we are now living in a spiritual super-nova, a kind of galloping pluralism on the spiritual plane.'

– Charles Taylor, A Secular Age

‘... it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity …’

– Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

The ‘glorious pair’ of European literary celebrity during the romantic period, Goethe and Byron, stand forth in their fiats as they do in so many other ways.\textsuperscript{1} Faust and Don Juan reintroduce the changed world to an epic that also is fundamentally different. Enlarging upon the lyric mode I took to be a departure from Milton’s epic project in the Introduction, in their hands modern epic becomes an endlessly generative form that has been substantively undercut, yet somehow gallops ahead nevertheless.\textsuperscript{2} These texts offer parallel, full-scale representations of the social evolution of fiat commands in poetry and – just as importantly – pursue consequences of fiat-like effects. Their registers are both material and, seemingly, magical. Byron and Goethe create new myths of modernity in aggressively thematizing the wonderment and explosion of projects that take flight on groundless credit. The project of modernity itself is included in their charge; they help us to see how it is the same modernity at issue in eighteenth-century Edinburgh as in contemporary Manhattan, an economic system at once projected and sustained with a single trajectory. Hence Goethe’s and Byron’s works are especially prescient from the later view of American usage after the mid-nineteenth century, whereby bank notes are explicitly ascribed to monetary ‘fiat.’ The greenback is fiat money:\textsuperscript{3} a word from the Latin
Vulgate Bible that makes a constant imprint upon these authors’ associative declensions from religion to economics.

Acting in a way as a second introduction, this last chapter discusses the romantic long poem’s indignant satire of modern fiat developments in economics, technology, and warfare. I begin, therefore, by identifying moments where imaginative valances and social ideas of fiat shift in Faust and Don Juan. Writ large, the shift involves alienation and dismantling of the divinely singular command of the Genesis ur-fiat. There is further a movement toward what I shall call (especially in Byron’s case) a portmanteau technique that includes an array of symptomatically modern behaviors – all of which prolong the momentum of credit and belief. This pattern resonates with my use of David Hume’s associational theory and figures of imagination in Chapter 4; it also takes up the recent thesis of Charles Taylor in his influential doorstopper A Secular Age (2007), insofar as the paradigm Taylor constructs situates any particular faith – even those that profess transcendence and universality – as just one option among many that now constitute the tenacious afterlife of belief. The signal disenchantments early on in these two modern epics – of Faust from his hermetic books, or of Juan from the faith of his Calvinist mother – lead to what in Taylor’s language might be called a ‘nova effect’ of disparate cultural substitutes for the creative fiat. Goethe moves from offering a Faustian parallel to Luther’s translated Grundtext of Christianity in part one, to the wildly heterogeneous style of part two, in which paper money fuels a ‘tragedy of development.’ Yet the redeployments of fiat are even more diverse in Byron’s oeuvre. They range from bloodshed that bitterly parodies God’s ability to create substance, to the digressive fiats of Byronic style, and finally conclude with the modern industrial-capitalist version of ‘let there be light’: the advent in Paris and Regency London of gas-illuminated lighting.

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Indebted to pathbreaking scholarship by Marc Shell, Kurt Heinzelman, Marjorie Levinson, and Alan Liu in a period that roughly spanned the 1980s, the decade of the 2000s to date has seen an exciting burst of writing concerning ‘the economy of lyric.’ Work in the last few years in particular has made good on the effort to theorize money and the aesthetic object in joint terms, going further than any previous historicism had done to elaborate the lyric’s monetary form. Current research thus promises to take us beyond ‘deconstruction in period costume.’ Two of the newest studies of Wordsworth understand his poetry in