of literary realism pertaining to

and Goux’s slightly diverging viewpoints: “[...] Anglo-Saxon literature has tried to compensate for the insufficient realism of paper money with its realism; French literature, on the other hand, repeatedly points to the illusory quality of the gold standard” (72).

the two novels. The purpose of my inquiry is to explore the three economopoetic levels in an actual textual analysis and to clarify how it can function as a tool in literary interpretations.

In *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer* the viability of realist representation, the process of mimesis in general, and the nature of language and *Schriftlichkeit* are scrutinized through themes and motifs that are inherent to the sphere of the material economy. Specifically, it is my conviction that Freytag and Stifter, in spite of their insistence on realist representation, to some degree question and at times even undermine their own realism. This aesthetic tension is decipherable from the way in which economic principles of the money economy are evoked semantically in the two novels. Literary realism, then, allows some degree of idealism, i.e., that it describes not what is but what should be. In a sense, it becomes a promise just as paper money is a promise.

In choosing Freytag's *Soll und Haben* and Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* I considered numerous criteria. Marc Shell's argument that all literary works speak economics led me to compare a novel that explicitly focuses on business and economics (*Soll und Haben*) and a novel that distances itself from it (*Der Nachsommer*). Already the title *Soll und Haben* implies the importance of economic themes and the existence of an organizing economic principle that allows for better "readability" of economic activities and representations. The novel directly and overtly employs the economic discourse of its time. In contrast, *Der Nachsommer* distances itself from that very discourse. In this discrepancy between the two novels lies the main justification of my choice of texts: I will show that even a novel like *Der Nachsommer* that clearly wants to liberate itself from "money talk" is mired in it as it develops a very different kind of aesthetics.

In addition, there are many parallel developments in the themes of the two novels. Both novels are *Bildungsromane* in which the educational path of the protagonist towards full integration into a certain societal structure is of great importance. Both protagonists acquire specific modes of representation related to issues of value, the ability to read signs and to express reality, issues relevant both in the material and poetic economies. Though some similarities exist between the two novels in the area of education, there are also many

discrepancies that can help further the interpretation of the works. An insistence on realism in all representation is another common denominator.¹² This insistence on realist representation plays out in different ways in the two novels. I will closely examine their divergent patterns through the lenses of money and economic structures. Thus, both thematic and representational concerns justify the comparison of *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer*.

Furthermore, in accordance with John Vernon, I believe that some time periods are more suitable for this type of economopoetic interpretation. The nineteenth century was an era of liberalism with pervasive economic and monetary change. It was a time of social, political, and economic change as well as technological improvement, scientific development, and capitalist domination. It is the time Georg Simmel characterizes by an increasing abstraction embodied by money: “Die Steigerung der intellektuellen, abstrahierenden Fähigkeiten charakterisiert die Zeit, in der das Geld immer mehr zum reinen Symbol und gegen seinen Eigenwert gleichgültig wird” (Simmel, 176). In other words, the development from an economy based on the circulation of coins whose exchange value corresponded to the value of their material substance to an economy based on the circulation of alloy and paper currency had an influence on thought. And it is this increasing abstraction – which is central to the idea of realist representation – that I will explore in this book.

As Vernon shows, even though money had always been a topic and theme of literature, some aspects changed during the mid-to-late 1800s. First, money came to replace custom as the major social bond. Second, money itself evolved into something new and unexpected with the growth of banks and the explosion of credit that preceded and accompanied the Industrial Revolution (Vernon, 20). Compared to Britain, industrialization came late to Germany. There was hardly any

12 H. Steinecke (1979) asks if *Soll und Haben* is a realistic novel and decides that it is, at least in the opinion of most of Freytag’s contemporaries: “Für die große Mehrzahl der Zeitgenossen und der Kritiker des weiteren 19. Jahrhunderts galt das Werk als realistischer Musterroman; in den Begründungen sind formale, stilistische und darstellungstechnische Argumente auf das engste und unlösbar mit weltanschaulich-ethischen und mit politischen Gesichtspunkten verbunden” (116).

progress during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But, as Robert Holub points out, “From 1850 to 1900, however, we find rapid industrial growth accompanied by the concomitant urbanization of society” (Holub, 175). In other words, in Germany, realism and industrial development, with the rise of middle-class economic power, coincide.¹³

The introduction and proliferation of the set of symbolic modes of representation, that is the nature of paper money, was accompanied by a semiotic crisis. In his article “Bild und Schrift: Zur Funktion von Medienwechseln in der realistischen Literatur: Stifter, Keller,” Helmut Pfotenhauer points to the changing and increasingly volatile financial climate, concluding that it was accompanied by “einer zunehmenden semiotischen Verunsicherung.” He explains: “Die Welt ist nicht mehr einfach lesbar. Deshalb müssen das Lesen und Denken, das Verstehen und Mißverstehen thematisiert werden, will man realistisch schreiben. Der Zeichenrelativismus und die Zeichenskepsis der Jahrhundertwende kündigt sich an; der sogenannte Realismus ist davon nicht abzutrennen” (Pfotenhauer, 217).

Insofar as it pertains to Poetic Realism in the German-speaking countries, Theodor Fontane’s essay *Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848* is important to my line of argument. Fontane adamantly divorces realism from any aesthetic movements that depict the darker aspects of life (such as poverty or social injustice) stating that, “Diese Richtung verhält sich zum echten Realismus wie das rohe Erz zum Metall: die Läuterung fehlt.” It is possible to argue that according to this model the true realist author offers refinement of “nature” in the process of literary production. The author is a craftsperson of sorts who extracts the valuable essence of life and shapes it in the form of *Schrift*. Fontane proposes a realist representational model: “Das Leben ist doch immer nur der Marmorsteinbruch, der den Stoff zu unendlichen Bildwerken in sich trägt; sie

13 Eda Sagarra (2001) discusses the development of the German economy, which started accelerating in the 1850s. Germany’s rapid industrialization was fueled by both internal and external factors: “Stimulated by Californian gold and an increase in the money supply, the availability of cheaper credit and good harvests engendered confidence, which led in turn to investment in enterprises rather than, as traditionally, government securities” (238).

schlummern darin, aber nur dem Auge des Geweihten sichtbar und nur durch seine Hand zu erwecken”.¹⁴ In other words, while the substance of art already exists in the real world, it can only be seen and presented to the world through the creative processes of the artist.

It is the role of the artist to extract the essence, or truth, from the material world without producing anything that did not already exist. The authorial process consists of the organization and presentation (i.e., making concrete through organized details what would otherwise be an abstraction) of that which is already in existence, unearthing meaning, and assembling an understandable and “readable” aesthetic whole from the chaos of life.¹⁵ In realist art, then, we do not encounter a creative, subjective artist but rather an objective and neutral craftsman who expresses an already existing, but hidden, reality to his audience.¹⁶ The author must first see through the disorder of real life

- 14 In *Realismus und Gründerzeit: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1848–1880*. vol. 2. p. 100.
- 15 Ulf Eisele (1976) discusses in depth the different phases of realism and their changing modes of theoretical self-understanding using excerpts from *Deutsches Museum* as well as other programmatic and theoretical texts from the 1900s. In his section on *Poetischer Realismus*, Eisele points out the importance of the *process* by which literature is created. In an attempt to explain the concept of *Verklärung*, one has to take into consideration the idea of “re-creating the world” (*wiedergeschaffene Welt*) in the process of literary production: “Der empirisch fundierte Realismus reduziert die Realität also zunächst auf das ihr Wesentliche und versucht dann, in einem zweiten Schritt, das Wesen zur sinnlich-konkreten Erscheinung zu bringen” (63). The idea of identification between reality and fiction is a crucial issue in the understanding of Poetic Realism. In the first step of the process the author brings out the essential: “Der Schriftsteller dient hier als Goldsucher, der nicht produziert, sondern nur freilegt...” (74). In the second step the author brings together the selected essential fragments not by simply “reentering” the inessential into the narrative, but by imitating the *form* of the inessential: “er ahmt am Essentiellen selbst, so wie er es vor sich hat, die *Form* des Inessentiellen nach” (74–5).
- 16 Referring specifically to the development of an aesthetics of realism in the 1850s, Russell Berman (1986) concludes that there were concurrent shifts in society and culture after the 1848 revolution that supported this development. There was an emergence of an anti-theoretical discourse which favored “experience over concepts and passive observation over enthusiastic activism” (59). Berman continues: “Real things, not imaginary objects, take priority; hence the literature of realism loses much of the subjective reflexivity and

to distinguish meaning from irrelevance, in order to be able to arrange the meaningful and the irrelevant in a “readable” way and create the verisimilitude of the literary representation.

According to Fontane, the real, material world contains the piece of art. Though simple, this model is rather problematic in that it excludes the production aspects of literature. Literature can never be real in the sense that it is the equivalence of the real world: the written word in its role as translator between the material and literary worlds lies somewhere between the two. The creator of *Schrift* necessarily contributes something in the process of capturing the real world and transforming it into text, a contribution not accounted for in Fontane’s essay.

We have to look to the literature of the authors of Poetic Realism to see how they deal with these changing realities and their own paradoxical relationships to the written word. It is not the case that the written word is accepted as a neutral medium in a realist representational model – it is actually often viewed with a measure of suspicion.¹⁷ In fact, both the written word and money are “contaminated” by the respective systems within which they operate. We assign meaning and relate to these systems in many different, and often individualized, ways. They are systems of power and sup-

philosophical excursiveness of the pre-1848 writing and adopts a primarily descriptive stance” (60). Berman’s point is important and relevant to the narrative of Literary Realism. However, beneath the surface of superfluous description, there is a tendency towards abstraction in both *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer* which relates to economopoetics. More specifically, both Freytag and Stifter question and undermine their own realist representational model by employing economic structures and content.

17 In his discussion of the *Kunstgespräch* in Georg Büchner’s *Lenz*, Robert Holub (1991) claims that it exhibits a “tension between the living word from the oral tradition and the dead letter of the text” (48). This tension is of defining importance to the realist literary tradition. The common denominator of these two traditions, i.e., the one that builds on visual arts (nineteenth century) and the one that focuses on the oral dimension (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), is that “both attempt to bring literature to life by an appeal to the senses” (47). Büchner’s *Lenz* demonstrates, claims Holub, that common to both traditions is the “refusal to deal with literature as the dead letters printed on page” (47).

pression, of poetry and commodity. They are anything we want them to be, and sometimes they seem to acquire lives of their own. Because of the representational instability of the two systems, it is particularly interesting and productive to investigate the ways in which realist authors and theoreticians like Freytag and Stifter deal with problems of representation in the material as well as in the poetic economy.¹⁸

Since I am assuming that existing economic practices and thought influence literary discourse (in which they are employed as structuring devices and metaphoric language), it makes sense to focus on literature from this time of extensive economic change. The transition to an increasingly abstract and symbolic paper economy is the most compelling argument.¹⁹ It is under the umbrella of this transition that I will explore the realist representational issues in *Soll und Haben* and *Der Nachsommer*. As I have indicated, I will base my economopoetic exploration of the two novels on a set of themes that are simultaneously economic and poetic in nature.

While I recognize that both texts are profoundly ideologized, my assumptions concerning economopoetics are not anchored in any particular political ideas or ideological theories. For example, it is not my goal to expose certain economic inequalities addressed in the

18 In his chapter on “The Business of Realism” Robert Holub (1991) points out that the writers of the 1850s realized that they needed to go beyond merely copying reality to poeticizing reality (195). He uses a quote by Otto Ludwig that calls for a “poetic realism”: “Art should not be impoverished reality, but enriched reality ... It should not be half of a world, but an entire world.” Holub’s reading of this quote is that writers “should strive to create a separate and complete reality in their work” (195). Holub also discusses the tension between poiesis and mimesis. On the one hand, a work of art must be true to reality; on the other hand, the construction of a work of art is enlivened by the writer’s fantasy and creativity (196).

19 To be sure, paper money was not particularly common in 1850s Germany. In fact, in 1855 only 19% of the money supply, specifically the *Stückgeldmenge*, consisted of paper money (Sprenger, 179). However, the growing economy of the 1850s and 1860s lead to an increasing need for capital. “Der allgemeine wirtschaftliche Aufschwung, eine liberale Wirtschaftsgesinnung, aber auch das fiskalische Interesse mancher Länder führte in den Jahren 1853–1856 zu einer Gründungswelle von ‘Zettelbanken’, wie die Notenbanken damals allgemein noch genannt wurden. In den vier Jahren kam es zu 16 Zettelbankenneugründungen, davon allein 9 in 1856” (174).

works, nor do I attempt to interpret the authors' views on economics. Instead, I will explore the monetary structures in the texts by means of thematic areas such as accumulation, production, consumption, circulation, exchange, and preservation. These themes are woven through the works, they are places where the material and poetic economies intersect, and they will be the bases of my interpretation. In addition to elucidating the economopoetics of the texts, my interpretative model will use a filter of economic thinking. My intention is not to focus on the themes, but rather to use them to understand the broader representational frameworks of the novels, and, in particular, the ways in which Freytag and Stifter express issues of literary representation through the discourse of money.